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Wednesday 26 November 2008

Mercredi 26 novembre 2008

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Wednesday 26 November 2008

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mercredi 26 novembre 2008

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

TEMPERATURE IN CHAMBER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will remind the members that it wasn't too long ago in this chamber that they were complaining that it was too cold. I recognize as well that it is a little warm in here. I thought it might be good for you if we turn the heat up a bit, so you can understand what it's like to sit in the hot seat up here. But there are some technical difficulties, and the staff are working to lower the temperature in here. Perhaps, because of that, everyone can do their part in lowering the temperature here and making for a good, quiet question period today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2008**

**LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL**

Mr. Fonseca moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 119, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 119, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'm pleased to rise and speak again on the McGuinty government's proposed amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. This bill, if passed, will be good for our province's construction industry; it will be good for our province's construction workers; and it will help us fight the underground economy. This is the right time to help those construction employers who play by the rules and pay their fair share by contributing to Ontario's workplace safety and insurance system. At the same time, we have

proposed a responsible and realistic implementation timeline that will allow stakeholders and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board the opportunity to discuss implementation and ensure that it is successful.

Our proposed bill would extend mandatory workers' compensation coverage to independent operators, sole proprietors and partners in a partnership. These individuals are not currently required to purchase Workplace Safety and Insurance Board coverage. Due to the transient nature of the construction industry and the difficulty of determining on-site who is eligible for an exemption from WSIB coverage, there has been abuse of the current exemptions by certain individuals and companies wishing to gain a competitive advantage. We cannot allow this to continue. These practices undermine contractors by creating an unlevel playing field and contribute to underfunding of the WSIB system. These practices also undermine health and safety standards on construction sites.

The government has listened and has amended Bill 119 to address the concerns of small companies with one partner or an executive officer in an office. If the legislation passes, the amendment to Bill 119 will allow the government to create a regulation to exempt an individual executive officer or partner who works exclusively in the office. The government will work with business and labour groups before putting forward a regulation to ensure it meets the overall goals of the legislation.

By proposing our bill, we are helping legitimate construction employers be competitive in this marketplace when bidding on construction jobs. They need and deserve the help of government. Our system of mandatory coverage will help us ensure that independent operators subject to this bill are registering within the WSIB system. This connection to the workers' compensation system, in conjunction with other programs such as the Canada Revenue Agency, will help to identify those who may be working in the underground economy.

If the proposed amendments are passed, they would only fully come into effect no earlier than 2012. This three-year implementation period would also allow business to properly understand and prepare for the new rules.

Stakeholders from the construction industry have been advocating for mandatory coverage in the construction sector for over 15 years. The stakeholders include the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, LIUNA, the Council of Ontario Construction Associations, the Residential Construction Council of Central Ontario, the Ontario General Contractors Associ-

ation, the Ontario Road Builders' Association, the Interior Systems Contractors Association, the Mechanical Contractors Association of Ontario and many, many others. The legislation is before us because of their relentless efforts to bring attention to this issue for the goal of levelling the playing field for all employers and improving the overall health of the construction sector. I sincerely thank everyone who has worked so hard to bring this legislation forward and for their long-standing advocacy on this very important issue.

This legislation will help the construction sector and those working within it in many ways. One of the most important things it will do is to provide a needed financial safety net for individuals and their families who might otherwise be unprotected. Once again, I will draw attention to the stories that I and my colleagues in this House have heard, many of them in our constituency offices, of some independent operators in construction who have unfortunately been injured on the job and did not have insurance coverage and now find themselves without assistance.

Every year, there are examples of serious injuries and fatalities that cause financial and emotional hardships to families following serious workplace incidents, where the self-employed individual dies without WSIB coverage. One example that comes to mind is an individual involved in construction who left behind a spouse and children. He died from a fall, but did not have the optional WSIB coverage. That means his spouse and children were not entitled to the lump sum benefits and reimbursement for burial expenses they would have received from the WSIB during that very difficult time.

0910

The spouse and young children also did not receive the monthly benefits they would have been entitled to and some of the additional programs the WSIB offers, such as bereavement counselling and labour market re-entry services for the spouse. Had this individual been covered under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, compensation for the children would be included in the monthly benefits. These benefits continue until the children have completed their education, including post-secondary. Insurance may cost money, we all know this, but it provides security and peace of mind.

Just as importantly, this bill will help us prevent injuries and make this province's workplaces safer. Once in the WSIB system, injuries are more likely to be reported, which will help both the WSIB and the Ministry of Labour track unsafe work sites and workplace practices within the construction industry. This will help us monitor our province's workplaces so we can better direct safety efforts and enforce our laws where these efforts will be best put to use.

Again, I emphasize that this bill will provide a level playing field for the many legitimate operators within the construction sector. Underground economic practices in construction threaten health and safety, undermine labour standards and erode construction quality. Establishing a mandatory coverage system would help level the playing

field for law-abiding construction companies that comply with their WSIB and other legislative requirements. We need to support the majority of legitimate construction companies that are playing by the rules, and this proposed legislation will do just that.

The proposal would also help reduce incidences of revenue leakage for the WSIB, where benefits are paid to individuals for whom no WSIB premiums have been paid by the principal or the employer. The Council of Ontario Construction Associations estimates that 61% of the industry is paying for 100% of the claims made at the WSIB. This has impacts on WSIB premiums for those 61% who are paying, and it is simply not fair.

How would you feel if the same was true for you about your auto insurance? I am sure, like they have, you would demand change. This bill is simply the right thing for government to do. It will reduce underground economic activity; it will level the playing field; and it will improve workplace health and safety in the construction sector.

Think about it. Many of us drove in this morning. Can you imagine if you were paying auto insurance and you knew that only 60% of those cars out there on the road next to you were paying auto insurance while the others were all being covered by your premiums? That would be so unfair; the outrage we would hear from all citizens across this great province of ours—rightfully so. That's what has happened in construction, where 61% have been paying for 100% of the claims.

This proposed legislation will level that playing field; will make sure that everybody is playing by the same rules; that we are helping those good companies, those companies which are the vast majority. But there are some out there, some bad actors, and we want to shut them down. We want to make sure that their employees are covered; that they're not using some of the nefarious practices that we've heard out there where they are misclassifying their employees, saying they're independent operators when they're truly not; they've been with that company, some for many years, and have been working as independent operators so that they wouldn't pay the premiums. But when one of those workers is injured, who has to pay? Those legitimate operators. Those that have been paying all along—very unfair—creating revenue leakage for the WSIB—a system that has been in place for close to 100 years here in the province of Ontario, and it has been there for 100 years because it works. It's working for employers, it's working for labour and it's working for employees. It allows for a safety net within the construction sector so that when those employees are out there, sometimes on very high-risk jobs on top of a roof, or out there on the road as they're working on our highways, or building our hospitals and our schools, we know that if they were injured they would be covered. Their families would also be taken care of, as I mentioned in that one personal story.

It also puts some onus on the industry so that they understand that there is a cost when somebody gets injured. There are premiums that are being paid out.

When there are less injuries those premiums can come down. When everybody is paying, they're all in the same boat and they will work to help to build a healthier and safer workplace. That's what we're doing in the Ministry of Labour.

From 2004 to 2008, we had a program with our inspectors as they were going out into the field. They were working with companies with a targeted compliance initiative, making sure that they looked at the highest-risk types of businesses and industry so that they could lower the lost-time injury rate within business. What they've done is, they've had a lot of success. We have seen an over 20% reduction in lost-time injury claims overall in Ontario. We now have a new program within the Ministry of Labour. It's called Safe at Work Ontario. It too goes into all different work sites, but it will also go into construction work sites and work with businesses in terms of building a culture of health and safety, making sure that we work with employers so they can understand that when you invest in your people, when you invest in health and safety, you're also helping your bottom line. But they want to make sure, when they're making those investments in safety, that everybody is also doing the same. We're all in the same boat. That's when we want to bring everybody into the WSIB who works within the construction sector.

You see, this is a sector that has some very unique characteristics to it. There is a lot of mobility within the sector. Construction workers may work on three different sites in a week, and would have worked on many different projects. One day they may be working on the QEW for the Ministry of Transportation as they're moving on one of those initiatives; the next day for the Ministry of Health as they're building one of our hospitals; or they're constructing the homes within our community or the community centres, things we need that help us with our quality of life.

Because of those unique characteristics, it has sometimes been difficult to bring everybody into the WSIB system. What this proposed legislation will do is allow for the industry to close many of the loopholes that have been out there. I spoke about the misclassification of workers. There's also the underreporting of payroll or the number of individuals that you have in your company, where some have reported that they've only got three individuals in the company and they say that they are covered, but the truth of the matter is that they may have 10. So if any one of the 10 gets injured, they say it's one of the three they're reporting, so they'll get benefits.

0920

This is completely unfair. As you know, 70% of their payroll is not paying premiums that help the entire system. Because of that revenue leakage and because of what we've also seen within the underground economy in construction, there is a lot of lost revenue to all levels of government. That lost revenue has been estimated by the Ontario Construction Secretariat at approximately \$2 billion—wow, \$2 billion. What we could do with that: hospitals, schools, roads, community centres. Those

dollars for infrastructure would help all Ontarians, and we want to make sure those dollars are there to help all Ontarians.

With this proposed legislation, we're not only leveling the playing field and bringing fairness into the construction sector, but we're making sure that those who work in the sector are more safe and have benefits if they do get injured. We don't want to hear about the independent operator who didn't have insurance getting injured and finding himself in a bad state and looking at a life—10, 20, 30 or whatever years he has—here in Ontario with a lot of hardship. We don't want that hardship on those construction workers. I know they don't want it.

Sometimes we look at only the short term and think, "Do you know what? I don't really want to pay out those funds." But we don't know what's around the corner. I don't know what may happen if I get into my car on the weekend; there may be an accident. We want to make sure that I'm covered, and also that if something happened to somebody in the neighbourhood, they would be able to recoup funds, to have funds, to have that insurance in place. As I said, if this was something around auto insurance and we knew that only 60% of those on the road were paying for 100% of the claims, there would be outrage.

I know that many in the general public may not understand the inside baseball of this particular issue, but it's about protecting those who are doing a lot for the general public, building the schools and our homes and doing work in the community. When we see those workers up on a roof, we want to make sure that they aren't injured, that safety practices are in place and that employers are looking at best practices.

Within those best practices, we have some amazing health and safety associations here in the province of Ontario. They are there to work in partnership, work together with employers, labour and employees, so that we won't have as many injuries and we will take care of our employees. Once again, this proposed legislation is based on the values of fairness and safety.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm standing here actually as a form of protest, Mr. Speaker, because as you would know, this motion is being rammed through under time allocation, which prevents the members of the Legislature from representing their constituents fairly on an important issue. I can tell you for sure that the member from Cambridge, who is here today, as well as the member from Wellington-Halton Hills are unable to present the views of their constituents. How disappointing. How shameful.

In fact, the minister said in his remarks, which were prepared for him, written by the ministry staff—he read them quite well, but the passion wasn't there. He has been told what to do by the Premier, and he read the speech rather succinctly. Unfortunately, he said, insurance may cost money. Let's be clear: That's the theme here this morning. This is a tax grab. Let's be clear. It's

\$11,000 for the small construction employer. It'll be the one- and two-man, mom-and-pop shop paying \$11,000 of additional tax.

Why are they paying the tax? Because the WSIB, the government-run insurance agency to protect workers, is in a huge deficit. Why, I would put to you, is because there's no plan to fund it properly and this is a method of reaching into someone else's pockets and taking out \$11,000 to have more consultation and more dinner parties for the board of the WSIB.

I don't think it does what it's intended to do. The minister also said, "will improve health and safety in the workplace." Now, how does this actually improve the functionality of trades? How is this actually going to make employers, who are now paying another \$11,000 per employer, safer? In fact, it arguably might make it less safe because now they don't have the money for the harnesses, the slings and the tie-off ropes because they're paying so much for these premiums. But it also implies, falsely I might say, that the independent operators don't have insurance, which is completely a misrepresentation of what is the fact. They have liability insurance, if they're at all clever—some may not. Many constituents of mine told me—law-abiding, tax-paying, hard-working citizens and family members—this will drive some of them even further underground. So it won't achieve the goals and the laudable objectives that the minister says. It's clearly an issue that we don't support.

Our member, Bob Bailey, who represents the riding of Sarnia—Lambton, has done a remarkable job of trying to hold the minister's wiggling feet to the fire, but he squirmed out of this with a time allocation motion. They limited debate in committee; it was only because the bill was poorly drafted that they even let it go to committee. They had to go there to get it amended because of the faulty workmanship in the legislation's drafting. Now the minister has brought it back here, time allocated, so no one can speak out. I've been given a minimum of 20 minutes. That's barely enough time to introduce yourself in this place.

But I think that, if I look at it, 61% of the people already pay. Well, I'm going to read an article—Mr. Speaker, through you, with your indulgence as well, I'm going to read an article or some parts of it from the media this morning, November 26. It's in our package and I encourage members to refer to that. What does it say here?

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's actually in the National Post. It's slanted towards business. If it was in the Toronto Star, the Liberals would read it, because it basically—

Interjection: They would write it, never mind read it.

Mr. John O'Toole: They would have written it, quite frankly, but I want to stay serious. This is by Ray Penning, a director of research for Cardus, the Hamilton-based think-tank, who will address Ontario's construction costs before the economic club today. This is an expert; we can qualify that. It's not me. What he's saying here: "Imagine it is 1978, the year Ontario's current construc-

tion labour framework was passed into law. You are an investor intending to build a major project such as a factory or power plant," which indeed we are; we intend or hope that Premier McGuinty will have a power plant built in my riding of Durham next to the Darlington generating station, so this is a real story then.

"No matter where you choose to invest in Canada, the only workforce that has the skills and capacity to complete your project is the one organized by the craft unions affiliated with the various provincial building and construction trades councils." There you have it. "You could receive competitive bids for your project, but all of those bids will be based on the same labour agreement, negotiated between employers as a group and their unions"—the one big union, the OBU.

"It's a complicated and messy history but if we fast-forward 30 years, that situation has changed dramatically. In British Columbia and Alberta (and to some extent other provinces), major projects are receiving bids from open-shop non-union contractors, alternative unions and the traditional craft unions."

0930

I'm going to intervene here for a minute. The point here is to imply that the only person qualified is one who belongs to a union. If someone has a skill—an artist, an actor, a musician, an electrician, a plumber, a welder, a lawyer—yes, they need to apply and comply with standards, whether it's in a profession or in an art form. But it doesn't qualify them just because they belong to an organization, so it's wrong to assume that they're the only qualified people because they belong to a craft union. I'm not criticizing. There's a place for all of us in this world.

It goes on here and says: "There are no known studies that measure the correlation between these competitive labour pool environments and the comparative economic prosperity enjoyed by those provinces in recent years, but anecdotal evidence and logic both suggest a strong link between competitive bidding and broad economic success.

"Ironically, while all this was going on, Ontario was heading in the opposite direction," and has been since around 2003. Someone argued before that we were off the road for 10 years.

"Working agreements among municipalities, school boards and many corporate investors prevented"—this is a key word—"contractors without labour agreements with craft unions from even bidding on projects." That's why it's costing more to do business. That's a tax. That's my premise here, and that's the thrust of my argument.

It says that the competition is suppressed, and now Ontario is "a 'have-not' province almost completely out of step with the country's fastest-growing provinces when it comes to the organization of construction labour.

"This tale of two economic directions took place due to changes...." I want to put this in a broader context. I read a book recently; it's called *The World Is Flat*. It's about globalization, it's about competitiveness, it's about our youth and how we will compete in a global economy.

We're looking today at the auto sector. I put to you, in a broader section, this is just one piece of a many-legged animal here in Ontario.

The Liberals' plan is to tax anything that moves. In fact, there was a competitiveness report as well. These are not things that I'm making up. All of us are required to do a certain amount of reading here, and they make it easy for us, because they give us these clippings which—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Who's they?

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the civil servants, the staff here, who are great people. They come in here—I think unnecessarily, because of the way these corporate hours work.

Now, they just had a report filed yesterday by a group of academic experts and practical experts, well-known and well-respected—and I give the Premier his due. He has a very illustrious advisory group, which costs millions of dollars, by the way. They tabled a report yesterday. Here's the headline. This is from another famous Toronto paper. It says: "Grits"—that's the Liberals—"Stomp Own Task Force's Rescue Plan."

Interjection: What a waste of money.

Mr. John O'Toole: I know. They spent a million dollars. They bought this advice from these experts on the panel. What do they do? They stomped on it. What did it say? This is exactly what this discussion is about. This is about Ontario doing the right thing at the right time for the right reason. What they're doing is the wrong thing at the wrong time for the wrong reasons. They got it completely wrong. They're off the tracks. They're out of control.

Well, I'm partially out of control here, a bit, but I'll bring it back here.

"The Ontario government rejected key recommendations proposed by its own task force yesterday to stimulate the province's sagging economy, including a call to harmonize provincial and federal sales taxes."

Again, I want to expose this for what it is: Whatever moves is going to get taxed. They've increased spending by about 30% and revenue by about 29%, and now revenue is going to go down because of the recession globally, and they're going to blame—here's the plan. Why is Premier McGuinty not dealing with the auto sector crisis when Ontario is the only province in Canada that is dependent almost exclusively on manufacturing, and more specifically the auto sector? Here's the plan: He's going to wait until Stephen Harper announces it, whenever that is going to be announced, possibly tomorrow. Stephen Harper is going to announce something, and Premier McGuinty is going to stand up and say it's too little, too late, too soon, too early, not enough—

Interjection: The blame game.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's all a game when, in fact, the Prime Minister has fishing communities on the east coast and forestry communities on the west coast—they're even cancelling the opera in BC.

The issue here is that the Prime Minister has a large family of provinces and territories to take care of and to address, and has, I would say, really responded in a com-

passionate way. He has indicated, despite the Conservative tendency not to have a deficit, that he is going to look after the people of Ontario and make the key investments. But what's happening here is, Ontario is waiting to blame Prime Minister Harper.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm telling you, I know how it works. After 15 years, they're going to blame it on somebody else.

This is what they are doing, though, and this report that I'm referring to says it very clearly. They gave them recommendations which he trashed. Here's the irony. If you read this with any conscience and any intuitive understanding of the economy, here's the deal: The Premier, I don't think—I say this with the greatest respect—gets it, or if he does, he's putting a barrier in front of the people of Ontario doing the right things. Here's what he's saying, which is completely wrong—and I'm saying it as a person who doesn't have as much education as he does, except the education of practical experience: "Cutting corporate taxes will create more ... trouble by starving the ... treasury of much-needed revenue." Corporations don't pay tax when they're not making profits—and we're in an economic collapse. Do you think General Motors, Chrysler, Stelco, Inco, Dofasco, any of them, are making money? No, they're losing money. That's why their shares are going down. That's why they're cancelling the dividend cheque. And why? Because he doesn't get it. I'm serious. I'm saying it as a humble opposition member. I think he does, though, and he's simply failing to do the right thing. He's doing the popular thing.

Even the remarks by the minister this morning remind me of that argument that insurance may cost money. That's the slippery slope. In other words, "Prepare to batten down the hatches. We're going to increase your taxes." That's what he's saying. It's code language.

I can only say to you that I'm passionate about this because I worked in this sector for years. I know there's an important purpose here, to protect workers, and employers should have choices in that. This is a managed, dictated program for all of the construction trades groups, and it's payback time for the Working Families Coalition, and I want to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member, take a seat. I'd like him to withdraw that comment.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll certainly withdraw that, Speaker, with due respect.

