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Monday 6 April 2009

Lundi 6 avril 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 6 April 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 6 avril 2009

The House met at 1030.

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.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John Yakabuski: The guests have not arrived yet, but I want to introduce the family of page Daphnée Dubouchet-Olsheski. She's a page from the riding of Ottawa-Vanier, but most of her family hails from the beautiful, great town of Barry's Bay in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke. I know that her uncle Donald is going to be here, her aunt Gail, her aunt Constance, uncle Tom Nevendorff, cousin Elliot McMurchy, and of course her mum, Michelle Olsheski. So when they arrive, good to see you.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I take the opportunity to introduce a member in our gallery. We all know John McKay, the federal member from Scarborough-Guildwood, and a member of the federal Liberal caucus.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further introductions, it is now time for oral questions.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: We have some very important guests who were supposed to be in the Speaker's gallery, and obviously they got delayed coming from a meeting to the gallery, but I would like to introduce them because they will be here shortly. We have a delegation from the RUSNANO corporation, which is a Russian organization exploiting, in the finest sense, nanotechnology. They are led by Alexander Losyukov, who is the deputy director general and who is leading this mission; Sergey Kalyuzhny, director of scientific technical expertise; Vladislav Chernov, principal councillor for international cooperation; and Alexey Pogorelov, project officer. They're accompanied by Nickolay Smirnov, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia; Andrey Veklenko, Russian Consul General in Toronto; Dr. Roman Mayev, director general, Institute for Diagnostic Imaging Research; and Michael Burton, the general manager, Institute for Diagnostic Imaging Research. They will be here shortly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): They are in the east gallery. Welcome.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Today I would like to welcome Chioma, the publisher of AMÖI magazine, to the Legislature.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Minister, one of the major concerns of many concerns is, at the end of the day, who bears the cost of your government's costly energy act, Bill 150. There's a huge amount of uncertainty, and the Premier and this minister have further muddied the waters on a number of occasions. They aren't helping seniors and families who are trying to pay their bills in terms of looking at the future.

Minister, is your harmonized tax grab going to apply to the increased costs of energy that hard-working Ontario families and seniors on fixed incomes are consuming? Is the HST going to be added to the energy audits you're already forcing on home sellers?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our comprehensive tax reduction plan will provide consumers with one of the largest personal tax cuts in Ontario history. The Green Energy Act I believe will stimulate growth in the electricity sector, it will stimulate additional production of electricity and, of course, as we pursue growth in the supply of electricity, that will keep downward pressure on costs, recognizing the challenges ahead.

In terms of the single sales tax, there are a variety of goods, including electricity, which will be covered, as they are under the goods and services tax. But the offsetting corporate and personal tax cuts, as well as the transition payments, will help consumers with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I asked a specific question and all I got was more obfuscation. I think it's only fair that this minister and other ministers in the government shed some light on this green disguise, and it's clear they're unwilling to do that.

A study by London Economics International shows that this legislation, Bill 150, is going to increase the average ratepayer's bill from a minimum of 15% to God knows how much. That's up to \$780 per year, Minister, and adding that onto the latest tax grab of a further 8% takes it up to over \$842. That's a far cry from the 1% and \$12 the minister indicated he hopes Ontarians are going to believe, in terms of what he said publicly. I know there's no reason to be cynical.

Minister, why don't you tell Ontarians the facts on this legislation? This amounts to nothing more than another new tax at a time when families can least afford it.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure.

Hon. George Smitherman: The group the honourable member is relying upon for his analysis today I believe said before a press conference that they hadn't yet completed their analysis, but already the honourable member is relying upon it.

I would repeat to the honourable member, as I said to the critic from their party, that we'd be very happy to continue to offer briefings from the ministry that give insights into our expectations with respect to the Green Energy Act. It is about more renewable energy on the one hand, and about creating the opportunity, through conservation initiatives, for people to use less energy, whether in their homes or in institutions like this one. I'd be very happy, by way of supplementary, to give more information to the honourable member about how we believe Ontarians, through initiatives like time-of-use pricing, are actually going to be powerfully enhancing their ability to manage their electricity use very effectively.