Personally, I wanted to say that I know there are others here who wanted to speak. The member from Cambridge and the member from Wellington-Halton Hills did want to speak. Time allocation has disallowed that, so I am going to make the generous gesture to give up the rest of my time to the member from York-Simcoe.

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

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise today to talk on this Bill 119. I just want to give you a little history on the progression of this bill. In principle, we agree with the bill but we have a lot of problems with the bill. We brought forward 19 amendments in committee and not one of those amend-

ments was dealt with and addressed properly. I had great concerns. The four in particular that bothered me were sections 8, 10, 19 and 27. I'd like to take a little time and talk about 19.

Having spent a good part of my life in heavy industry and in the trades, I think I can speak from a position of experience. The one that really got me, that the government wouldn't deal with, was the intimidation and coercion section that we brought forward. Why I say that is because the minister stood up and talked about how this bill will enhance safety and health in the workplace.

I'm going to give you a personal view of what happened to me in the steel industry. There is a part of the steel plant called the coke ovens. They're vertical furnaces, which heat the coal into coke, and they have what they call a pusher car, which pushes the coal into quenching cars on the other side of the ovens. Then they go to the quenching station to be cooled and on to the blast furnace. On what they call the bench, on one side of the ovens, they have the pusher car, a 50-tonne car that has a big arm that pushes the coke into the cars. There is no way to get off that bench if you are on a man lift, which we were on because we used to go up in man lifts to repair the furnace doors or other parts of that furnace.

0940

I brought forth a health and safety concern about being trapped in a pinch point, where you couldn't get away and you could be killed. The company didn't like it. They wanted to put a safety man on the car. They wanted to have a guy with a little horn while this car was moving up and down pushing coke out of the ovens.

It got to a point where I refused to do the job. The company tried to intimidate me and threatened dismissal. All kinds of interesting things transpired. The two workers who were with me—I was the lead hand—refused to do the job too. Well, they got to them after about a week and a half by threatening to fire them. I only had one year to go to get my 30 years, so I could have been in jeopardy for my pension, but I felt that it was very unsafe and I stood up to the company. I was the only one, by myself.

They called in the Ministry of Labour. They had the company executives, there were the ministry people by phone; at the time they were on rotating strikes, and we had a group call. They listened to my side of the story, they listened to the company and they said they would have to make a decision on that. They came to some conclusions that weren't acceptable to me, but at a point where it was better than it was.

Well, lo and behold, three months later on a night shift, the driver of the pusher car fell asleep at the wheel. The 50-tonne pusher car went off the rails and smashed into the other battery of ovens. It hurt one individual seriously and tore out six ovens. There were hundreds of thousands of dollars' damage. I didn't have to say, "I told you so," because it was evident from what happened—just one incident over the years where I was threatened to be sent home by refusing to do unsafe work.

I was exposed to all kinds of carcinogens over the years, from asbestos to tar pitch volatiles, ammonia,

naphthalene—you name it; I've been exposed to it. But we finally got masks. What I'm trying to get to is that we tried to build in to the new bill the ability for workers not to be intimidated and coerced, whether by a big employer or small employer. I'd like to bring up the point that I was in a strong union environment—the United Steelworkers—and I still got attacked and intimidated. What does the poor guy do who is working for a five-man company or a smaller place? He probably would be fired and sent home.

There were several amendments that came from an experience level over the years that this government would not listen to and would not entertain. They think they know it all, but they don't. There are a lot of people out there who have a lot of valuable information and input to put into it. Ever since I have been in this House, not one amendment I have brought forward, not one bill, has been accepted by that side of the House—absolutely disgusting.

Another thing that's bothering me is the 2012 implementation day—slowly. They could have sent this out to the public. They could have had more discussion, as the official opposition has complained. They could have talked more about it. They didn't. They decided to push it through.

When you deal with a bill, as you well know, bills have parts you don't like. The government always stands up in the House and says, "You voted for it. The NDP voted for it." Well, you can't pick out certain parts of a bill and vote against those parts or cut a bill in half. You either vote for the bill or you don't. There are parts you like and parts you don't like, but you've got to vote for it one way or the other. That's unfortunate, because I do support the premise of the bill. It's moving in the right direction, but it falls short of a lot of the major things that I was concerned about.

Item 10: It's our belief that there should be no exemptions in WSIB coverage in the construction industry. With respect to the home renovation industry, there is no reason that construction workers employed in the home renovation sector should not have mandatory coverage. I'll give you an example of why they've missed the boat on this one too. It's because in home renovations you're going to see a lot more small construction companies become home renovators, and they're going to fall under that auspice so they don't have to pay the premiums. You're going to see, all of a sudden, all these new companies in Ontario that are going to change their direction, change their mandate, and this government is going to lose out on those things.

They're telling me that a guy working on a roof in an industrial site like Stelco or a guy working on a home roof—can that person not fall in both situations? But he is considered a home renovator. So I'm concerned that they have not delved into this properly; they haven't taken a really hard look at it.

I safely say, and I'm not bragging by any stretch of the imagination, that most of the members on that side have probably never worked 30 years in an industrial environment or in construction. Some may have, but most

haven't. But they're calling the shots and they don't want to listen to other people who have experience—me and many others. They think they know it all. They don't, and they won't listen. That's unfortunate, because I think you're going to see some more pitfalls in this bill and there will be more people getting around the so-called—well, the underground area they're talking about where people don't pay their premiums. I think you're going to increase them, I really do, and they'll find angles to get around it.

I agree with them as to why is this legislation necessary? Because there has been abuse in the system: no restrictions as to who can be classified as an IO; and that's another exemption—officers of the company. I don't know about anyone else in here, but on any construction sites I've seen or been involved with, owners or superintendents of those companies were telling me, no, they're not going to go there; they're going to sit in their offices. Baloney. They have trailers on-site at all these construction sites where these guys go, talk to their draftsmen, talk to their engineers, talk to their foremen, talk to their lead hands—they're there. They should be covered too.

I don't disagree that if they are only there 25% of the time maybe the premiums should be adjusted accordingly. But no, you're going to have a lot more operating officers than you had before so they can get around premiums.

Let's talk about private insurance. I asked one of the people who made a presentation in favour of private insurance, "Sir, would you think that if you put in a lot of claims your insurance would go up?" He said, "Absolutely," and I said, "And you said to me you haven't had any claims in 20 years. That's amazing. In the construction industry, it doesn't matter if you have five or 20 employees, and you've never made a claim."

Wow, that sends a strong message. That tells me that they're not reporting claims because they want to keep their premiums down. How many of those guys, 25 or 30 years later, have injuries that they received on a job and didn't claim to keep their job because they didn't want to bug their boss, and now they're walking around crippled? I can name lots of them, and I can remember the days in WSIB where even our company, Stelco, one of the biggest steel companies in Canada, would offer you—we were actually being tricked at the time. They would say, "Mr. Miller, you fell off a scaffold and you hurt your knee. Well, I'll tell you what: You come into work. We'll pay for the taxi. You come into work and you sit there and just sharpen pencils." I thought I was doing a favour to the company. I thought I was being a good employee so their claims wouldn't be put in and their rates wouldn't go up.

0950

Little did I know that I put myself in jeopardy. By not claiming anything, by not reporting my injury, 30 years later, when that nagging injury that may have happened two or three times when I was sitting sharpening pencils for the company because they didn't want me off on

WSIB—they said to me, "I'm sorry about your knee, Mr. Miller. It appears that you didn't go off; you went to work. We don't have any record of your injury." Interesting. And the minister stands up and talks about how he's going to help safety and health. I question it, because there are a lot of things that we put in that they wouldn't even entertain. So all I can say is it's going to come back to haunt them. You heard it here today. A lot of these things they're doing are not well thought out, not complete, they didn't talk to enough people—and that's what happens with bills sometimes, when you don't get all the proper sources.

A lot of our people in the union are in favour of the bill, and I agree that it will help more workers to be covered—90,000 to 130,000, to be exact. I agree with that. But they didn't go far enough. They didn't deal with these pitfalls, and these are just some from over the years that I could bring forward to show them. But once again they wouldn't listen, they don't want to hear about it, they think they've got it all figured out. Well, we'll see what happens.

In closing, I'm proud to say that in a non-partisan manner I have supported—

Interjection.

Mr. Paul Miller: As the member from Peterborough makes a comment—I have supported six Liberal bills to date, in my short tenure of a year and a bit. Six bills I've supported, because they were good for the people of Ontario. I believe they had good points; I supported them. Not one bill has the NDP put forward that they have supported. They've shot it down in committee; they won't even entertain it. I call that partisan, not for the people of Ontario. I call that arrogant. That's exactly what they're doing, and I'm very disappointed.

I have a few minutes left, and I will be sharing them with the member from Nickel Belt.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to begin the conversation today on Bill 119 with the fact that each time the minister was asked to respond to a question in the House, or certainly this morning in his comments, he talked about the importance of safety. I want to be absolutely clear in my comments that no one disputes the legitimacy of the need for safety. One of the things that I would applaud the WSIB on is the increased public awareness of the need for safety. I think the fact that they are able to put together very graphic commercials and also repeat the fact that there are no accidents—these are extremely important public messages. I know that in a case that I'm familiar with, it was an "accident" actually done by someone who was the health and safety staff person. It was a simple thing of forgetting to turn off the machine. So the training and the exposure to understanding the importance of safety and what those regulations are within the workplace that provide safety are extremely, extremely important.

I think the comments that have been made in defence of this bill have somehow glossed over the fact that no

one disputes the importance of safety. However, that's not the mechanics of the bill, if you like. We have been very clear about the fact that this is a bill that zeroes in on small business. Certainly, within the small business community there has been, I would argue, a stifled reaction but certainly a reaction. I've received e-mails from constituents and people who are struggling in an extremely complex and difficult economic environment, which I'll mention later. The cost of this is estimated to be in the neighbourhood of \$11,000 a year, in a situation where obviously many people in these businesses already have private insurance. So we have to look at, how is this being fair to those who are the targets of this piece of legislation?

I think it comes at a most inopportune moment. When we have, as a caucus, looked at the decline in manufacturing jobs and in the forestry industry over the past two years—we've been identifying that decline and challenge to the government for two years, certainly pre-dating the current climate that we find ourselves in.

I just want to say that this is the wrong group. This is a group that doesn't have the same needs, in terms of WSIB support. It's the wrong time, as Ontario is dead last in economic development. It's now a have-not province. We have fewer and fewer jobs in the province. And frankly, it's the wrong process. When I look at the way in which this bill has been brought to the House and the way in which it has been shepherded through with time allocation, without hearings beyond Toronto, with only two days of public hearings, the fact that we're forced through time allocation at this point in time and the fact that the bill isn't until 2012—it has been in a very compressed time here, with a timeline that goes beyond the next election. So I think it's really important for the people to understand that it's the wrong group, it's the wrong time, it's the wrong process.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is a privilege for me to respond to Bill 119, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act, that finally addresses mandatory workers' compensation and benefits coverage for construction workers who are not presently covered. This legislation means that about 90,000 Ontario construction workers will have the privilege of being covered under WSIB.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, I certainly want to take this opportunity again to thank the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario for their advocacy on this issue for the last 15 years.

In the last 15 years, the Ontario construction industry has been substantially restructured by the practice of hiring subcontractors and independent operators. The use of independent operators has resulted in thousands of workers in the construction industry being deprived of coverage. That has created a group of employees who are entitled to claim benefits from WSIB if they get injured, but who do not have to pay premiums to the WSIB. In addition, the contractor can insist on subcontracting to firms that are portrayed as independent contractors, rather

than employing workers, as described by the WSIB, in order to gain a competitive advantage. That has shifted the whole cost of statutory payments to WSIB to a smaller and smaller group of construction workers who pay into WSIB. That has also translated into an unfair competitive advantage. You can see that if you make sure that the subcontractors that you're going to be hiring are deemed to not have to pay into WSIB, there's a saving to be made there. So two companies: one that plays fair, treats its employees as workers so that they are covered by WSIB and pays the premium; and one that looks for loopholes and makes sure that each of the subcontractors is not considered workers, doesn't have to pay into WSIB, and therefore has a competitive advantage because there are savings to be made. But those savings are made on the backs of the workers who might get injured, and this is not fair.

I cannot stand here and talk about WSIB as the be-all and end-all of it, because I've worked in the health care industry long enough to know that WSIB comes with its fair share of heartache. A lot of people who were injured on the job cannot gain access to WSIB benefits because of the loopholes you have to go through.

But there is a system in place. There are arbitrations in place so that a worker has a chance to be heard. It is sometimes cumbersome, but at the end of the day, the workers get their coverage.

People who would argue that you can get way cheaper benefits by taking out an insurance policy are—there's an argument to be made. Sure, you are probably able to pay less, but you also get less. Further, if you are denied coverage from your private insurance, there's nobody there to help you, there's nobody who knows that system except for very expensive lawyers, and then you question yourself as to why you ever went down that path.

WSIB for construction workers makes sense, and this is why the NDP will be supporting it.

En ce moment, selon le nouveau projet de loi, la Loi 119, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail, il y a près de 90 000 employés de la construction qui n'ont pas droit à la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail. Ils n'y ont pas droit souvent parce que les sous-traitants qui les emploient leur demandent d'être travailleurs indépendants. Comme travailleur indépendant, tu n'as pas besoin de payer les primes de sécurité professionnelle. Par contre, s'il t'arrive un accident au travail, tu auras droit à la couverture. Ce qui arrive dans ce temps-là c'est que certaines compagnies qui traitent leurs employés comme des employés, eux paient les primes et leurs employés sont couverts. D'autres compagnies un peu moins scrupuleuses vont demander à leurs employés d'être des sous-traitants indépendants. Comme sous-traitants indépendants, cela veut dire que la compagnie qui les embauche n'a pas besoin de payer leurs primes à la sécurité du travail. Par contre, ces gens-là ont droit aux bénéfices, ce qui veut dire que de moins en moins de travailleurs légitimes et d'organismes légitimes paient les primes,

bien que le nombre d'accidents continue d'augmenter. Ceci devait être changé et la loi le fera.

Par contre, il y a encore toute une catégorie d'employés qui ne seront pas couverts. On parle ici des personnes qui travaillent dans ce qu'on appelle des travaux de rénovation domiciliaire, et ce n'est pas acceptable.

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

There being none, pursuant to the order of the House dated November 5, 2008, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Fonseca has moved third reading of Bill 119, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

Third reading vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day. Deputy government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have no further business at this time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): There being no further business at this time, this House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1004 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would like to welcome to the chamber the students of O'Gorman High School, who are here today, all the way from Timmins—they drove down last night and will be back in Timmins by tomorrow—and all the firefighters who are here with us today.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'd like to introduce Fred LeBlanc, president of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association; Mark McKinnon, the vice-president; and Barry Quinn, the secretary/treasurer. Welcome, Fred, Mark and Barry, and all the other firefighters who are here.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Shortly, we will be joined by members from OPSEU; from CUPE 3903, the York University faculty; and also SEIU Justice for Janitors.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted to welcome Jim Holmes and Rich Kerr, from the London Professional Firefighters Association.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to introduce Bruce Donig, president of the Cornwall Professional Firefighters Association.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce to members of the Legislature and welcome to the Legislature Terry Colburn and Corry Vanderlee, from the St. Catharines Professional Fire Fighters Association.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It always gives me great pleasure to introduce Paul Wilson from the Peterborough Fire Department, a great service in the city of Peterborough.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I am pleased to introduce Tim Lea and Michael Collee, two members of the Niagara Falls Professional Firefighters Association, who have taken the time to come up here.

Mr. Dave Levac: I would like to introduce all the members of the professional firefighters association who are not here, and thank them for allowing these guys to be here.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Just for reciprocity, I want to welcome Rod MacDonald, from the Stratford firefighters group. I am delighted that he is here today.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to introduce John Sobey, from the firefighters in my riding. He and his team are keeping us safe all the time. Thank you very much.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It is my honour to introduce Stephen Emo of Collingwood Professional Firefighters Association, who is here with us today.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to welcome, in the public gallery, Carrie Pearson, who is my assistant in the Lindsay office, and Brook Jewell, our co-op student from Lindsay Collegiate and Vocational Institute, who also works in our Lindsay office for a few months. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Somewhere in the audience—there are so many firefighters here, which is great—is Dan Bonnar, president of the Ajax Firefighters.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to bring to the House's attention the fact that SEIU, CUPE and OPSEU have just arrived.

Mr. John Yakabuski: With so many firefighters here, perhaps they could do something with the fire that seems to be going on in here—it's about 90 degrees.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Welcome to North Bay firefighters Tim Mainville, Keith Hann and Brian Boutilier, whom I don't see yet but I know they are coming today. We welcome them.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd like to welcome the firefighters, as well as the Hamilton firefighters, and Henry Watson, who's here today.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to apologize to the firefighters in Oxford county who couldn't be here today.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I would like you to help me welcome firefighters from Burlington: President Dan VanderLelie, Paul Cunningham, Jeff Rock and Sandor Toth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable members. That was a useful test for me on remembering riding names for members.

I want to take this opportunity on behalf of the member from Hamilton Centre and page Bradyn Litster to welcome her father Dwayne Litster to the gallery today. Welcome.

As well, I want to take this opportunity to welcome, in the Speaker's gallery, a good friend of mine, Warren

Scott from the St. Thomas Professional Firefighters Association. Welcome, Warren.

And to the honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who made comment about the heat in the chamber this morning: As I relayed earlier, there were some technical difficulties. Perhaps this heat will help to cool the atmosphere in the chamber today. The Speaker would very much appreciate that.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I will try and respect your suggestion, Speaker.

My question, through you, is to the Premier. Yesterday, your government received the annual report from the task force on prosperity chaired by the Dean of the Rotman School of Management, Dr. Roger Martin, and the great economic minds in your administration dismissed that expert advice and effectively flushed the \$1-million-a-year cost of the task force down the toilet.

One of Dr. Martin's recommendations was that, in these difficult economic times, your government should tighten its belt and perhaps bring in a restraint program. Premier, are you at least going to accept that advice? And when can we see a plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question. I know that my colleague will recall that, as part of our fall economic statement, the Minister of Finance announced further restraint measures that we would adopt. He announced as well that we would not be proceeding as quickly with some of our new initiatives.

But the spirit of the question is laudable. I think it's important that we all take a look at how we conduct ourselves in government. I've asked the finance minister to consider other measures that we might bring forward to this House. There will be more measures that we will adopt, I can say. I should also say they will be largely symbolic in nature in terms of the limited savings to be achieved there, but I think we have a responsibility to lead by example.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My recollection is that one restraint measure was a \$53-million cut to health care.

Press reports today indicate that tomorrow's federal economic update will include things like restricting use of government planes, cutting travel for cabinet ministers and senior civil servants, ending unnecessary travel and entertainment, and spending cuts at crown corporations and agencies. The federal government, Premier, clearly understands that politicians and governments have to lead the way in showing restraint during difficult economic times. What is your plan and when will we see it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to go up to the 30,000-foot level for a moment: My colleague will know that we

have achieved savings in 2007-08 of \$806 million. Through the fall economic statement, we have announced an additional \$108 million by way of savings. But beyond that, again in keeping with the issue specifically raised by the leader of the official opposition, we intend to announce further measures that we think we ought to adopt. I think, again, they are largely symbolic. The financial savings will be somewhat modest, given the multi-billion-dollar budget that we manage. But I think it's important that we do that and we look forward to announcing that in due course.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: In terms of those savings, I'd say, "Show me the beef." Send us that list. We'd love to see it.

Just in this fiscal year, when we knew we were already in tough economic times, heading for a deficit and have-not status in this province for the first time in our history, your government spent up to \$2.7 million—tax dollars—on a party for your friends in Windsor; you spend \$2.5 million for hotel rooms; you personally spent \$1 million in government flights to fly to places like Hamilton from Toronto; you spent \$4.5 million—tax dollars—for spin doctors in the Ministry of Education; on and on.

Premier, when are you going to show real leadership, accept expert advice, do the right thing, lead the way and bring in a restraint plan to cut and curtail unnecessary spending?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We will always make efforts to act responsibly when it comes to managing the people's money. We understand how hard Ontarians work for their money, and we understand their very legitimate expectations of us, as people privileged to serve them through government.

Let me talk a little bit about the restraint initiatives that were just announced. We talked about completing the hiring of 9,000 nurses over a longer period of time than anticipated; that will save us some \$50 million. We're deferring less urgent action—education capital improvement projects; that will save us \$25 million. We're delaying the launch of our Ontario social venture capital fund; that's \$20 million.

Those are the kinds of things that we have looked at, but again, specific to the kinds of issues raised by my colleague, there will be an announcement in due course that deals with those things that we can more specifically do ourselves, as members of the government.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: On November 3, Ontarians woke up to the grim reality that under Dalton McGuinty, Ontario had become a have-not province. Yesterday, the Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress, chaired by Dr. Roger Martin, shone a spotlight on the fact that Ontario has the highest tax on new business investment in all of

North America. That means that if you're starting a new business in Ontario or expanding an existing one, you are hit with punishing taxes greater than our sister provinces or competing states.

Premier, will you commit to following Dr. Martin's good advice and reduce the level of business income taxes as part of a plan to grow Ontario out of its have-not status?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to take the first part of this question and I want to speak to this whole issue of Ontario being a have-not province. I want to remind my colleague once again of the facts. There are only three provinces in Canada which are net contributors to the federation: Ontario, Alberta and BC. This year, Ontarians will contribute \$23.5 billion to Ottawa for distribution to the rest of the country. If you take a look at the net contributions from Alberta and BC, Ontario's contribution is 40% bigger.

The issue in Ontario is not that we're not generating enough wealth; it's that we're not able to keep enough of our own wealth—just to set the record straight when it comes to this whole issue of whether or not Ontario has enough wealth.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, not only is Ontario now a have-not province, but when it comes to answers to grow us out of it, we have a have-not Premier. You put Dr. Martin's latest report on the shelf with such speed, it gave the press gallery whiplash.

Remember that on September 25, 2006, you announced Roger Martin would be your special economic adviser. Since then, you've ignored his advice so often and so predictably, he's probably feeling like a member of the Liberal caucus.

Your only plan to date to grow us out of have-not status is to put out your hand to Ottawa and say, "Please, sir, can I have another?" Premier, when, if ever, will we see your plan to grow Ontario out of its have-not status, and will you include Dr. Martin's recommendation to lower the business income tax once and for all?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I always appreciate the good work done by Dr. Roger Martin and his institute, and we give careful consideration to his advice. I just want to remind my colleague of some of the advice that we've received in the past and how we've dealt with it.

Dr. Martin has indicated that we should eliminate the capital tax. Well, we've gone so far as to eliminate it for our manufacturers, and we did it on a retroactive basis. He said that we should encourage investment in machinery and equipment, and we've done that through the capital cost allowance measures we've adopted. He said that we should be focusing more on increasing apprenticeships. Well, we've invested \$75 million in our 2008 budget, and we have thousands more young people enrolled in our apprenticeships. He said we're going to have to do something to address the dropout rate from our high schools. Well, so far, because of the student success measures we've adopted, close to 11,000 more kids are finishing high school every year. Those are direct responses to Dr. Martin's recommendations.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, the task force looked at your so-called record on business taxes and they were far from impressed. In fact, last year Dr. Martin said the government was losing tax revenue due to high business taxes, and that's exactly what the economic statement a few weeks ago had shown.

Let's get to this main point: Under Dalton McGuinty, Ontario is now a have-not province. For the first time in the history of Confederation, we are receiving equalization payments. In short, we're on the welfare rolls of Confederation. You know as well as I do that the same outdated tax-and-spend policies that got us into this mess sure the heck aren't going to get us out of this mess.

Since November 3, all you've done is brought in a new WSIB bill that puts punishing new taxes on small businesses, with the goal of shutting them down at the behest of the union bosses.

Under Dalton McGuinty, Ontario is on the welfare rolls of Confederation. Where is your plan to grow us out of it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just can't see things that way. It's such a negative, pessimistic outlook on this great and wonderful province of Ontario, the best province in the best country in the world. I just can't share my colleague's outlook.

Obviously, we have some fundamental differences of opinion when it comes to what we need to do to further strengthen this province. We believe that you've got to invest in innovation. We believe you have to invest in the skills and education of our people. We believe you've got to invest in partnerships with businesses to put them on a stronger and more sustainable footing. We believe that you've got to reduce taxes, but in an affordable and thoughtful and responsible way. We believe those are the foundations for strengthening our economy.

There's one thing more that we believe in: We believe in the future of this province. We believe it's a future filled with great hope. Yes, these are challenging times, but we're going to get through them the way we've always overcome our challenges: by hanging tight and hanging together.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: To the Premier: There is yet more evidence that Ontario's auto sector is in very serious trouble. Oshawa, the home of General Motors, has experienced a 96% increase in the number of employment insurance claims. Windsor, the home of Chrysler Canada, has experienced a 30% increase in employment insurance claims.

My question is this: With thousands of Ontario auto workers already out of work and tens of thousands more in danger of losing their jobs, will the McGuinty government table a made-in-Ontario auto investment plan before this Legislature recesses for Christmas?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Late though it may be, I welcome the support offered by my colleague.

I don't want to belittle the seriousness of the issue and the concern in the minds of all those families who enjoy a good quality of life as a result of somebody in the family working in the auto sector.

What I'm asking my friend to do is to understand that this is a national concern now. One of the single greatest challenges before us has to do with our credit issues and liquidity issues, and we cannot resolve that without the support of the federal government. That's why we'll continue to work hand in hand with the federal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I think everyone understands that the auto sector is important nationally, but I think the McGuinty government needs to understand that it is vital for Ontario's economy and it is vital for hundreds of thousands of jobs in this province.

The Conference Board outlines the nature of the problem. The Conference Board says that 15,000 more assembly jobs will be lost by the end of 2009; even more jobs will be lost in the parts side of the auto sector by 2009. The board also says that Ontario's auto sector will lose \$1.7 billion this year as new vehicle production declines by 15.3%.

What I'm asking the Premier is: Instead of referring to Oshawa, instead of referring to Ottawa or instead of referring to Washington, when are we going to see a real auto investment plan from the McGuinty—

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

1050

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, it is at least passing strange that when we moved ahead aggressively with a \$500-million auto investment strategy, through which we leveraged some \$7.5 billion—\$8 billion in new investment, we received no support. In fact, that was opposed by the New Democratic Party.

The challenge associated with the auto sector in North America is big, to say the least. We understand that the best way for us to move forward in that regard is to work hand in hand with the federal government. The Big Three understand that. The CAW understands that. I think the people of Ontario also understand that. We're going to continue to find a way to work with the federal government and provide some solid foundation on which the Big Three and the auto sector generally can continue to build and grow here in Ontario.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to be very clear with the Premier. Yes, I did disagree with your former strategy of handing \$200 million to General Motors without any product guarantees or any job guarantees. I didn't think it was very good that General Motors got \$200 million and thousands of GM workers were put out of work. I didn't think that was a very good strategy. What's happening now is this: Companies, workers, unions and people who study this industry are all saying it needs some action now, and what went before didn't work, and what went

before can't be relied upon as an excuse by this government.

Are we going to see an auto investment strategy to help sustain hundreds of thousands of jobs from the McGuinty government, and are we going to see it soon, or are we going to continue to see more job losses?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're going to see a determined, thoughtful and—this is really important—concerted effort to address the auto sector challenge.

I have had a couple of conversations with the Prime Minister. Ministers Bryant and Clement are working well and hard together on this particular file. We will continue to do everything we can. We'll continue to stay in touch with representatives of the auto sector, not just the manufacturers but the suppliers, the dealers and the like.

If you take a look around the world, you'll see that it's the national level of government, the federal governments, whether you're talking about the US, Australia, the European Union, for example—now here in Canada, it's not the kind of thing that we Ontario taxpayers can take on on our own. We have to work in concert with the people of Canada.

I understand my friend's impatience in this regard, but we're going to take the time to get it right. We'll take no more than the time we need, but we'll take all the time that we need as well.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: Again to the Premier: It's surprising, when I contrast the Premier's words of just a few years ago with his words now. Just a few years ago, not long ago at all, the Premier was saying, "I will not tolerate any notion that somehow we are backsliding when it comes to the auto sector in the province of Ontario. We're at the highest point in our history when it comes to securing a strong economic advantage on the auto score."

A couple of years ago, the Premier was out there boasting and bragging that the strategy then was the right strategy. Well, that strategy didn't work. The crisis has gotten worse. You can either wait for this to be decided in Washington, or you can try to get out in front of it and position Ontario. What's it going to be? Allow the decisions to be made in Washington when Ontario could lose thousands more jobs, or are you going to state a position that will help sustain jobs in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Obviously, a lot has changed in the last couple of years. Among other things, we've all learned about something called a sub-prime mortgage crisis, that a million Americans lost their homes and that what started out as a domestic financial crisis became a global economic crisis, and we've all been swept up in it.

What has also happened, of course, is that many North American consumers have stopped buying cars, and that's had a direct and profound impact on the health and vigour of our domestic auto sector. There are no magic fixes in this, and there are no quick answers. It's going to require that we bring our very best to address this

challenge. That's why we're going to continue to work closely with the federal government to make sure that we get this right and to make sure that we decide upon a strong foundation on which we can continue to build.

I believe, as the number one automaker in North America, that we have a very strong position from which to move forward. I look forward to making that—

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: Just a couple of years ago, the Premier claimed to have all the answers. In fact, the Premier was getting a sore shoulder from patting himself on the back and saying that Ontario was going to lead the auto sector. Well, Premier, the situation has gotten much, much worse, and it does no help that your government seems to try to be on both sides of the fence at the same time. One day you say the auto sector is important and the next day you say, "Well, maybe it's not as important as worrying about the deficit."

Premier, what people need to hear from this government is, what is this government's position? Are you going to require product guarantees? Are you going to require job guarantees? Are you going to require that the Big Three in the auto sector start producing some energy-efficient vehicles in Ontario? What's the McGuinty government's position, other than referring to Washington and to Ottawa?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In some ways, the auto sector issue and the challenge is very complicated, but in other ways, I think it's pretty simple. We are the number one auto producer in North America, and for long into the foreseeable future, North Americans are going to continue to buy millions and millions of cars. Why would we give up our position of dominance in this particular market?

What we're going to do in order to retain that is, we're going to pay close attention to what they're doing south of the border, we're going to work hand in hand with the auto sector here in Ontario, and we're also going to work together with the federal government. We're not going to be precipitous. We're not going to be reckless. We will pay very close attention to what is happening on the front lines, and we will continue to work hand in hand with the federal government.

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

Mr. Howard Hampton: The Premier refers to being reckless. I'll tell you what was reckless, Premier. What was reckless was to hand out \$200 million to General Motors without getting a commitment that the energy-efficient, fuel-efficient hybrid half-ton would be built in Oshawa. What was reckless was to turn out money to corporations without getting guarantees that energy-efficient, fuel-efficient vehicles would be produced in Ontario.

What would be reckless, Premier, about saying to the Big Three that the McGuinty government is prepared to make an investment, but they have to guarantee that Ontario will no longer be the home of gas-guzzling dinosaurs; Ontario will be the home of fuel-efficient, energy-

efficient cars and trucks that people actually want to buy? What would be reckless about the McGuinty government stating that position for Ontario workers and for Ontario jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to a few facts connected with Canadian consumer demands. One of the criticisms that has become fashionable of late is that the Big Three are making products that we don't want. If you take a look at the top 10 selling vehicles in Canada in 2007, four of those in the top 10 are trucks. The number one selling vehicle in Canada is a truck. Five of the top 10 are trucks and minivans. Those are not the most fuel-efficient vehicles.

So, in fairness, as we impose new responsibilities on the Big Three in particular to produce more fuel-efficient vehicles, I think we have a corresponding responsibility as consumers, as we move forward to support our auto sector, to buy more fuel-efficient vehicles. I think that, again, we're all in this together.

1100

PROPANE EXPLOSION

Mr. Toby Barrett: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, during the 10 days following that explosion at Sunrise Propane last August, did you do any air quality or water quality testing?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I can tell you that our inspectors were on site immediately. They worked very closely with the city of Toronto during that period of time. They were complemented by all of the other emergency staff individuals that were involved during that period of time. With respect to your question, as to whether or not air quality testing was done or water quality testing was done, I will get back to the member on that specific issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: They were on-site, but you don't need to get back to me. You did not conduct any testing within that 10-day period. I have the proof right here.

You have a legal obligation to perform those tests. Your ministry has a responsibility—the legal responsibility—to protect health and the safety after these types of accidents.

There are firefighters in the Legislature today. Minister, explain to these firefighters, what were their colleagues and area residents exposed to during the 10 days after that blast? And if you don't know, if you cannot explain, will you conduct an investigation into why there was no air quality and no water quality testing done during that crucial 10-day period?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Once again, we're very proud of the work that was done by all the emergency workers, including the firefighters at the time. We worked very closely with the city of Toronto. We had the main responsibility in actually dealing with the clean-up of the situation there. I think that the entire situation, from beginning to end—all of the various people that were involved from the Ministry of the Environment, from the city of Toronto to the firefighters etc., worked in a very exemplary fashion to make sure that the people of that

area were protected in the best possible way. If the member doesn't want me to get back to him with respect to the specific question that he has, I will submit to this Legislature that I will find out the answer to that question and submit it to him anyway.

PAY EQUITY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. In Ontario, almost one in two workers are doing part-time, contract or temporary work and many are being paid considerably less for doing exactly the same work as full-time workers. In the European Union, this would be illegal. Will the minister change the Employment Standards Act so that all workers doing equal work will get equal pay?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. Under the Employment Standards Act, temporary employees, including those working for agencies or through agencies, generally have the same rights as all workers. Also, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, those workers have the exact same rights as all workers in Ontario.

What I can tell the member is that our ministry actually embarked on a consultation over the summer. We have met with Parkdale Community Legal Services, the Workers' Action Centre, and ACCESS, which represents 80% of those temporary agencies. We want to make sure that we review all of those recommendations and continue to work with all employers to ensure the health and safety of all workers in Ontario.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To the Minister of Labour again: We have a member of CUPE 3903 who has worked 16 years on contract work as a university professor and has to reapply for a job every year. We have OPSEU members here, SEIU members here. They all know that this government is in violation of the UN's declaration that everyone, without discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. When will this government change its employment legislation and finally bring fairness to Ontario's workplaces?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind—you welcome guests to the gallery. We welcome you to observe but we ask that you not participate. Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can say to the member is we are working very closely with the stakeholders: with labour groups, with employers, and speaking to those workers who work through temporary agencies. That's why we embarked on this consultation over the summer. We are reviewing all of those recommendations. From the member's own riding we are working closely with Parkdale Community Legal Services and the Workers' Action Centre.

We want to make sure that workers are treated fairly. I'm sure the member wants workers to be treated fairly. We want to make sure that there is fairness and workers are protected in terms of their health and safety through the Employment Standards Act, through the Occupation-

al Health and Safety Act. That's what we do. It covers all—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm constantly hearing references to an internal labour relations issue that I don't think is appropriate to be heard in this chamber. I'm putting the government members on notice, because it's not the first time that this issue has arisen. This is an internal labour matter that the member will be dealing with and I don't need to hear about it in the chamber. I appreciate that.

New question.

ABORIGINAL HOUSING PROGRAM

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Toronto's aboriginal community is large and is growing. In fact, over 35,000 aboriginal Canadians are living in our city, and they are an important part of our ethnic cultural makeup. I've been approached by a number of these communities, especially in the aboriginal groups, to find out what our government is doing in terms of helping to create affordable housing for them, especially for low-income families, so they can spend more of their money on other necessities, such as skills training and saving for their children's education.

Minister, I know you've been delivering \$36 million to Toronto for social housing repairs and \$1.8 million for the rent bank this year. I know you're helping Toronto build new affordable housing through the affordable housing program, but specifically, what is our government doing to assist aboriginal communities with their housing needs?

Hon. Jim Watson: I want to thank the honourable member for Davenport for his question. I was very pleased this morning to be with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and my colleague the Deputy Premier, in his capacity as MPP for Toronto Centre, at the Miziwe Biik Development Corp., where we signed a memorandum of understanding with the development corporation to flow \$20 million for aboriginal housing projects in the greater Toronto area.

This money is part of the \$80-million aboriginal trust funds that have flowed to the province of Ontario, and this money will go into building new affordable housing units, housing repairs, as well as home ownership loans that will help create housing opportunities for close to 320 families in the greater Toronto area.

I want to in conclusion thank nine-year-old Briar Perrier, who sold Minister Smitherman, Minister Duguid and I these wonderful bracelets. She has raised \$1,200 for aboriginal housing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: That's great news, and I want to congratulate the minister on signing such an important memorandum of understanding. I'm sure this money will be of great benefit to the households who receive it.

We know that the majority of the aboriginal population throughout Ontario is very young, we know that

over 25% of the aboriginal population is 15 years old or younger and we also know that a stable and secure home is important to lift people out of poverty; it is a basic determinant of health and, for that matter, a healthy future. It gives youth a foundation they need to succeed. Minister, can you tell us how this memorandum of understanding signed today fits into this government's commitment to improve the quality of life for aboriginal people in Ontario and specifically for aboriginals in Toronto?

Hon. Jim Watson: I refer it to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I too rise with Briar's bracelet on today to respond to this question. I want to say—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. You're supposed to seek unanimous consent to be wearing something in the chamber. It's clear in the standing orders.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I hear the comments, but we have rules that are very clear in this place. There was reference made to the bracelet.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's fair enough, Mr. Speaker. My apologies.

I rise today to say that we are on the threshold of making real progress when it comes to improving the quality of life of First Nations, Metis and Inuit communities across this province. It starts with respecting aboriginal communities, in a respectful, trusting relationship. That's being built right now in an unprecedented way, but it also starts with building that in the nature of government-to-government relationships.

That's what this particular initiative respects, because Miziwe Biik provides the aboriginal community with the responsibility of administering this program. I think that's what really helps here. That's what was really exciting this morning—

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

1110

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Labour. The official opposition's proposal at committee for the WSIB legislation would fully exempt executive officers from paying you WSIB premiums. It was struck down by your Liberal colleagues. Instead, you brought forward a regulation that, according to you, will allow exemptions for executive officers and directors in the future, clearly a move on your part to please big business and unions. Your amendment doesn't address executive officers or independent officers for small and medium-sized businesses who may be on jobs sites and already carry their own insurance.

Along with verifying who is covered and who isn't, how do you plan to enforce your regulation?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can say to the member is that this government listened to all stakeholders, and we brought forward an amendment that is for executive officers or a partner who is in the office. Yes, if somebody

is out on the construction site, they have to be covered by WSIB because those are risky places; they are dangerous places. We want to make sure that they are covered. That is what we have brought forward.

I had a chance to speak again to the legislation earlier this morning, and this proposed legislation, if I put it into the terms—and I was thinking about this as I was coming in to Queen's Park the other day—if only 60% of drivers out on the road were insured and they were paying 100% of the freight for all the others, I don't think that would be fair. This is about covering everybody—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Minister, you're surely aware of the economic difficulties we are going through in the province, and more and more layoffs are taking place every day. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, your legislation is a cash grab of over half a billion from hard-working small businesses. That's half a billion dollars into your labour monopoly that has proven year after year that it is unable to manage its unfunded liability, which is now over \$8 billion.

Why are you discriminating against executive officers of small and medium-sized businesses when they are on the job site and already carry their own coverage?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It's unfortunate that this member does not want to support legitimate, fair, hard-working companies that are out there that are being undercut by bad actors: those who are not paying their fair share.

This is about fairness. It's about safety for those workers. It's making sure that all workers on a construction site are covered. It's combatting the underground economic activity that takes place in construction. It's about the revenue leakage that is happening with WSIB, where 60% of the industry is paying for 100% of the claims. That's unfair. I would hope the member can understand that.

It is about fairness, it is about safety, and it is about working with labour, with employers, and especially keeping in mind that this is for all those Ontario workers out in the construction sector.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. The Canadian Association of Food Banks reported yesterday that the number of working Ontarians turning to food banks increased significantly in the year 2008. How does the minister explain this?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me start by thanking Food Banks Canada for their report. It is yet another important piece of information for us, as we develop our poverty reduction strategy and as we begin to implement it. I want to thank them for their contribution, not only this report, but also the Ontario Association of Food Banks for their significant contributions to our strategy.

I have had a chance to look briefly at the report. I look forward to reviewing it in more detail, but I was happy to note that 4,000 fewer Ontarians used food banks this year

compared to last year, on a monthly basis; 24,000 fewer Ontarians used food banks each month compared to the peak in 2005.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: The minister failed to answer the question. The question is: Why is it that more and more working Ontarians are being forced into the food bank?

The minister and her government often talk about increases to the minimum wage, but this report shows that the increases have not been enough to stop more and more working Ontarians from relying on food banks.

The report last week by well-known economist Jim Stanford found that a minimum wage of \$16 an hour is needed for a single parent raising a child to meet her family's basic needs in Toronto. This government repeatedly refuses to increase the minimum wage to a fair and decent level, saying it will hurt business, even though leading economists say it just isn't so.

My question: Why won't the minister acknowledge that Ontario's minimum wage is too low to live on and increase it to a liveable level of \$10.25 now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member highlights that we still have a challenge when it comes to poverty in this province. None of us are denying that we have a problem; in fact, we're prepared to address the problem. We are moving aggressively, but in a balanced way, on minimum wage. I think it's very important that minimum wage continues to increase, but let's think about it for a second. When we were elected in 2003, it had been flat-lined for nine years at \$6.85. It's gone up now to \$8.75 an hour, and it's on its way to \$10.25. That's an aggressive but balanced approach to increasing minimum wage.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Attorney General. Ontarians have the right to live without fear in their homes and in their communities. Many Ontarians want to know that we are taking the necessary steps to prevent and end violence against women, youth and children.

Earlier this year, our government committed over \$8 million in new funding to help ensure that women who are victims of abuse and their children get help faster and are better protected from future harm. Those investments included a new early victim contact program, more annual ongoing funding for the partner assault response program, and new annual funding to the province's 79 supervised access program locations.

Yesterday, the Attorney General introduced legislation that included important reforms to the restraining order regime in this province. Could the Attorney General tell us how the new legislation, if passed, would strengthen the protections for vulnerable women and children?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I join my colleague from Huron-Bruce and all members of this House in saying that we must have an Ontario where all are able to live their lives free of abuse and violence. Restraining orders are those orders that judges make to keep the vulnerable, particularly women and children, safe. But we've heard

for more than 10 years, and my colleague from Durham has been an advocate, that the restraining order system is not tough enough, it's not available as it should be, and they are not enforced as they should be. So just the other day I was pleased to introduce legislation that will make the orders more available, will put real teeth into the orders and will give them real enforcement that will keep our women and children, and all Ontarians, safe from abuse and violence.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Sadly, violence against women and children in times of family breakdown and distress is not something that is new. In fact, many people have been calling for a strengthened restraining order regime for a number of years. I know that we have had legislative attempts in the past to reform the restraining order regime, but could the Attorney General tell us why this legislation will bring in the changes that we need to make life safer for women and children?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: My colleague is right. For more than 10 years, every member of this House and ones before have stood and said, "We need to reform." There was a unanimous bill passed by this House, but not proclaimed, that spoke to the principle. There are many members of all parties who have brought forward initiatives, so we have all worked collectively, and what we introduced on Monday is the product of all-party and all-corners-of this-province support for a system that will be stronger and tougher.

Let me just let you know what an advocate for a world without violence against women said about this. Pam Cross, who is well known to all, says, "Those of us who work with abused women and children are thrilled with this package of family law reforms. This legislation would help hundreds of women and children by making justice faster, more accessible and more affordable." To all of us, the Premier, the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, my colleague, children's minister—

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

1120

MINISTERS' COMMENTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier.

Premier, last Thursday, members of your caucus voted to defeat my resolution to build new long-term-care beds in Simcoe and Grey counties. Just before the vote, your Minister of Education said twice, "Why should we care about seniors in Simcoe-Grey?" and that disrespectful comment was repeated by your Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Premier, you're here to govern for all the people of Ontario. Don't you think your ministers should be apologizing to the senior citizens who are waiting for a long-term-care bed in Simcoe and Grey counties?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. David Caplan: I think the member would want to recognize that this government has worked very hard to continue on the progress that we've made when it comes to long-term care. In fact, we have a comprehensive long-term-care strategy which is going to benefit

not only the members you represent in the community of Simcoe–Grey, but all Ontarians right across the province.

That includes things like quality improvement. We're going to measure and for the very first time publicly report health outcomes and satisfaction through the Ontario Health Quality Council. We're working with our partners in the sector to implement the recommendations that Shirlee Sharkey made to improve the quality of care within our homes.

We have new legislation and new regulations. I know the member would want to acknowledge that we have increased staff capacity within—we've added over 2,500 more personal support care workers, over 2,000 more nurses. We've already—

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I didn't hear any apology in that ramble.

Premier, let me read you some e-mails I've received.

A registered nurse in Simcoe county wrote, "I am totally disgusted at the responses of the two ministers who were totally out of line in their remarks to your presentation."

Another constituent even wrote an e-mail to you, Premier, that said, "(this) clearly outlines your party's despicable behaviour toward the people of Ontario and especially to the senior citizens of Simcoe–Grey. I urgently request that the two ministers named provide a public apology for their insolent behaviour...."

Premier, will you apologize to the 4,000 senior citizens waiting for a long-term-care bed in the Simcoe and Grey catchment areas in central Ontario?

Hon. David Caplan: I'm going to ask the Minister of Education to respond.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to be clear that the Minister of Children and Youth Services and I have actually issued a statement that made it very clear that on the day in question, what we were talking about was support for long-term-care homes for all of Ontario. We are so committed in each of our ridings—but across the whole province. The Minister of Health has spoken to our government's record.

I want to be clear to all of the constituents in the member opposite's riding that there is absolutely no ill will that comes from any of us on this side of the House to them. We are completely supportive of their needs, and we will work as a government to provide support for the health needs of all Ontarians.

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. You describe yourself as the education Premier. That's what you said when you were first elected. If you're the education Premier, why are you not responding to the desperate calls for help from the children of Attawapiskat who are trying to get their school replaced?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: One of the challenges, I think, for our society in Canada is the issue of the jurisdictional debate—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, listen. I'm not going to hide behind the jurisdictional debate. I just want to raise it as an issue that we need to deal with.

The reality is that the federal government, as you know and as the member opposite knows quite well, has had responsibility for education on-reserve for those children.

What you need to know is that I am working with First Nations, Metis and Inuit people across this province to see if there are ways that we can support the education of all aboriginal children. We have already got in place an aboriginal framework for education in the province. We are in the process of developing tripartite conversations.

It is extremely important to me, as the Minister of Education, that we support the—

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Minister, these kids are desperate. They've been trying to get a school rebuilt in that community for the better part of 10 years. It is an absolutely desperate situation.

Let me remind you of a couple of things. First of all, these kids are Ontario citizens and they deserve the full attention of their provincial government when it comes to education.

Let me tell you something else, Madam Minister. Ontario signed Treaty 9, and one of the reasons that people signed the treaty over 100 years ago with the province was to make sure that they had education for their kids. So let me ask you on behalf of those children: What are you prepared to do as a province to make sure that those kids get the same education as any other child in this province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member knows full well that education on reserves is a federal responsibility. But if he listened closely to the Minister of Education, he would have noticed that after generations and generations of governments that have just allowed it to stop there, this Minister of Education is saying we've got to do more. We're going to do more because these young people deserve the same access to opportunity that every person in Ontario has. So we're committed to working with the federal government if necessary, and we're also committed to working with First Nations if we have to go after the federal government to make sure that that equal opportunity can be developed here in this province. Because the member is right: There are two tiers of education right now across this country when it comes to First Nations, Inuit and Metis students and non-aboriginal students, and we're committed to working with all partners to resolve—

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

ELECTRICITY GENERATION

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. Minister, over the summer you came to Mississauga South to announce that Lakeview will not be considered as a potential site for a new gas-fired power plant. After hosting a dirty coal plant for 40 years, the residents of Lakeview, and indeed all of Mississauga, welcome the decision to protect our waterfront. Now that Lakeview is not an option for power generation, we are one step closer to our goal of revitalizing the area.

At the same time, however, you stated that you will be directing the Ontario Power Authority to initiate a request for proposal for a new gas-fired power plant in the southwest GTA. Since then, you have issued that directive and the RFP is under way. Minister, my constituents are apprehensive about this. They're not sure what this means for the community or when or how decisions will be made. What are the requirements for the RFP, how will the location of the new plant be decided and how can communities get involved in the process?

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to thank the honourable member and I want to acknowledge that he has been very proactive on the part of his constituents.

As our province undergoes the bold ambition of eliminating coal, we have a need for peak capacity. That is, when a lot of people at the same time demand energy, it's our obligation that it be available to them, and accordingly, these gas-fired power plants are part and parcel of that. I did direct the OPA to initiate a process that will see 850 megawatts located in the southwest GTA. This is a process that will be completed by June of next year, with an in-service date for the plant no later than the end of 2013.

The project will be required to undergo all local, municipal and environmental standards, and there's going to be a very big process of involvement with communities. We had a great town hall meeting a few weeks back in Mississauga. Since then there have been efforts by the OPA in more localized centres in the southwest GTA to involve the public, give them information and respond to their questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: As you know, the Clarkson airshed study found that we have a stressed airshed in Mississauga South. Emissions from industry, the QEW and nearby coal plants all played a role in these findings. Even though the Lakeview coal plant has been demolished and the Nanticoke plant is soon to follow, air quality remains a concern. As such, people are worried about the cumulative effect of existing emitters and a new gas-fired power plant on the air we breathe. I've heard from many community leaders and ratepayers who raise the same concerns about gas plant emissions, like CO₂ and particulate matter. In response, many have suggested that power generation should be placed farther away from residential communities. In addition, they proposed that new power be transmitted over greater distances via transmission lines.

Minister, in light of the finding of the Clarkson airshed study, why is it necessary for new gas-fired power generation to be built in the southwest GTA?

Hon. George Smitherman: In the southwest GTA we have a characteristic which is evident in quite a few parts of the greater Toronto area, which is growth. That is an area where hospitals are growing, as one example, and demanding more electricity. It's crucial that we meet those needs reliably.

On the matter at hand from the member about the Clarkson airshed study, a couple of things that I think are very important to keep in mind: First and foremost, we've already taken out of play there a very large polluter that is Lakeview. This airshed is downwind of Nanticoke. Nanticoke is the single largest source of air pollution in Ontario and that's why it will be out of service as a coal-burning plant by 2014.

That's the single-largest climate change initiative and should be very, very beneficial to the residents of Clarkson, who are dramatically downwind from that.

1130

This new gas-fired facility in the southwest GTA will meet the needs as dictated by the Environmental Assessment Act, and overall, we see progress towards substantial improvement in the air—

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

PESTICIDES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. During the debate on Bill 64, the pesticide ban, you assured cemeteries that they would be exempt. We now find that you have broken your promise, but given your track record, nobody is surprised.

You further committed to comprehensive consultations with lawn care professionals to implement regulations in a sensible way, with a realistic timetable. You have gone back on your word to them as well.

If your government understood business at all, you would recognize that your regulations leave them no room and no time to plan or prepare for the 2009 growing season. Why can't you people keep your word?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well—and I appreciate the question—we have been very adamant on the whole pesticide situation that we were going to implement the new rules and regulations by the growing season of 2009. We have said that right from the very beginning, and we intend to do that.

But, as the member also knows, the final regulations are on the EBR right now. We're looking for comments from individuals. We've met with the same organizations that he has obviously met with within the last day or so. We are still reviewing the situation, and we'll be making a final determination shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Those regulations will be finalized in March, and that doesn't give anybody enough time.

Your regulations will, further, create the very strange situation of allowing individuals the right to apply class 7 pesticides, such as Grub Eliminator, but not allow professionals to do the same.

Many people, including seniors and the disabled, rely on professionals to take care of their properties—professionals who are trained to deal with the products in the safest possible manner, including not requiring the homeowner to deal with the storage or disposal of unused product.

Will you commit to correcting this blatant inconsistency immediately?

Hon. John Gerretsen: We know where this government stands on this particular issue. We want to protect children in the best way we know possible as far as banning the cosmetic use of pesticides is concerned.

We also realize that there are certain products that under certain circumstances could be used for purposes other than—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew, you just asked the question. I would ask that you be respectful and listen to the answer.

Hon. John Gerretsen: As he well knows, there are certain products that can be used for different purposes. For those purposes, particularly when we're talking about indoor purposes, there will be a use of restricted products on that list that will be sold to individuals on an individual basis for those specific purposes.

We intend to bring in the best possible law, as we have done, and the best possible rules and regulations to make sure that the children of this province are—

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

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Rouge Valley Health System, Ajax and Pickering hospital, recently completed a state-of-the-art, nine-bed psychiatric intensive care unit costing \$3 million—not too many of those around.

Can the minister explain why, in spite of Durham region's desperate need for these psychiatric services, these new beds will not be used for mental health, but will be replaced by general beds?

Hon. David Caplan: As the member is well aware, the hospital, working with the Central East Local Health Integration Network, made a determination as to the very best way that they could be able to provide the services both for general surgical and also for mental health to the people served by Durham region. It was, in their determination—certainly not by the ministry—the best way to coordinate and to be able to configure the particular services in this area.

I know that the member is well aware that this is an example of people in local community determining how to best meet local needs. This is the whole advent and reason behind the formation of local health integration networks, that, in fact, it is people empowered within

their own community who are in the best position to be able to direct and determine the kind of care needs for the populations they are serving.

I know that this proposal has moved forward. I know that it has created a lot of conversation within—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: The fact is, the people of Ontario spent \$3 million to build this psychiatric intensive care unit, and it will never be used. The people from Durham region want to have this psychiatric unit in their hospital.

Ontario is facing a mental health services crisis. The Canadian Psychiatric Association recommends that patients be admitted within 24 hours in case of a high degree of risk to self or others, yet in Ontario, people often have to wait five days or longer, often with catastrophic consequences. Without these new psychiatric beds, Durham residents will face increased wait times and potentially devastating outcomes. My question is simple: How can this government shut down mental health facilities in a time of desperate need?

Hon. David Caplan: The characterization of the member is unfortunate and simply incorrect. Facilities are not being shut down; they are simply being configured in a different way.

In fact, mental health funding in the province of Ontario has increased: over \$200 million in funding to expand services to over 200,000 additional Ontarians, hiring more than 1,100 new mental health workers.

Interjections.

Hon. David Caplan: I would contrast that with the experience under Mr. Kormos or his colleagues in the New Democratic Party, who cut mental health funding by over \$23 million in 1992, and a further cut, my friends, by over \$42 million in 1994 and 1995.

Interjections.

Hon. David Caplan: I am not going to take a lecture from the member opposite, given his very sorry record, given the treatment of the mentally ill under his party. It's—

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

DEFERRED VOTES

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT, 2008

LOI DE 2008 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 119, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 / Projet de loi 119, Loi modifiant la

Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l'assurance contre les accidents du travail.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1137 to 1147.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Fonseca has moved third reading of Bill 119, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Paul
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Fonseca, Peter	Mitchell, Carol
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Moridi, Reza
Best, Margaret	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Horwath, Andrea	Pendergast, Leeanna
Brotten, Laurel C.	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Brownell, Jim	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Ramal, Khalil
Cansfield, Donna H.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Leal, Jeff	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Craiton, Kim	Matthews, Deborah	Sousa, Charles
Crozier, Bruce	Mauro, Bill	Watson, Jim
Delaney, Bob	McGuinty, Dalton	Wilkinson, John
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All opposed, please rise.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Martiniuk, Gerry	Scott, Laurie
Barrett, Toby	Miller, Norm	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	Sterling, Norman W.
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Yakabuski, John
Jones, Sylvia	Runciman, Robert W.	
MacLeod, Lisa	Savoline, Joyce	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 64; the nays are 19.

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

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Just a reminder to members that I encourage everyone to join the press gallery tonight at their gallery auction in support of the United Way.

This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1151 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to introduce Damian Kraemer in the gallery here, a resident of Toronto Centre—not from my great riding of Stormont—Dundas—

South Glengarry but here in Toronto Centre, an associate with Gowlings here in Toronto.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I forgot to introduce members of the Sudbury Professional Fire Fighters Association who were here this morning. So a little bit late, Mark Muldoon, Mark Gobbo, Danny Wendler, Chad Witmore, Brent Cadotte and Sean McMahon.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Introductions? Members' statements?

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: My apologies. It isn't so much a matter of there not being guests; it's a matter of there not being very many members present to introduce those guests, obviously.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It's not a point of order.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I stand before you today to inform this House and the citizens of Ontario about a real injustice and tragedy that is occurring at the racetracks of our province while the government of Ontario refuses to protect the agricultural community.

The previous government allowed racetracks to install slot machines. An agreement dated July 31, 2000, between Georgian Downs Ltd. and the OLG stated the following: "and whereas the slot programs at racetracks is intended to promote live horse racing in the province and subsequently benefit the agricultural sector in Ontario and the OLG supports this endeavour."

What is happening today? Exactly the opposite. The OLG, the completely dysfunctional Ontario Racing Commission and the McGuinty Liberals are allowing the casino licence holders to suspend or cancel racing dates. For example, this January and February, there will be no racing at Georgian Downs.

Do horses still have to be fed? Of course they do. Do racing stables still have ongoing costs such as heat, hydro and insurance? Yes, they do. Will cancelling racing dates have a negative impact on agriculture? Yes. Will the slot machines at Georgian Downs be closed at the same time? No; you bet they won't.

While the McGuinty Liberals and the OLG hold lavish \$2.7-million parties at Casino Windsor, while the McGuinty Liberals allow the useless expansion at Casino Windsor to run hundreds of millions over budget, they refuse to come to the assistance of citizens of rural Ontario who depend upon harness racing to feed their families.

I call upon the Legislature to demand a public inquiry into the actions of the OLG and the Ontario Racing Commission.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd ask for unanimous consent for all parties to speak for

up to five minutes on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

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

Members' statements?

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Could you please identify who said no?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I heard a no.

Interjections: I didn't.

Mr. John O'Toole: I didn't.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'll allow the member to seek unanimous consent once again.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's my understanding that this was to be done after members' statements. Would the member defer asking for unanimous consent until after the finishing of members' statements?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): We'll continue with members' statements.

WILSON CAULFIELD

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I recently attended the Ontario Senior Achievement Awards ceremony. Recipients are those who have made a significant contribution to their community after turning 65 years of age.

One such individual is Wilson Caulfield of Brampton. In the early 1980s, Mr. Caulfield joined his local service club, the Kiwanis, and recommended they institute a new program which would capture discarded prescription eye glasses, collect them in a central location in Ontario and distribute them to developing countries. The eyeglass project created by Mr. Caulfield has helped thousands of people in developing countries who would not otherwise have had the benefit of sight. Over the years, more than 66,000 pairs of eyeglasses have given the gift of sight to literally thousands and thousands of people who would not otherwise have been able to read and write, sew or build. The eyeglass project volunteers work in collaboration with eye clinics where ophthalmologists and optometrists provide eye examinations and treatment, and opticians ensure that patients receive glasses best suited to correct their vision.

This project continues today through the Kiwanis Club of Islington. Mr. Caulfield was recognized by the Kiwanis of the Year Award in 1998 for his accomplishments with the eyeglass project.

The Ontario Senior Achievement Award honours those who have made outstanding contributions to their communities. Please join me in congratulating Mr. Caulfield on having been recognized and chosen as a Senior Achievement Award recipient.

CYRIL LEEDER

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I rise today to congratulate the Ottawa Senators chief operating officer, Cyril Leeder, on winning the Ottawa Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Year.

Cyril has been with the Senators since the franchise returned to the NHL in 1992. Along with owner Eugene Melnyk, Cyril has worked hard to make the Sens a great success and to bring the 2009 IIHF World Junior Championships to Ottawa this winter—and now they have their sights on a major league soccer team for Ottawa.

That most recent project had Cyril and Eugene in California on Thursday, so Cyril's beautiful wife, Lydia, was there at the dinner to accept the award.

Born in Brockville, Cyril is a real asset to eastern Ontario. He serves on the board of directors of the Ottawa Congress Centre and the marketing board for the National Arts Centre.

I was very happy to be at the dinner to recognize so many outstanding businesses and business people of my great city, Ottawa. My only regret about Cyril winning the gold is that my 38-year-old son Ian Sterling, president of Doherty and Associates Investment Counsel, won the silver. I want to take this opportunity to say just how proud a dad I am of my son Ian and thank his beautiful wife Tanya for her support, and their three great kids, my grandkids.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to say how concerned we in the opposition are that, for the first time in many years, the government has not allowed us to take five minutes per party and speak about this incredibly important day, which is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

We are absolutely firm in our demand for this. I know the vote won't happen until after this, so certainly we would like to see that. You know, there's always time for everything else except in the case where one out of every two women, 51%, experience abuse or assault during the course of their lifetime. So I would ask every member of the House to vote in favour of five minutes at least, so that each party can speak about this important topic. To not do so is, of course, really, to just ignore the spirit of the day and the importance of the day and the importance of this day to all of the various women's groups that are working so hard in their battle against the battle against women.

Again, I would just hope that in the deferred vote after members' statements there is unanimous consent for statements on the issue of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

MIKE NEUTS

Mr. Pat Hoy: The Attorney General's Victim Services Award of Distinction ceremony will be held tomorrow. I am honoured to announce that Mike Neuts from my riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex is one of 13 recipients.

This award recognizes Mr. Neuts's leadership, courage and dedication in raising the profile of victims' issues in the province of Ontario.

Since the tragic death of his son Myles in 1998, he has dedicated his time to educate children and adults on anti-bullying, so that no other parent may know the pain of losing a child to this senseless act.

For the past 10 years, he has been a crusader for a bully-free society. He has been to 234 schools, spoken to more than 74,000 students and more than 16,757 adults, and has attended well over 500 different events. He has worked hard to ensure the recommendations of the coroner's inquest are followed. He participated in the development of the Report 2000 on youth violence in Ontario schools and communities. He has been to Windsor, Warton, London, Watford, Kitchener, Komoka, Hamilton, Toronto, Bowmanville, Ottawa and Owen Sound, just to name a few of the places in Ontario, and travelled to Alberta.

1510

This much deserved recognition is a testament to Mr. Neuts's tireless efforts to raise awareness and to effect positive changes in the lives of children, educators and law enforcement officials.

On behalf of the citizens of Ontario, thank you and congratulations to Mike Neuts for his outstanding contribution to make a better future for families and communities.

EMERGENCY INTERVENTION ORDERS

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to briefly comment on one aspect of Bill 133, the Family Statute Law Amendment Act, 2008. Of course, I'm referring to the use of emergency intervention orders to protect vulnerable spouses, children and family members.

Almost one year ago, December 7, to be exact, I introduced Bill 10, An Act, in memory of Lori Dupont, to better protect victims of domestic violence. It called for the emergency intervention order being available from a designated judge or justice of the peace 24 hours a day.

In reviewing Bill 133, I do not see where the emergency intervention orders are included, and I'm very disappointed. In fact, Bill 133 actually repeals a bill that included emergency intervention orders, the Domestic Violence Protection Act, which was passed by the Harris government in 2000 but never enacted by the McGuinty government.

I'm encouraged by new measures to help those who are at risk. Today is the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. It is a reminder that there's much more to be done.

I would urge this House to consider including the emergency intervention orders as part of Bill 133, or through the passage of my Bill 10, the Lori Dupont Act, and I ask, respectfully, for the House to bring this to the Attorney General's attention.

ROSE OF SHARON LONG-TERM-CARE HOME

Mr. David Zimmer: I want to celebrate an important community initiative. It is the Rose of Sharon long-term-

care home. When it opens on April 1, 2009, the Rose of Sharon long-term-care home will be the first Korean long-term-care home in Canada.

The Rose of Sharon is also known as the flower of eternity. It's the Korean national flower and it embodies the Korean aspiration for peace and prosperity.

This is an ambitious undertaking by the Toronto Korean community. In addition to the 60 resident beds in its long-term-care facility, the Rose Of Sharon long-term-care home will have 90 life-lease apartments. In providing both types of care units, it's clear that this facility values the ability to offer its residents an independent lifestyle.

It's a substantial investment made by the Korean community, and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is pleased to have committed \$2.1 million toward this project.

I'm proud to stand here on behalf of the Korean community and, indeed, all Torontonians who are working tirelessly with the Korean community in the construction of this new facility here in Toronto. It's a magnificent volunteer achievement by the Korean community in Toronto.

TIMERAISSER

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to share with members of the Legislature a unique community event that took place Saturday, November 15 in my riding of Ottawa Centre. Over 400 people gathered together at the Canadian War Museum in support of Timeraiser, an organization that helps non-profit and voluntary organizations, both large and small, to connect with potential volunteers.

Part volunteer fair and part silent art auction, instead of bidding money, 258 people bid their time—the number of hours they are willing to volunteer for an organization of their choice over the next 12 months.

A lot of local organizations from Ottawa participated in this endeavour, such as the AIDS Committee of Ottawa, Big Brothers Big Sisters Ottawa, Citizen Advocacy of Ottawa, Ottawa Riverkeeper, Mothercraft Ottawa and LiveWorkPlay, just to name a few.

Bringing together these organizations with interested community members, I'm pleased to let everyone know that Timeraiser surpassed their goal of raising 5,000 volunteer hours by bringing in over 7,015 hours by the end of the evening. With 25 items up for auction, 19 of them went for the maximum 150 hours.

I want to commend Anil Patel and Jennifer Grebeldinger for their hard work and dedication for creating such a unique event. In addition, I want to recognize some members from the young lawyers division in Ottawa—Juliet Knapton, Heather Fogo, Cheryl Knapp, Alayna Miller, Anthony Moffat, Debora Sarmiento and Lisa Barnett—who worked very hard on this event.

Congratulations to them for organizing the first-ever Timeraiser in Ottawa and for its success in helping many great organizations in our community.

VIC JOHNSTON ARENA

Mr. Bob Delaney: In 1961, the residents of the town of Streetsville pitched in and raised about \$250,000 to build the first indoor arena in Peel county. It was completed on time and within budget.

In the 1960s, Vic Johnston was the chair of the Parks Board in the town of Streetsville. In 1973, a testimonial dinner in his honour was held and the Streetsville Arena was renamed after Vic.

On November 24, in Streetsville, the Vic Johnston arena formally reopened after a major \$8-million expansion and renovation, once again completed on time and within budget.

Congratulations to the board of the Vic Johnston Arena: Myles Robinson, Steve Stone, Jim Gray, Todd Ladner, Ken Hunter, Dave Moss, Mike Vassalo and Todd Smith. They raised \$1 million in just nine months to get the project going.

Those who learned and played their hockey at Vic Johnston from the 1960s through to the 21st century made memories on the ice surface and with their teammates. Those experiences serve them today, serve them in working with others, reaching beyond their day-to-day abilities and finding something special, being part of a team and learning how to contribute and how to lead.

Today's donors wanted to pass along these priceless character treasures to the generations to come who can now play hockey in a modern state-of-the-art facility.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ABLE INSURANCE BROKERS LTD. ACT,
2008

Mr. Dhillon moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr19, An Act to revive Able Insurance Brokers Ltd.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

NIAGARA HEALTH SYSTEM
ELECTIONS ACT, 2008LOI DE 2008 SUR LES ÉLECTIONS
AU SEIN DU SYSTÈME
DE SANTÉ DE NIAGARA

Mr. Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 134, An Act to provide for the election of members of the board of trustees of the Niagara Health System / Projet de loi 134, Loi prévoyant l'élection des membres du conseil d'administration du Système de santé de Niagara.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Peter Kormos: The bill provides that at least 12 of the trustees of the Niagara Health System are to be elected to represent the area municipalities of the regional municipality of Niagara.

PETITIONS

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition that reads:

"Whereas elementary school-aged children in the province of Ontario suffering from diabetes require regular blood sugar monitoring and may also require insulin and glucagon to manage their disease; and

"Whereas there is no medical or nursing assistance readily available in schools as there was in the past; and

"Whereas the parents/guardians of these children must currently visit their children's schools "several times throughout the day in order to test their child's blood sugar levels; and

"Whereas the absence of medical support in our elementary schools results in substantial stress and disruption to the lives of children and their working parents;

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

"(1) That elementary schools in the province of Ontario have on-site staff trained in the daily monitoring of blood sugar levels of children who suffer from diabetes; and

"(2) That the trained staff also administer insulin and glucagon when required, with the consent of the child's parent/guardian."

As I agree with the contents of this petition, I affix my name thereto.

1520

AUTISM TREATMENT

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition to fund autism treatment.

"Many children in the Niagara region diagnosed with autism are currently being denied appropriate treatment because of a shortfall in provincial funding.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario for immediate and full funding for all of these children."

There are thousands of signatures and I've affixed mine as well.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition from constituents from my riding.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people 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 grandparents.

“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

“Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

“Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant’s willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

“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.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and sent it to the clerks’ table.

PROTECTION FOR MINERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: “Whereas the current legislation contained in the Ontario health and safety act and regulations for mines and mining plants does not adequately protect the lives of miners, we request revisions to the act;

“Lyle Everett Defoe and the scoop tram he was operating fell 150 feet down an open stope (July 23, 2007). Lyle was 25 years and 15 days old when he was killed at Xstrata Kidd Creek mine site, Timmins.

“Section R-60 (page 60 of Mining Regulations), paragraph 74 states that, ‘A shaft, raise or other opening in an underground mine shall be securely fenced, covered or otherwise guarded. RRO 1990, Reg. 854s 75(1).’ The stope where Lyle was killed was protected by a length of orange plastic snow fence and a rope with a warning sign. These barriers would not have been visible if the bucket of the scoop tram was raised. Lyle’s body was recovered from behind the scoop tram.

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

“Concrete berms must be mandatory to protect all open stopes and raises;

“All miners and contractors working underground must have working communication devices and personal locators;

“All equipment involved in injuries and fatalities must be recovered and examined unless such recovery would endanger the lives of others; and

“The entire act must be reviewed and amended to better protect underground workers.”

This petition is signed by the people of Englehart. I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with Courtney.

GTA POOLING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition that was mailed to me by Ljilja Pantic of Argyle Road in Mississauga. It is addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, and it is titled “End GTA Pooling.” It reads as follows:

“Whereas the city of Mississauga faces a long-term labour shortage, resulting in some 60,000 more people commuting into the city of Mississauga than leave Mississauga to earn their living and support their families each and every day; and

“Whereas 10 years ago the Ontario government of that day introduced the concept of GTA pooling, whereby funds are taken from the municipalities surrounding the city of Toronto and channelled into the city of Toronto without benefit or accountability to the taxpayers of those fast-growing cities, which face big-city needs and issues of their own; and

“Whereas GTA pooling places an additional tax burden on the municipal property tax bases of some \$40 million each and every year to the city of Mississauga; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario in its 2007-08 budget proposes to completely eliminate GTA pooling during a seven-year span beginning in fiscal year 2007-08, and that, as pooling is phased out, Ontario will take responsibility for social assistance and social housing costs currently funded by GTA pooling;

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

“That all parties within the government of Ontario support the swift passage of the 2007-08 Ontario budget and ensure that its provisions ending GTA pooling are implemented.”

To that I can only say amen. I affix my signature to it and I’m going to ask my page from Mississauga–Streetsville, Jason Fernandes, to carry it.

INNISFIL EARLY YEARS CENTRE

Mr. John O’Toole: I’ll try to be much briefer.

“Whereas on September 15, 2008, Simcoe Community Services announced that due to lack of funding by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ontario Early Years Centre Innisfil satellite location located at 8000 Yonge Street in Innisfil, Ontario, will be closing on November 30, 2008”—shortly;

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

"We respectfully request that the province of Ontario and its funding partners take any and all means necessary to provide an adequate level of funding on a consistent, ongoing basis to Simcoe Community Services for the purpose of keeping the Ontario Early Years Centre Innisfil satellite location open to the parents, caregivers and children of the town of Innisfil and surrounding communities."

As a parent, I am pleased to support this and sign it and present it to Jenna.

TUITION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the student's association at Laurentian University:

"Whereas undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have increased by 195% since 1990 and are the third-highest in all of the provinces in Canada; and

"Whereas average student debt in Ontario has skyrocketed by 250% in the last 15 years to over \$25,000 for four years of study; and

"Whereas international students pay three to four times more for the same education, and domestic students in professional programs such as law or medicine pay as much tuition as \$20,000 per year; and

"Whereas 70% of new jobs require post-secondary education, and fees reduce the opportunity for many low- and middle-income families while magnifying barriers for aboriginal, rural, racialized and other marginalized students; and

"Whereas Ontario currently provides the lowest per capita funding for post-secondary education in Canada, while many countries fully fund higher education and charge little or no fees for college and university; and

"Whereas public opinion polls show that nearly three quarters of Ontarians think the government's Reaching Higher framework for tuition fee increases of 20% to 36% over four years is unfair;"

We petition the assembly as follows:

"(1) Reduce tuition and ancillary fees annually for students.

"(2) Convert a portion of every student loan into a grant.

"(3) Increase per student funding above the national average."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk's table with Sahara.

RAILROAD BRIDGE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This petition is addressed to the Parliament of Ontario, the Minister of Transportation and, it says here, the mayor of Toronto:

"Whereas Bloor Street West between Lansdowne Avenue and Dundas Street West has been identified as the only stretch of Bloor Street that has no landscaping;

"Whereas the neighbourhood near 1369 Bloor Street West has been recognized as a priority revitalization area by a city of Toronto study in 2000;

"Whereas items for beautification include:

"(1) Developing terraced walls with flowers and planters near the railroad bridge;

"(2) Constructing new abutment walls;

"(3) Cleaning, painting and reconstructing the rusty, dilapidated railroad bridge; and

"(4) Creating brightly lit murals underneath the bridge in order to make it more secure and more people-friendly;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request in the strongest possible terms that our province and our city government immediately reactivate the 2000 reconstruction plan and CNR immediately proceed with improvements to this bridge.

"We look forward to a dynamic, revitalized community enhanced by a beautiful continuous cityscape. We want to be proud to live here."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition and I'm asking you to support it as well.

1530

INNISFIL EARLY YEARS CENTRE

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

"Whereas on September 15, 2008, Simcoe Community Services announced that due to lack of funding by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, the Ontario Early Years Centre Innisfil satellite location located at 8000 Yonge Street in Innisfil, Ontario, will be closing on November 30, 2008;

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

"We respectfully request that the province of Ontario and its funding partners take any and all means necessary to provide an adequate level of funding on a consistent, ongoing basis to Simcoe Community Services for the purpose of keeping the Ontario Early Years Centre Innisfil satellite location open to the parents, caregivers and children of the town of Innisfil and surrounding communities."

As I am in favour of this, I have affixed my signature, and give it to page Sarah.

HOSPICES

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas hospices on church or hospital property do not pay taxes;

"Whereas hospices are not-for-profit organizations providing emotional, spiritual and bereavement support and respite care to terminally ill individuals and their family members;

"Whereas a residential hospice (usually an eight- to 10-bed home-like facility) provides around-the-clock care to terminally ill individuals and support to their families;

"Whereas hospice services are ... free of charge;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to allow hospices across the province to be exempt from municipal taxes.”

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

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Ms. Laurie Scott: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario is introducing a policy of forcing sole proprietors, partners, executive officers in a corporation and independent operators in construction to pay workers’ compensation premiums on their own earnings in addition to the premiums they already pay on behalf of their employees; and

“Whereas such a policy will inflict an additional \$11,000 average cost to law-abiding business owners in the above-ground economy while doing nothing to root out the law-evading cheaters in the underground economy; and

“Whereas such a policy will not improve access to workplace health and safety education and training since law-abiding businesses already have access to all of these resources and law-evading businesses will continue to hide; and

“Whereas such a policy is not needed to level the playing field, since the rules already require that firms large and small must cover employees, while company leaders are exempt in both cases; and

“Whereas there has been no serious review of alternatives such as tracking who has coverage by name to limit abuse and other insurance options; and

“Whereas such a policy could be extended beyond construction to other sectors; and

“Whereas Ontario’s slowing economy is hurting citizens and businesses, also resulting in Ontario becoming a first-time ‘have-not’ province;

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

“To vote against or repeal any legislation that requires independent operators, executive officers in a corporation, sole proprietors and partners in construction or in any other sector to pay WSIB premiums on their own earnings.”

I want to thank the CFIB in my riding in Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock for getting these signatures.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Joe Dickson: “Whereas the Rouge Valley Health board of directors has recently approved closing the 20-bed mental health patient unit at the Ajax-Pickering hospital,” and they have been moved out of Ajax to Centenary hospital as of last Friday;

“Whereas there remains further concern by residents for future maternity/pediatric closings, particularly with the new birthing unit at Centenary hospital” and “new labour/delivery/recovery and postpartum (LDRP)

birthing rooms and an additional 21 postpartum rooms opening this fall ... even with the Ontario Ministry of Health’s largest-ever expansion of the Ajax-Pickering hospital; and

“Whereas there is a natural boundary, the Rouge Valley, that clearly separates the two distinct areas of Scarborough and Durham region;

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

“That the Central East Local Health Integration Network (CE-LHIN) and the Rouge Valley Health System (RVHS) board of directors review the Rouge Valley Health System makeup and group Scarborough Centenary hospital with the three other Scarborough hospitals; and

“Further, that we position Ajax-Pickering hospital within Lakeridge Health, thus combining all of our hospitals in Durham region under one Durham region administration.”

I affix my signature to this and will pass it to Samiha.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House, when the order of the day is called for resuming the adjourned debate on government order number 14, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the motion and any amendments thereto, which questions shall be decided without further debate or amendment; and

That, except in the case of a recorded division arising from morning orders of the day, pursuant to standing order 9(c), no deferral of any vote shall be permitted; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on government order number 14, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The deputy government House Leader, Ms. Smith, has moved government notice of motion number 92.

The deputy government House Leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: As many know, we are moving forward with the motion that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs begin its deliberations and conduct pre-budget consultations in the very near future.

These consultations would normally have taken place in late January. However, given the economic circumstances we presently face, Ontarians want to hear from their government and also want to have the opportunity to speak to their government about the concerns they have around the economy.

As the members of this House will recall, members opposite spent two hours of debate only four short weeks ago discussing the need for a select committee on the

economy to go out and discuss the state of the economy with the people of Ontario. Today we find them actually not wanting to go out to the people of Ontario and having that discussion. It seems passing strange that the official opposition has changed its position when the circumstances in the province have, in fact, not changed and may perhaps have worsened.

I note, as one of my colleagues pointed out for the record, that it is the official opposition that has taken this position and not the third party. We look forward to working with the third party and having this standing committee travel the province, hopefully in early December. Members of the standing committee should be out there and should be hearing from the public.

The Minister of Finance, who undertakes his own pre-budget consultations, has undertaken them earlier than planned this year.

Every year, as members of the House would know, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs does table a report in this House. Oftentimes that report is tabled mere days prior to delivery of the budget. We would like the people of Ontario to have the opportunity to have real and substantial input to the deliberation of this year's budget, particularly during these difficult times. We feel it is important that our Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs get out into the field and have those discussions in December, as we propose and as the third party agrees to. For some mysterious reason known only to them, the official opposition has chosen to stand in the way of this progress. I look forward to hearing from them as to why they've taken this position, and to further debate this afternoon.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, close; he looks a lot like me.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm so used to the member from Durham. I'm sorry. The member for Oxford

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Today the McGuinty government has found a new way to lessen democracy in Ontario. They have actually moved closure so they can limit debate on their motion to reduce pre-budget consultations because they don't want to hear the criticisms about their lack of consultation.

The McGuinty government seems to have forgotten that we are here to represent the people of Ontario, and that means the government must consult and listen to those people. Traditionally, these consultations have taken place during the winter break. It involves several weeks of travelling around the province to hear directly from people, businesses and organizations about what is working and what the government needs to fix. But the McGuinty government is far too comfortable sitting in their ivory tower in Toronto and telling those people what they should do instead of listening to them.

The members of the McGuinty cabinet have demonstrated over and over that they don't know what is going on with the average Ontarian. The priorities of this gov-

ernment are not the priorities of the people of Ontario. The government showed how disconnected they are from average Ontarians with last fall's economic statement. Across Ontario, people were hoping that the government would be announcing a new plan to try to save businesses and keep jobs in Ontario. Instead, the McGuinty government announced they had spent their way into a deficit, and they are continuing on the same, ineffective economic strategy. They still will not acknowledge that that strategy isn't working. Their current strategy has led to plant closures, layoffs and Ontario becoming a have-not province.

1540

These are the reasons that pre-budget consultations are more important than ever. Instead of going out and listening to the people of Ontario, instead of expanding pre-budget consultations to do an even better job in these difficult times, the government is limiting the opportunity to hear from Ontarians by reducing the number of pre-budget hearings and trying to sneak them in during the week just before Christmas. Now they've moved closure so they can't even have a real debate about the shortened pre-budget consultations.

Merry Christmas, Ontario, from the McGuinty government. The government wants to hold hearings in the week before Christmas. That means while people are finishing their Christmas shopping, planning Christmas dinner or attending their kids' Christmas pageants, the government is hoping that they can hold very limited consultations and no one will notice. They're hoping the holiday music will cover the legitimate complaints from the people of Ontario.

The government seems to believe that if you rush through the consultations, no one will point out that our manufacturing sector is in trouble, our people are losing their jobs and our farmers are losing their farms. The members on the opposite side don't seem to be aware of the reality that is facing Ontarians. People are losing their jobs. They're worried about how they're going to pay their mortgage and put food on the table. They're worried about how to explain to the kids that there won't be presents at Christmas this year and they can't afford to send the kids to hockey or dance class.

That's the reality in Ontario today, whether the members on the other side want to hear it or not, a reality that the people of this province are dealing with every day. No matter how much the government tries to limit debate and consultation, it won't change the reality in Ontario. People in Ontario are in trouble and they're scared about the future. Young people don't know where they're going to get a job. People who have one are worried that it will disappear and they won't be able to find another.

Every day, it seems another manufacturing plant announces that it's closing its doors: in my riding just recently, DDM Plastics in Tillsonburg, Lafarge cement in Zorra township and layoffs at Cami Automotive in Ingersoll. Every year I hear about farmers who can't pay their feed bills or are losing their farm because this government chose to give payments to retired and deceased

farmers instead of to the young farmers who desperately need help. These are farmers who are contributing to the economy, buying feed and equipment and hiring people in our rural communities, but soon to be the latest people in the unemployment line in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

I can assure you that those farmers would love to participate in pre-budget hearings. They would love a chance to tell this government about the problems the Minister of Agriculture has created. A real government, a real leader, would acknowledge these problems. They would listen to people who are scared of losing their jobs, to a small business man who is struggling to keep the doors open and to the farmer who needs government help. A real government and a real leader would want more hearings, more information, so they could find a solution and a way to help these people.

That is why our party introduced an amendment to expand pre-budget consultations, to hold them in the months of January and February so we can advertise them properly and give people the proper time to prepare. I'm very pleased to support that amendment.

A few weeks ago, when thousands of students came to Queen's Park because they were concerned about tuition levels, our critic for training, colleges and universities for the PC Party was out there speaking to them. The NDP were there, but once again the government members chose to hide inside Queen's Park and ignore the people they claim to represent. Now the government is trying to force unfair driving restrictions on many of those same students and is refusing to listen to them. A motion to limit pre-budget consultations and now the closure motion are just the latest examples of the McGuinty government trying to shut out democracy and the voice of the people.

Every time they run up against a problem, they try to bury their heads in the sand, cut down consultation and hope it will go away. We saw it in the last few weeks with Bill 119: As soon as they realized this bill would burden small business owners with huge costs, and those owners were upset, the government used their majority to force it through with almost no consultation. On Bill 114, the amendments to the bill were due before the consultations actually began. How much can anyone feel their input matters when it's already too late to solve the problem before it's pointed out?

In 2004, the Minister of Finance, who was the government House leader at the time, boasted about the extensive consultations that they were undertaking. In their first throne speech, this government talked about the ideas they were going to take to the people. In a few short years, they've lost the ideals that they claimed to have. They no longer want debate or to hear from Ontarians.

A few weeks ago, that same minister said that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs allows an opportunity to deal with the economic challenges. Now, instead of letting the committee hold full hearings to investigate the topic, they are trying to limit these hearings and slip them through just before Christmas. They have become so entwined with special interest

groups and union bosses that they have forgotten who they are here to represent.

We are here to represent the 21-year-old who is car-pooling to work with her friends, trying to save money for the future, who under Bill 126 will no longer be able to get to her job. We are here for the many small business owners in my riding who have been working so hard to support their families, but with Bill 119 are going to see all their profits go to the WSIB. We are here for the thousands of people who have lost their jobs because their plants can no longer be competitive in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario. Those are the people we were elected to represent. Those are the people that this government needs to hear from in the pre-budget consultations.

I urge the government not to cut pre-budget consultations short. Don't try to bury them in the busy week just before Christmas. Instead, take this opportunity to go out and listen to the people who are in trouble and, for once, make this budget about them, instead of making it about rewarding special interest groups. Make this budget about developing a jobs plan and really helping the people and businesses of Ontario so that, together, we can all be strong and Ontario can lead this country once again.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to speak.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I stand here, as I have every time for 86 months in a row, to oppose a government closure motion. It's not that I don't understand what the government is trying to do, but in this place I believe in democracy. I believe in allowing bills and motions to take their normal course. I understand the government's need to move on this quickly, but it would, in any event, have been accomplished had we allowed debate today and tomorrow. It is simply closing one full day of debate.

I do note for the record, and I think it's very clear for anyone who checks Hansard, that there have been no additional speeches made by the New Democratic Party since I made the first speech and my colleague from Trinity-Spadina gave a two-minuter. There have been no additional speeches from the government benches. The speeches have been confined to those of the Progressive Conservative official opposition.

Having said that, I don't know how much more—except to hear some more Conservative speeches—would have been accomplished. We would have concluded, in any event, by tomorrow. The full eight hours or whatever is required under the standing rules would have been met.

I cannot vote for closure. Having said that, I think I need to reiterate for the record why I supported the government motion in the first place.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is a leadership speech.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, this is not a leadership speech. This is a speech for this House.

The subcommittee met, the subcommittee and a majority, being the Liberal member Mr. Arthurs from Pickering-Scarborough East and my colleague from—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, you weren't there—my colleague Mr. Hudak from Niagara West—Glanbrook and I sat there, and we came to a conclusion, although my colleague from Niagara West—Glanbrook said his Conservative caucus may not agree to it, that we were going to meet during that week. That was the discussion: the best possible week to accommodate all of the members on the travels around Ontario. There was some discussion about going in January and it was problematic. It was problematic for the members, but it was also problematic for the process that is about to unfold.

We know in this province that we are going through a period of tremendous economic turmoil. We know that we are not alone. That same phenomenon is taking place across Canada, and indeed across North America and the world. We know that we need to work together as a government and opposition in order to do that which is absolutely best for the people of this province. We need to get out there, and we need to get out there early, in order to plan and try to have a coherent and consistent policy to weather this storm, to try to save jobs in Ontario, to try to create jobs in Ontario.

1550

I am reminded that just a little more than two weeks ago I stood in this very House and argued passionately for the motion at that time to set up an all-party select committee to do exactly the same because, notwithstanding the merits of what the government or the official opposition is trying to do and the methodology by which they are attempting to do it, the final analysis is that I believe we all need to work together for the people of this province. We all need to come together in a common goal to try to find out what the people want and then try to move in that direction for the benefit of everyone.

The argument has been made that this is being held under cover of darkness and is being done just before Christmas. I would hesitate to say that this is being done under cover of darkness. This has been advertised on the parliamentary channels, at least in Toronto, and it will be advertised on the parliamentary channels and in the newspapers and everything else, as set out in the subcommittee report.

Because the finance committee does not require the authority of the House because we are meeting in session, we've already held one meeting on November 20. We will hold two additional meetings, one on December 4 and one on December 11, to hear people who make application in the Toronto area. We received more than 80 applications for 51 spots in a matter of days. We had to, as a parliamentary committee, go through those and determine which 51 we would hear and which 29 we could not hear. That was a difficult process, and we did it. There are many more groups wanting to make deputations than is possible to be heard.

There is also the very thorny issue of when the budget is going to come down. I am not privy to the actual date, but I take the finance minister in Ontario at his word that he would like to bring down the budget towards the end of February or the very beginning of March. He feels it is

necessary and incumbent upon him to do so because of the turmoil in the markets, the turmoil in the economy and his efforts to try to get a handle on it before year-end, and I understand. I am the finance critic. If I were sitting on that side of the House and in that chair, I would probably be trying to do the same thing. You do not want to bring down a budget in such trying circumstances after March 31, because whatever direction the government takes will be compressed into the 11, 10 or nine months, or whatever time there is in the balance of the year so that if cuts do have to be made, then it is microscoped into that period and made to be much worse. If help has to be done, you have to wait for months when you may not want to wait those months or to give the monies that are necessary. I understand all of that.

I also understand—and we've read in the paper in the last couple of days—that the finance minister of Canada is going to come down with his budget in the first week of March. He too is not waiting until the end of March or into the new fiscal year, but it's coming down at the beginning of March.

That being the case, I don't know how the finance committee, of which I have been a member these many years, can reasonably be expected to meet to hear the deputations, to make the motions, to have the documents translated, to present what we need to to the Minister of Finance to have it considered in time for the budget—to do all of that—if we do not go on the road in December. That was part of our discussion. That's what we discussed. I was party to it, and I'm going to stand here and say that I was in agreement with what was done.

I listened intently to the motion, the amendment, made by my colleagues. With the greatest of respect, I understand that they want to go in January or February. I understand that and, if that were the lone motion, I probably wouldn't be standing here. But they also, in that motion, requested that the finance committee visit 19 locations in and around Ontario. I would love to visit 19 locations, but the travel involved and the difficulties in going to 19 locations would involve—I would hesitate, without—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, it would take more than 19 working days. It would take more than four weeks, possibly five weeks. If we were to start, as they suggest, in February, and spend five weeks on the road getting the information, then we could not have the meeting to make the motions. We could not advise the minister. The budget would have come and gone. It just couldn't happen.

I am at a loss. I cannot accept the Conservative motion. I understand, and I will stand up and say what we did in the budget committee and in the subcommittee was right. Now I have a closure motion which I cannot possibly vote for because I don't believe that closure was the right thing to do. I invite the government members to do whatever you think you need to do, but I will not be party to it. I invite the Conservatives to continue with their motion, but I will not vote for that. I will vote in favour if there is a separate motion to confirm the recommendations that the budget committee and the subcommittee

that reported to it made. I consider that they were right, I consider they are just and in the best interests of the people of this province, and that they can reasonably be accomplished to hear the people in the five locations: one in Niagara, one in southwestern Ontario, one in northwestern Ontario, one in northeastern Ontario, one in eastern Ontario and three in Toronto. That seems to me to be reasonable given the circumstances, the timing and the necessity of acting quickly so that we can advise the minister in time for the end-of-February or beginning-of-March budget.

Having said that, I will cede the floor to my other colleagues. I hope that someone can elucidate in this debate and talk precisely not about what is happening in the economy and what bills are not before the House and what bills should be, but in fact why it makes or doesn't make sense for us to meet that week, from December 14 to 19, because I think that is in fact the entire issue here.

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

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'm just looking at the clock so I have some sense of our time allocation during today's debate.

Let me say I very much appreciate the comments by Mr. Prue, the member from—I always forget the riding. Beaches–East York; I should know that by now. I appreciate the position that he finds himself in at this point in time.

Yesterday, during the course of the debate on our motion, there did come forward a motion that the question now be put, in essence to achieve, I think, what he was asking for in that the motion spoke to the specifics of our travel and scheduling. Unfortunately, with respect to the Speaker, the Speaker chose at that point in time to suggest that debate hadn't continued sufficiently for the purposes of the minority to have their voices heard. So we are left today with a time allocation motion, because there are constraints within all of these operations and the ability, subject to this Legislature giving approvals, for the work that needs to be done to prepare for that week to happen. That work can't proceed at this point in the absence of this Legislature bringing some conclusion, some determination, to what that might mean.

I want to talk about, obviously, December 15 to 19 as appropriate times for us to be travelling and what that will accomplish in comparison to what the official opposition, in particular, in this case has spoken to as non-desirable, in the alternative wanting to travel, instead of that time and the locations identified, in January and/or February, by their amendment to some 19 locations or, in the absence of that, travel in January or February to some number of locations.

I just want to draw a reference to what we're doing this year by virtue of the subcommittee report and what we've already initiated, although this week of the 15th to the 19th is still in play.

We have allocated eight days of hearings for the purpose of pre-budget consultations, three of those in Toronto and five of those on the road. Last year, when we

met in late January/February, we had six days on the road, and I believe I recall either two days or, at the most, three days in Toronto. In essence, we had the same number of days of hearings and, for all practical purposes, we covered much of the same in the context of Toronto and other locations within the province of Ontario. So from that standpoint, we are seeking out the advice of Ontarians in this year toward the development of the budget very much the same as we sought out the advice of Ontarians last year and, I would suggest, even over the past couple of years.

1600

During our time—and the member from Beaches–East York spoke about our Toronto hearings—we will hear from, give or take one or two, depending on if we have a no-show, 50 individuals and organizations. Most of those will be organizations of a great variety of sorts who will seek out information from us. We will seek from them information on what the budget should look like, what the priorities should be for the province's budget, what the Minister of Finance should take under consideration.

Yesterday, during the debate on this matter, I had the opportunity to speak to some of the deputations or witnesses who have already spoken to us and what their priorities were. During our five days proposed at this point in time, at up to 24 a day, we expect we will come close to reaching that in all of those locations because of the nature of them. They're regional locations in geography and people can get to them and there's a broad interest. So I'm suggesting that we're going to hear somewhere between 100 and 120 additional Ontarian organizations and individuals about what they see as priorities that the minister should be considering in the development and finalization of his budget. That will be some 150 Ontario individuals and organizations inputting from across this province into the budgetary process.

I would venture to say that after 150 we're unlikely to hear something so substantively different in additional hearing days that it would influence the minister to modify or develop his budget outside of that broad framework. There is a point in time, I think, when you are hearing from witnesses across the province where you've gathered as much cogent information, important information, consolidated information focused on key priorities that you can present back to the minister for his or her consideration—in this case his consideration. Does 200 make more sense than 150? If one multiplies the 19 days proposed by the 24 that we might hear in each day, we're in the neighbourhood of some 400 witnesses. I don't think that 400 witnesses are going to provide us with that much different information than 150 will.

If we're only hearing five, I'm going to make the argument that you haven't tested the marketplace in a substantive enough way to really get the views of the people of Ontario, and maybe if you only sample 10. But there is a sort of statistical analysis one might do to say, at what point are you getting the information that people want to feed back to us and back to the minister? I would argue that at 150 or thereabouts we're at a point in time where

we've reached a broad scope of people across this province from one corner to the other, as well as a focus here in the large metropolitan area of Toronto, that we will have gathered sufficient and significant information from the people of Ontario, from those individuals and organizations who want to present to us.

Based on our prior experience, six, seven, eight, nine days—one year it might be eight, one year it might be seven, one year it might be nine—have been deemed to be sufficient for that purpose. This is a different economic climate, but that doesn't change the fact that we have to gather information we can use. It doesn't change that we're going to get a broad cross-section of information. It doesn't change that 150 organizations are going to be able to give us, individually and collectively, a good sense of what we should be asking of the minister in the context of developing his budget when it comes to priorities.

The budgetary process for the most part, this pre-consultation process, doesn't necessarily drive individual requests that the minister will always put into play. So it's not a matter of hearing from 400 witnesses so we can find the one we missed that the minister is actually going to include in that budget. Written submissions can achieve the same end. We're not restricting. If we get 1,000 written submissions—you don't have to present to the committee—then those will all be built into the process of the report-writing, and the staff will be driven crazy on that. We don't expect that to happen, but it doesn't preclude that.

I would suggest that the five days we set aside put us on the road in a concentrated fashion at a time where people are thinking about the economy and are thinking about next year's budget, which allows us to complete that work and allows the minister to complete his work. As the member from Beaches–East York said, whether the budget is in late February, early March or later March, our experience of past years is that it certainly has been during the fiscal year, and I wouldn't expect that to necessarily change this year.

I'm anxious for us to complete our Toronto hearings in the two remain days we have set aside for that, and then immediately be on road for five days so we can hear from the people of Ontario. I'm anxious to see this debate conclude so that, subject to the decision of this Legislature, if it's positive at the end of the day, the committee clerk and his team can go to work on the necessary preparations to make sure we can actually be at those locations at the times we have proposed.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm kind of sad that we're up here debating closure of debate on the amendment by my colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook, who wanted to take the pre-budget hearings out to some of the communities in Ontario instead of putting all the committees before Christmas.

In his amendment, he put that they not meet “during the week of December 15” but “during the months of

January and/or February,” and then listed a bunch of communities they would like to go to, one of which is Lindsay, in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. Each of the communities that my colleague from Niagara West–Glanbrook mentioned in his amendment certainly deserves the opportunity to be heard, and I certainly appreciate that Lindsay was there.

I think it's also important to bring up the fact that when the Minister of Tourism got up today to tell us what we would be debating, she said that we, as the official opposition, were standing in the way of progress in this debate. Yesterday she was in the Legislature and tried to shut down debate on the amendment, part of which I just read. She thankfully was ruled out of order, but nice try.

We're not trying to shut down debate. We're trying to take committee work out for a longer period of time—the usual that we do in January and February—not hide it under the cover of Christmas and the holiday season. We want to hear from the people of Ontario properly.

Time allocation, which is closure of debate in other language, is not fair. Quoting the Minister of Finance, when he was in opposition in 2003, “Personally, I would like to see a lot more work done in committee. There are examples in the Commonwealth, in Australia and Great Britain, where in my view committee work is much more important. Hopefully we will have the goodwill in this House to find those opportunities.” Well, they're taking those opportunities away. How soon they forget once they get into government.

Because they aren't coming to the town of Lindsay or to my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I thought I would just highlight quickly a few of the topics that a lot of people would have shared with them had they decided to go there. For example, the county of Haliburton now has the lowest household income in the province of Ontario—tough times up there. Agriculture is the largest economic driver of the city of Kawartha Lakes; it's second in the whole province, but it's the largest economic driver in my city of Kawartha Lakes. They are facing huge crises, especially in the hog and beef industries at the moment—the pork and hog farmers were here this week—and they don't know what to do. They don't know what the solution is. They've had some federal loans that have taken them for a year. There has been nothing for long-term income stabilization from government. Do you want them to stay farming; do you not want them to stay in farming?

We hosted a round table up in Lindsay, at the new Lindsay agricultural exhibition grounds, with my colleague from Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, who is the critic for agriculture. There are some serious concerns in agriculture out there, and they do have some solutions. We've got to figure out how to keep them going. We never want to lose the ability to feed ourselves. Especially since we're demanding such regulations upon them and they're producing the highest quality food that we have, we certainly need to offer them more supports.

1610

The city of Kawartha Lakes actually did an impact study in 2006, and it was the sixth-biggest community in

Ontario in beef cow numbers. We've got two family/independently owned dairy processing operations. I know that everyone here has heard of Kawartha Dairy ice cream, which you can also buy in Toronto now, and the difficulties that they are facing right now. We have a great goat milk processing plant at Mariposa Dairy, which is just doing a tremendous job in our area.

The capital value of the city of Kawartha Lakes' farms is \$773 million.

Another big factor in our riding is tourism. I'd say that most of you have enjoyed the beauty of the city of Kawartha Lakes and the rest of the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock. We certainly have a lot of tourism up there. They've had a very soft summer, very much cutting into their revenues. How may they survive? They have got some ideas and initiatives they'd like to see brought forward for the province of Ontario, but specifically for Kawartha Lakes, using the Trent-Severn waterway. My colleague from Peterborough is hopefully meeting with his federal counterpart, whether by phone—

Mr. Jeff Leal: Tomorrow.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Tomorrow, he tells me, which is good.

MPs and MPPs from all parties are trying to capitalize on that jewel of the Trent-Severn waterway that we have through the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and many of our surrounding ridings.

Manufacturing: Certainly, the losses at GM are affecting my riding. At one point, it was the largest private employer in the riding. I think I have more retired GM workers now than actual workers at GM. The spinoff affects many of our ridings. The suppliers, the related businesses, the restaurants on the corners, are all affected.

One of my suppliers, Devour Technologies in Omeme, was certainly trying to look to expand their business, and they hit roadblocks. They employ so many people and are such good employers.

I spoke to Gerry McKeown and Gayle Jones at the Lindsay and District Chamber of Commerce, which represents 600 business members and their 7,000 employees, and they said point-blank, "Wow, if the government holds pre-budget meetings in Lindsay, we'll fill a room and keep the agenda more than full for the committee." They have done some real work in their local economy and have put their concerns forward in the chamber. They gave a deputation to the city of Kawartha Lakes council just a few days ago regarding a survey in which 54% said lack of economic development was a huge problem for the businesses there and 13.5% said red tape regulations are holding them back. So the chamber is really concerned with those challenges that are occurring today in the market and the economic forecasting.

I have limited time left, but I can't pass up this opportunity yet again to comment on the negative impact that the WSIB legislation that was rammed through the Legislature today is going to have on my small businesses. I read some of the petitions that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business from my riding has put together.

We tried and tried to tell the government—first of all, we don't need the legislation; workers are covered; there are private insurance choices out there; WSIB doesn't have to be mandatory. When small businesses are struggling to stay alive and you're putting this tax grab on them, which is totally unfair, and they're being portrayed as bad business owners and breaking the law, that is absolutely not true.

The Clean Water Act, which was a massive concern in my communities, is still hugely on the radar screen. When I go to my community events—the potential financial disputes that they look like they are having—they shake their heads and say, "Why would the government do this to us?"

I'm sure the member for Peterborough agrees with me that we need the rail link that's going to go between Peterborough and Toronto. That's certainly an initiative that needs to be moved forward.

The expansion of four-laning of Highway 35 and the 407 link to the 35/115—huge stimulus for our area. Environmental assessments are all set up for that. Things are moving, things are done, but we have to help.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Jim Bradley is on top of that.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The member from Peterborough says the Minister of Transportation is on top of that. I'm going to hold him to that. I hope he is.

We'd like you to come to Lindsay for the pre-budget committee hearings.

I just want to make a note that the Olympic torch is making its way and stopping in the riding of Kawartha Lakes, but we can't seem to get the finance committee to come to Lindsay.

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

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I can't tell you how pleased I am to rise today and speak to the time allocation motion. One of the things I wanted to talk about was the fact that I had the privilege of being a part of SCFEA for four years during the first term. As a new member, I thought it was really important to be given that opportunity because you really did have the opportunity to hear from all the different parts of Ontario, and the different concerns, because certainly the concerns vary from the north, from the south to the east and to the west. It really does give you a bird's-eye view of what the concerns and the needs are of the people of Ontario.

What we're talking about today, just to refresh people's memories, is SCFEA going out—and SCFEA is the acronym for the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. This motion will give them to opportunity to go out and talk to the people of Ontario.

I really do feel that it's an important process. I know that in the past, the previous Mike Harris/Eves government—I know that the members here are standing in the House and talking about a time allocation motion, which is appropriate, but their memories are short.

Interjection: Very short.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Very short. And I must say that it really needs to be said. You would hardly remember

that this was the same group that brought forward the Magna budget. The Magna budget was certainly one that the people of Ontario talked about. So I see the members standing in the House today and talking about the ability to go out and talk. That's what we're doing, that's what we have done and that is what we continue to do. But you have to ask yourself: How could they, as former members, agree to the Magna budget, which took the budget right out of the Legislature? Right out. Where were the people of Ontario? Were they on the press buses? I don't think so. I can tell you this, and I think it's important: You got into that by invitation only. And who got those invitations? I can tell you—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order: Standing order, I think, 47—the member has to stay on topic, and this is about a time allocation motion. About previous activities outside of the House here you can speak to the press.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): That is a point of order, and I'm listening very carefully to every member as they speak today.

The member for Huron—Bruce.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I guess we're just a little touchy over on that side today, but I think that this is what we are talking about: the ability to go out and talk to the people of Ontario. I know from that side of the House, quite frankly, they're not interested in talking about what happened in the past.

Interjection.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: But it is. It's what and how they treated the people of Ontario. By having the ability to go out and talk and listen, that's how we come forward with plans that speak to the people. It is so important. I can tell you that the first SCFEA meeting I went to, I was quite astounded by the lack of understanding by the previous government. It wasn't just me who thought that; it was the presenters. One after another came forward and they talked about the concerns, how their voices had not been heard. We heard from a number of presenters that they could not come and talk to their elected members. So I know that you know around our area we have a little saying for that—as we have a saying for a lot of things—but I'm not going to say what that is because I firmly believe that there is a time and a place for that. But I want to remind the members and encourage them to continue to listen to the people of Ontario, as we have demonstrated in the past and as we will in the future. I know I had the opportunity to speak to this just a few days ago, but I think it needs to be said again, because they quite frankly just don't remember over on that other side. Even though they're a little touchy today, I'm going to give it a go again.

1620

What's the percentage of the previous government for time-allocated bills? Do you know that 60% of their bills were time-allocated? That is scandalous. How can they rise in the House and have the audacity to say anything?

But you know what? They do, because they forget. It's been five years. They quite frankly don't remember. They never wanted to go out and talk to people. You can go back and look at the record. Presenter after presenter stated that. And now today we see them rise in the House to speak about the time allocation, which is appropriate, but we have to remember that 60% of their bills were time-allocated. I'll put our record up against that any time.

I know that the members from that side of the House are anxious to know what our record is. Our record is 25%. That is significantly lower, and it is respectful of what the people of Ontario want to see. They want to see us going out and having the conversation. I know from that side of the House the only conversation they're interested in is a conversation that happens every four years. When you talk about this in the House and remind them, they don't want to hear that, because I think that if they were given half a chance, they'd go back to the way they were.

I can remember at Queen's Park here the day that they took the budget, the Magna budget. They got on the buses and they rode the buses out to Magna; there was a "For sale" sign right out here on the lawn. Quite frankly, you can pick up a paper and see where it's happening now at another level of government as well, but that's for another day.

Mr. Speaker, I really do thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to the bill today, and I really did want to strongly reinforce that we know that in order to bring the strongest budget forward, we must have a conversation with the people of Ontario.

I also do want to thank the Minister of Finance. A number of my stakeholders, a number of my constituents have told me that they have had meetings with the Minister of Finance today. They appreciate the time that he has given for their voices to be heard, and they know that their concerns are going to be reflected in the budget.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm very pleased to be able to enter into this debate. I would just like to begin by looking at the actual motion that we are looking at. I think people need to understand that the practice of pre-budget consultation has always been through January and part of February. People need to understand that the reason for this was simply to offer the members of the committee the opportunity to travel throughout the province to hear deputations and then be able to look at these deputations in a thoughtful way, to be able to write a report and then to be able to present it to the Minister of Finance.

The reason for that was not only the importance of consultation, but also the importance of moving around the province. It was designed to fit with the creation of the budget in March and April of the year. So it is with great regret that we see that this motion before us tries to—or in fact does—hide this pre-budget consultation in the shadows of the holiday preparation. That's one of the

aspects of this motion that we object to. The reason for that is simply because of the limited opportunity it provides people in responding, because all of the major stakeholders are used to this process happening a month later, throughout January. They are also used to the fact that it travels extensively. We are faced, then, with a situation where, as I say, hiding in the shadows of the holiday you have a very brief time and very few cities in which to have this consultation.

I think it's particularly concerning to not only the members of the opposition here but also the public in general, because they have witnessed, as we have seen with the WSIB bill, the fact that everything of a substantive nature, such as WSIB, has been shrunk into a very short time period of debate. We had time allocation for that. We had very limited public hearings on the WSIB bill. Now we're looking at the same kind of shrinkage, if you like, in this process as well.

It's particularly upsetting because of the fact that, for two years, we have identified the job losses that have sprung out, in the manufacturing sector particularly, and these have come to both large cities and small cities. I am reminded of the very long list of those small Ontario cities that have had to absorb significant job losses. It would seem to me that those are the people that we should be engaging in conversation when we're talking about a provincial budget.

It's also, I think, the fact that people are reeling from the speed of change. It was this government that had had a bill come in June that allowed it to disperse public funds, because it declared that it had surplus. It changed the act that originally allowed the surplus to be used to pay down the debt so it could be used in whatever way that the government sees fit.

Even in August, at the AMO convention, the Premier was still announcing monies available for disbursement. In the context of that kind of change and the job losses that we're looking at in this province, it underscores just that much more why greater consultation should be taking place.

I was particularly struck this morning by the report in today's Toronto Star which recorded the remarks of the Premier in response to his own Task Force on Competitiveness, Productivity and Economic Progress. I would think, of all years, this is the one where you would want to hang on every word in a report such as that. I know that in this House, on several occasions, I have referred to their earlier work on various issues, whether it's poverty or the competitiveness of the province, so I was shocked at the fact that the Premier would disregard this report. He then went on to talk about the fact that "there's no shortage of advice"—and this is a quote of the Premier's—"that we're going to receive."

I would say that he's shutting that down. He's making sure that, in the short days of December, he's not going to give himself an opportunity to hear too much. But his quote further on, I think, is even more disconcerting. He says, "If we were to dramatically reduce corporate taxes we would reduce our revenues and that would create even more financial challenges for us."

1630

Well, there are two questions that I would like to ask him. The first one is: When all those layoffs were happening in the last 18 months, you didn't seem very concerned about the drop in revenues that you would have with 200,000-plus-and-counting people out of work.

One of the things, obviously, if you look at your own government planning and income streams, is the fact that people pay personal income tax. When they're unemployed, not only do they not do that, but they then start dipping into programs and services that the province has available. I think the Premier should have been more concerned about his revenues over the last 18 months than suddenly coming to this notion that he's concerned about it if we were to reduce corporate taxes. We all know that the most important thing you can do in stimulating the economy is to free up money so people have more in their jeans pockets.

The other part of this that amazes me, in terms of his concern over dramatically reducing corporate taxes, is of course that the companies have to make a profit in order to pay anything in corporate tax. I think he needs to revisit this comment, because I'm quite sure that the revenue is going to decrease, just by the fact that there aren't going to be the profits that have been made in the past few years. The task force on competitiveness has offered this for a number of years as a method of making sure there is more money in the jeans of more people. I think it's very unfortunate, at this particular point in time, when we're looking at very, very serious economic challenges, that the Premier is dismissing this opportunity and this advice and he is reducing the opportunity for advice from the general public.

I have two items that I think are particularly germane to this discussion today. One is that this afternoon, Magna announced that it would be laying off 850 workers at the Magna International plants in Aurora and Newmarket. It just adds to the concern and the instability for our communities across the province—I would argue, another good reason to go out and have further consultation.

I also received this afternoon a letter from a constituent of mine, Karen McElrea of Pefferlaw. She writes to me, "I am sending you this e-mail today to voice my concern about the automotive industry and their importance" in "the community and country in which I live...."

"The effects of that many Canadian workers to suddenly become unemployed would be catastrophic to the well-being of many families, communities and would certainly force this country into an economic depression with very little optimism of a quick recovery." She goes on to talk about how paramount it is to the future of our families, our children and our economic growth.

When I can bring to this discussion these examples of concerns, real-life concerns of real people in our communities, it suggests to me that they are making a plea for broader consultation. They are looking for leadership from this government and they need to have their voices heard.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm just going to take a few minutes. I have no desire, really, to prolong this debate. You heard from our finance critic, Michael Prue, the member from Beaches–East York. He sat on the committee and he understands the dealings of the subcommittee and what was discussed and what was decided, and I have no contention with that.

I do have a contention, as we all do in the New Democratic Party, with the idea of a time allocation motion. Certainly, time allocation is a very nice way, a very polite way, of saying “closure,” that is to say, shutting down debate. We would never support such a motion.

This place should always be a place of open debate, of democracy, of hearing everyone's opinion, and I understand, although I disagree with my colleagues to the right of me, that that's partly the impetus behind their own motion. It's that they would like to see more and greater and more in-depth debate. I don't happen to agree that 19 meetings are needed. At a time of fiscal restraint, ferrying all the MPPs necessary around the province—well-fed, well-watered MPPs at that—to various places to hear people is probably not the best signal to be sending to the constituents in any of our ridings and is, certainly, I don't think, necessary. I would wonder at it, from the Progressive Conservatives who usually promulgate messages of fiscal restraint. So there is that.

There is a classic case where the government's select committee is meeting to discuss something near and dear to my heart, which is the payday lending bill that I brought in, and then they brought in one as well, which doesn't have a great deal of meat to it but a great deal of promise in terms of regulations. Right now, behind closed doors somewhere, there is some secret committee discussing said regulations. One of the most expert witnesses, in fact, in Canada wasn't able to go and depute to that committee or be part of it because they wouldn't pay his fare from Ottawa to Toronto. This seems very problematic to me. We're willing to pay for MPPs to travel all around the province, but when it comes to having someone who was the head of the payday lending association and now has seen the light and is working in a critical position of that payday lending association as someone who is a proponent of credit unions—the fact that he can't depute is sad indeed.

Having said that, I look forward, of course, to the results of that committee and hopefully to regulations which I've been promised will be stronger than Manitoba's. We live in hope, we do, in the New Democratic Party.

I can't support the Conservative motion to extend these hearings all over the province. I understand mainly 50 different organizations are deputing. That seems to be adequate. What doesn't bode to be adequate is the response that we know will come in terms of the budget. We live in hope in the New Democratic Party, but we're not that hopeful that the serious measures needed, the serious plan needed, is going to come forth from our colleagues across the aisle.

What would we like to see, of course, in the budget? First and foremost, we would like to see more affordable housing, something that we do not have in this province, with 125,000 families waiting on the list—we don't have it.

What else would we like to see? Something that wouldn't cost a tax dime, and that's the passing of the bill for a \$10.25 minimum wage, and in fact a living wage bill. We would also like to see equal pay for equal work for temporary, part-time and contract workers, something I called for this morning. Again, it wouldn't cost the government a dime, not one tax dime, but is absolutely necessary. Well, I amend that. It might cost something for some OPSEU members who work for the government where the government is one of the worst offenders, actually, of hiring contract workers or temporary workers through agencies. It would cost that but, in fact, it's simply a question of equal pay for equal work. We would like to see that.

What else would we like to see in the budget? Well, we'd certainly like to see, on this day that we were hoping something would come forward—I understand it's happening tomorrow—some statement from the government about the elimination of violence against women day, which is honoured internationally. We would like to see more transition housing for women escaping abuse.

We would like to see more adult bodies in our school system, more social workers so the kind of horrendous instance of the death of little Katelynn Sampson needn't happen again, and one of the ways to prevent that is by having enough adult eyes on situations. Her school, for example, phoned her house and was told that she had gone to the reservation, and they didn't have a social worker who could travel up to the reservation to check if that was true or not. That has to end.

1640

We need more money for daycare. We have a province right next door to us that has \$7-a-day daycare and we don't. Why is that? Quebec has it; we don't. We need mandatory women's studies in the schools. Again it's a paltry sum, but more money for education. We need to fix the funding formula. Miss G Project has asked over and over for that. There are so many things that we in the New Democratic Party would like to see—certainly a raise in ODSP rates. The member from Beaches–East York, our poverty critic, has spoken about this over and over again. We don't see that. This would help with the poverty, putting more money into people's pockets that they could then spend to stimulate the economy.

We need infrastructure dollars. We need an uploading policy that's going to happen certainly a little faster than 18 years from now, or 2018—whenever, sometime, never. I joked with a friend that what we don't have is a 25 in 5 policy around poverty; what we have is a 5 in 25-year policy, where this government is going to take 25 years to affect the poverty rate by 5% at the rate they're going, if they get there at all. We need action on poverty and we need it soon—and dramatic action, not the piecemeal efforts we fear are coming.

Really, what do we expect from this government? A great deal from the budget. We hope they hear that and assume that they will from the number of submissions made to them before the Christmas season. I can't support the idea of an endless junket, as I said, of well-fed and well-watered MPPs running around the province—no. What we would like to see is action, certainly not action in the way of a closure motion, though; certainly not action in terms of the end of debate, but action in terms of doing something about the incredibly pressing problems that this province faces. That's what we'd like to see action on, and with that, I will sit down.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. Certainly, from some of the previous comments, I think it's a good time to remember some of the actions that have been taken in this House in response to economic crises or in response to some of the decisions that have had to be made. While it's nice to have the luxury of saying, "Well, I kind of support it, but I'm not going to support it," or "When it's time to stand up for this action, I'm not going to put my hand up or I'm not going to be in the House," or whatever may happen over there, when you look at the opportunities that the third party has had to play a positive role in this House and you look at some of the things they've voted against, it's a sorry track record, in my opinion. When you look at such things as the Investing in Ontario Act, raising the minimum wage, the auto investment strategy, the advanced manufacturing fund, the third party in fact has voted against a lot of the opportunities that have come along. From the comments that we've just heard, you might have thought they supported some of those initiatives that have simply made Ontario a better place. While every piece of legislation may not have everything you want in it, I think as a responsible party you need to vote in favour of moving the province ahead, and that's what today's decision is all about.

When you see some of the negative news coming from our neighbours to the south these days and some of the financial forecasts, you realize that our province, as dependant as it is upon our exports to our neighbour, has to make some pretty big decisions. I think at a time like this the constituents, the citizens, of our province look to their governments—to their provincial government, to their federal government, to their local government—to work together. The Minister of Finance has come forward and said, "Do you know what? Based on what's happening out there, based on the unusual, unique circumstances, it would make some sense to me that we get out early and we talk to the public, we engage the public in the province of Ontario and ask them for their advice, ask them for their input, ask them what they would like to see their government do in these troubled economic times."

I think that as a government, as an opposition party and as a third party in this House, at some point in the very near future we're going to be asked to vote on some

issues that are going to strike a balance that will allow us to move forward as a province, that would allow us to maintain and protect the public services that give us the lifestyle we enjoy in this province and at the same time deal with some of the troubled economic times that are facing the North American continent, the European continent and indeed the entire world.

I think it's time to move on. At some point you've got to start to set a plan in place and you've got to say, "This is how we plan to proceed. This is how we plan to engage the public. This is the process that we will use." If we look back at the track record of our government, when we took over government in 2003 we had that shock that, I think, reverberated right around the province to all those who had been involved in politics; I think that even includes the media. That is, we found that we had inherited a \$5.6-billion deficit that was hidden from the public. In fact, we had to, as a result of the conduct of the previous government, bring in a law that would guarantee that no government could ever again hide a deficit. It's a shame we had to do that, but it was the only way of dealing with it and we had to make sure that the Auditor General signed off on the books before an election. That's how the term of government started off in 2003.

Since that time, we brought in a plan for change. We brought in the Investing in People, Strengthening our Economy budget. We committed \$6.2 billion to the Reaching Higher plan because we understood the importance of post-secondary education. That was the largest multi-year investment that the post-secondary education system has seen in this province in over 40 years. As we speak today, one in four students is now a recipient of some sort of funding assistance from the provincial government.

When 2006 came along, we were able to balance the budget. In 2007 we brought in the Ontario child benefit. That's helping more than a million children. Now we've seen increases in the hourly minimum wage—it's going to \$10.25 by 2010—and this year municipalities, the people that we work with, our partners who help run our towns, cities, villages and regions, were the recipients of \$1 billion in new municipal infrastructure, something that this province has needed for a long, long time and something that I think is going to prove a wise investment for people to come.

Every year, we have a process in this House, and that's that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs goes out and engages in a conversation based on the rules decided by that committee. The committee has come forward and said, "Instead of this process taking place as it normally does, in late January, because of the unusual circumstances we believe that members of the standing committee should be out there right now to start to restore some of the confidence that people need in their economy and their government; that things are in good shape, that they can start to spend in the way that they have in the past, make investments again, buy the new appliances and buy the cars."

Auto, for example, is a huge industry in my riding. Oakville is the home of the head office of Ford Canada.

We've got some of the most productive plants in the entire world. The Canadian Auto Workers Local 707 are some of the most productive workers. Some of the most productive plants on the entire planet are right here in our jurisdiction and we need to sort out very, very quickly what the future is for that industry and how we're going to help it succeed. We're drawing a number of opinions from a number of people in that regard. It's time to formalize that process. It's time to get out.

When you look around the world, if you look at the United States there's a debate raging within that country as to how to proceed. When you look at some of the Great Lakes states, they're proceeding as well. The federal government is making decisions. It's starting to evolve a process that's going to allow them to make some of the decisions on behalf of their citizens. As Canadian citizens, we need to be out there as well. We need to get on top of this. We need to make sure that we're getting the fairness that Ontario deserves in its treatment from the federal government. What many people in this province don't realize, when we're talking about haves and have-not provinces, is that this province, a province in which we all live, contributes \$23 billion a year to the federal government. Much of that goes to other corners of this country, and it's a great country that we have. Ontario has never shirked away from that responsibility. But in troubled economic times when the person, state, province or jurisdiction that's providing the vast majority of the wealth of that country needs some assistance, some help, needs someone to share in the workload, that's the time for a responsible federal government to step up to the plate. Some of the comments we've heard in past, obviously from the current Minister of Finance, I think in retrospect even he would regret making. They weren't positive comments; they did nobody any good. It may have made him feel good for a few seconds; it did nothing for the future of our country.

1650

I'm hoping that, as a result of the decision being made today, we can begin to move forward on the five-point plan we propose for the future of this province. I believe we're going to come out of this much stronger than we went into it. I believe the people have what it takes to make Ontario a world leader, even with these troubled economic times. We can't get to that point until we get on the road and hear from those people. I urge all members of the House today to support having that committee on the road as early as possible and getting expert advice from people in Ontario.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I guess the key thing is to remind the viewers, as well as members in the House, that the discussion this afternoon is a time allocation motion that is closing off debate on one of the most important topics facing not only us here but the people of Ontario. In fact, the very heart and soul of the economy of Ontario is at great risk, and it's tragic.

If you put this in perspective, what is actually happening here is that they're limiting dialogue with the

people of Ontario. That's it in a nutshell. I could stand here for an hour and outline case and story that reinforce the humanity of this whole issue.

I understand that government motion 14 is time allocation. For the viewer, we've been given 40 minutes to address our concerns. Now, how does that apply to me, as the member for Durham, and to other members here who have spoken?

Let's make this a real story about families. I have two stories I want to tell that are real. One is from a General Motors dealership in my home community of Bowmanville. A person there called me; I won't use the name. This is a genuine story that can be checked out. They have a child who is disabled, and he works there as a salesperson—a very nice person; I've met him in the community over many years. The dealership is his heart and soul; it's his income. That's right where these products, the manufacturing and the economy are in trouble, and he's asking me what our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, is going to do. I said, "Well, I have written to him, I've written to the Minister of Economic Development, I've written to Jim Flaherty and I've written to the Prime Minister, in fact, and expressed support for my constituents."

That's one, and like we all know, I'm sure all people are hearing from dealers in their communities. They all employ five, six, 10 or 15 people in the showroom and probably three or four times that in the service area of the business. Those are families. This is Christmas. We need to be there to listen to them. That's our job.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm not lecturing people. I'm saying I've been privileged to serve them.

One of the e-mails I received—there are hundreds of e-mails that I've received. Again I won't mention the name, but this is a person I spoke to on the phone after I got the e-mail. I can produce it if somebody wants to challenge it. She's a single parent, 58 years old, and she works in the engineering centre at General Motors in Oshawa. As far as she understands from her direct supervisor, if there isn't immediate aid in some form to secure jobs, some provision, it will be a very dark holiday season. It would also, in a more sophisticated way, almost ruin her pension opportunities.

These are genuine stories of genuine people that could be told across the province of Ontario. I think there's a psychological release for people when they get to tell their stories. It is our duty to listen. What you've done here is ignore the advice—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John O'Toole: I've been in this function for about 10 years. I was on the committee that the member, Wayne Arthurs from Pickering-Scarborough East, is on and had the privilege of sitting in on these hearings, which we've had for years, Mr. Speaker, and you've been here longer than I have. Some would say too long, but that's another discussion—I'm only kidding. These meetings were always held—and the members would

know—generally, in January and February. That’s what was done. The pre-budget hearings from that committee met. They actually got to know each other and the communities around Ontario. They got to hear the families, the small businesses, the concerns of the chambers of commerce, the boards of trade, the leadership in the communities, the municipally elected, the nurses, the teachers—from the various people who provide these many services. And you’re denying that, and that’s what this debate this afternoon is about. Shame on you.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Shame on you.

Mr. John O’Toole: Merry Christmas.

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: And I think it’s terrible—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order, order.

Mr. John O’Toole: —that we wouldn’t, in these exceptionally economically difficult times, have visited. As our member from Niagara West–Glanbrook has said—he listed several communities. In fact, I’d like to name some of them. Many of you here today—some of you have left early, I guess, because there aren’t many here listening, and that’s disappointing too. Cambridge—the member from Cambridge is right here. He’s here to speak, and he has been cut off because of this time allocation. He has about 50 different businesses that are in perilous condition.

Chatham—Speaker, it’s either you or Mr. Hoy who represents this—many automotive-related and manufacturing industries.

When I look around here: Cornwall—the member down here; Hamilton—well, we had people from Hamilton here earlier; Andrea—she’s running for the leadership for the NDP and I should get that in here. There’s Kitchener–Waterloo—Elizabeth Witmer; Ted Arnott’s riding; Lindsay—Laurie Scott, and she spoke here today; Oxford county—the member from Oxford spoke.

These people are just adding their voice on behalf of their constituents. That’s our job. That’s the reality of this debate. Let’s not trivialize what this time allocation is. We’ve been shut out, shut down and ignored. That’s what you’re saying to the people of Ontario. Shame on you because—

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Shame on you.

Mr. John O’Toole: —don’t you recognize that these are—

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

Mr. John O’Toole: —very unusual and frightening economic times? And what they’ve done is, they’ve—the Premier, I think, is part of this. I’m going to tell the whole story. Here’s what I believe is happening, because I spoke to the person engineering—and I said to them—this is quite honestly what I said: “I am suspicious that there are three bills before the House that are sensitive and sentimental bills.” Bill 133, for protecting children and vulnerable women, that’s important and we support that. There’s my bill, Bill 10, the Lori Dupont Act—and the Attorney General. But it’s not about the economy,

okay? It’s emotional, it takes the spotlight off. The first three pages in the clippings today are about these issues that we generally support. The other two are about Highway Traffic Act amendments, Bill 118, I think it is, and Bill 126. They’ve got all the young people outraged. You know that. We’re all getting e-mails from these young people. Their graduated licence is being extended for three years and they’re being discriminated against.

We’re talking about Highway Traffic Act amendments when we should be spending time on the most important things, which are the economy of this province of Ontario, working in partnership with Stephen Harper, working in partnership with Jim Flaherty, working in partnership with, dare I say it, David Miller, working in partnership with our municipal leaders and the union leaders.

But no, what are they doing? They’re cutting it off. You’re refusing to listen and respect the views of those who don’t have the privilege of being here. They don’t want to listen.

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s a sad day when democracy is treated this disdainfully in this place, the sanctuary of debate. It’s being shut down.

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: I am heartbroken, quite frankly, by the arrogance of the government. It saddens me, the arrogance of it.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order, order.

Mr. John O’Toole: Mr. Speaker, I am so moved that I am going to have to give up the rest of my time. I know they won’t listen.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: I think it’s so important that we want to get the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs out on the road as quickly as possible. I know some have said, “Let’s do it in January and February,” but we know that with the economic challenges that we face, we’ve got to get that committee out there early.

1700

They’ll be visiting five communities across Ontario. The communities are being selected and will cover all the geographic regions in Ontario. They will get the opportunity to get the input that they need to formulate a report from that committee, that we all look forward to seeing early in the new year to help us formulate the budget that we’ll present in March of this year. They’ll be able to hear from every sector of the economy. All sectors of the communities will be able to come forward and provide that input.

Just this afternoon, I got a call from David McGee. His family owns Jack McGee Chevrolet Cadillac in Peterborough. It started in 1963. It’s one of the largest General Motors dealerships in east-central Ontario. Mr. McGee said we have to get together with the federal government—the federal minister, Mr. Clement, and our

minister, Minister Bryant—to get that package together to assist the automotive sector. It's not just the production side of it; indeed, it's the dealership side of it, it's the parts side of it, that are very, very important to our communities right across Ontario.

So I'm hearing what they said. I certainly said that the finance committee will be getting out early. I know it's a hardship for some people to set aside those Christmas plans, but we're seized with the challenges that we're facing, so we want to get that committee out early.

We hear from the opposition—and that's really interesting, because I remember that follow-up just before the 2003 provincial election. They had the Magna budget that was taken out of this precinct. I know the member from Eglinton–Lawrence was so articulate on a number of occasions talking about how Parliament was held in contempt at that particular time, with moving that budget outside of this precinct to Magna. I believe it was the only time in Ontario political history that the Speaker of the day—Gary Carr, that very independent-minded, very articulate man—wrote a very long dissertation on how the government of the day was holding Parliament in contempt by taking the budget to that big gymnasium with only invited guests. Indeed, that was a very unfortunate thing when it came to the respect of parliamentary tradition.

I just got a note here from research, and this is an interesting one. It says the NDP government changed the standing orders in 1992, making it easier to time-allocate bills. The government was able to put forward a debatable motion unilaterally imposing limits on the length of debates on government bills and motions. These reforms marked, for the first time, that time allocation was codified in the standing orders. Previously, time allocation motions were presented as a substantive government motion that required debate. I know why they wanted to bring that in. It's because when they designed the social contract—that was a real gem. I know that was cooked up in the backrooms. The member from Kenora–Rainy River, who was the number-two man in that government, next to the Premier, Mr. Rae—they got together in the backroom, cooked up the social contract and then brought it in. They knew that they didn't want one minute of debate on the social contract, so they changed the rules of the House so that they were able to jam through that very remarkable piece of legislation. When I talk to OPSEU members in Peterborough and the various unions in Peterborough, they still have the scars on their backs from that social contract legislation. How did they bring that in? They closed down Parliament, through a new censure motion, to bring that in. In fact, things were going so badly that Parliament didn't even meet in 1995, because they didn't want to be accountable to the government.

We look over the things that we've been doing over the last number of years—in 2004, our very first budget was the Plan for Change. We brought back fiscal sanity to the province of Ontario. We had that famous \$5.3-billion deficit that no one knew about. Indeed, Madam

Ecker, a very fine person, went through that whole campaign period in Durham region having her press conferences daily and reassured the people of Ontario that indeed the budget was balanced. Lo and behold, we come into power in October 2003 and had the former Auditor General, Eric Peters, do a study of what happened with that budget, and we had a \$5.6-billion deficit.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: We had to take decisive action and decisive leadership to get rid of that structural deficit, which was so very important. Someone over there said that Gerry Phillips and Monte Kwinter did raise some questions. But at the finance committee of the day, Madam Ecker said, “No, Mr. Phillips, you're wrong. No, Mr. Kwinter, you're wrong. Believe me. This budget is balanced.” They took that song and dance all through that campaign in 2003.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Well, that's true, too. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence says, “Canada won't have a deficit.” We know that when Jim Flaherty comes in tomorrow, he'll talk about the mother of all deficits over the next few years.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I believe that, under standing order 47, the speaker should speak to the topic. I believe the topic we're debating here is the government's reason for cutting off debate on this very important motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I remind the member from Oxford that it's actually standing order 23, but it is a good point of order. Member for Peterborough, I'm listening very carefully.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I know there's a big audience in Peterborough who are listening this afternoon, and of course we know that the good folks of Peterborough are very interested in history—they're interested in the political history in Ontario. I just wanted to spend a couple of moments to remind them of that very indistinguished history of eight years.

Indeed I want to welcome the leadership candidates for—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Oxford, wait until I recognize you, and then you can start to talk. The member for Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Now that I know the order, 23, I do believe that the member is to speak to why this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Oxford, take your seat. I'm listening very carefully. The member for Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: You know, it's interesting: Some of them over there, of course, believe in the old kind of Stalinist revision-of-history technique. We just want to remind the people there what the real history is. I know they want to deny their eight years in government, and that's okay. We're moving forward.

I just want to highlight a couple more budget things. Our last budget, 2008, Growing a Stronger Ontario, is

very important: \$1.5 billion for the three-year Skills to Action plan. That's why we want our finance committee to get out on the road. We want to talk to hear from those deputants who will talk about some of these programs that are producing results in communities.

In the community of Peterborough I talked to the site manager of GE just yesterday night at an event, the Festival of Trees, which raises money for the hospital and the health sector in Peterborough. He was telling me that their order book is full for 2009, and they're looking forward to extending their various contracts into 2010. They certainly show a great deal of enthusiasm, in their particular sector, for where the economy is going. Just recently, we provided almost \$5 million to Kawartha Ethanol Inc. to develop an ethanol plant in Peterborough—again, good news. There's lots of very positive activity. I know that the Minister for Research and Innovation has a chance to visit our community on numerous occasions to see what's going on at Trent University, Fleming College and Flying Colours, all good-news stories that are out there, and it just keeps rolling.

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

Hon. John Wilkinson: I'm delighted to enter the debate. Our good friend the Minister of Finance has a very difficult task ahead of him. In unprecedented global economic turmoil, he has to fashion a budget for this province this spring. We have a number of mechanisms we have used in the past. The minister himself goes out on consultations, and he has started to do that quite a bit earlier. The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, of which I was a proud member for a number of years in the previous Legislature, has a fine history of going out across this province and listening to people, so that that advice can be crystallized and given to the Minister of Finance as he works on this very, very daunting task that he has in front of him.

The question here today is, should we get on top of this now or should we wait? This is no time, I say to my friends opposite, for dithering. The good people of Ontario are not expecting their elected officials to come up with any excuse as to the inconvenience to them to do the

job to which they have been elected and to serve on the committees that they have been appointed to by this House, by their political parties.

So, if the Minister of Finance is saying to this House, in these tumultuous times, that he needs advice from SCFEA, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, sooner rather than later—I can say as a minister of the crown that I have been requested to put my budget allocation for next year in much sooner than later—if he is asking us and the members to do that, I think it is important for us not to dither, not to wait, but to move on this motion. Let's get the committee on the road on the week of December 15 because the times call for this action.

I'm sure now that the members—I hope—will support this motion.

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

Ms. Smith has moved government notice of motion number 92. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Now that we have everything in order, I have been handed in its official form a deferral notice that pursuant to standing order 28(h), the vote on the time allocation motion will be deferred until deferred votes on Thursday, November 27.

Vote deferred.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Wilkinson: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock on Thursday, November 27.

The House adjourned at 1713.

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
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Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
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Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
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Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
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Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
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Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
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