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

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We released the early findings because committee hearings start today and because the conclusions are so alarming with respect to the contradictions in terms of what you've said publicly about this legislation.

Our caucus is anxious to create more green energy while building our environmental economy, but most importantly, we're anxious about being straight and honest with Ontario families, seniors and others on fixed incomes about the implications of this legislation. It appears to be, based on the early results of this study, another manipulative move on the part of your government, another tax grab that's going to hit families and seniors especially hard during tough, tough economic times.

Minister, I'm asking you, would you consider taking another look at this bill, perhaps pulling it off the table for now, looking at the real implications, then coming back to this House with legislation that will meet Ontario's future energy and environmental needs—a realistic approach to this issue?

Hon. George Smitherman: I note that in crafty doublespeak it took the honourable member less than 10 seconds. He said that they're anxious to see more green energy come to life and they're very anxious to do all they can to make sure that it doesn't happen. The point of the matter is that the Green Energy Act seeks to create the capacity for more renewable energy on the one hand and to reduce use on the other by supporting the emergence of a culture of conservation in the province of Ontario.

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I think most Ontarians do understand that energy and electricity prices are under pressure to rise; we've seen volatility in natural gas as an example. That's why the

smart meter and the evolution to time-of-use pricing, something that will become more and more known to Ontarians in the next number of months, is a powerful tool that will allow Ontarians to use electricity in those times of the day when it's particularly inexpensive. If we all manage our use well, then those times when there's a lot of demand, especially on hot days, we won't experience this extraordinary range of volatility in the pricing.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure as well. I think there's room for building green energy in the province of Ontario and still being honest with the people. I'd like to ask the minister: Who has been consulted, and how has he come to the conclusion that his Green Energy Act will add, as per his promise, only 1% a year to the cost of energy to consumers and will create 50,000 jobs? We have to ask, where did you obtain these numbers? Whom did you get them from? Whom did you consult? Who gave you those numbers? Tell us, please.

Hon. George Smitherman: I want to say to the honourable member that this is ground that we've had the chance to go over before, and I've taken the opportunity even beyond what happens here in question period to try and give the honourable member some further insight, because I saw that he was stuck at a certain point.

There are presumptions established in the Green Energy Act. We presume that, over a period from 2010 to 2012, an incremental \$5 billion will be invested in the emergence of green energy: in more renewables coming to life; in the transmission and distribution investments which are required; and in the efforts that we will make to enhance the capacity for you and me in the institutions like this one, and in our very homes, to use less electricity. All of those things combined, we anticipate an incremental 1% additional cost per year associated with the implementation of the Green Energy Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It seems that the minister is the one stuck—stuck in a hole; and good advice to anyone there is to stop digging. I didn't hear a name referred to. My question was whom the Premier and the minister have consulted. One has to wonder if maybe it was the very same ghosts that the Premier took advice from when he said he would close all Ontario coal plants by 2007.

London Economics International's latest study said that this Premier's ever-increasing energy costs would actually make Ontario less competitive than it already is, driving jobs out of the province. We've already seen over 300,000 manufacturing jobs leave this province under your watch. Minister, you're driving a stake further into the economic heart of this province and bringing Ontario further into the abyss of have-not status by scaring investment and new business away. Why don't you consider the real and true implications of your green disguise and focus on doing everything you can to encourage and retain investment here in the province of Ontario?

Hon. George Smitherman: On the matter of investment, it would be nice if the honourable member would stand in his place and acknowledge that through our efforts with respect to renewable energy just in the last few years, we've seen nearly \$4 billion of incremental investment in creating sources of green energy, along the lines of those near Kincardine that I participated with the local member in opening on Friday, a substantial investment on the part of Enbridge which has created strong employment, enhances the property tax base and gives landowners and farmers another source of much-needed revenue.

The honourable member's solutions are what? They campaigned on a promise as well to close coal, and now, through many of those members, in legislative debate they said no, they want to keep the coal plants open. But perhaps they believe in carbon capture, where they're going to take the smokestacks and turn them upside down. We believe in transforming to one of the cleanest, greenest platforms of energy in the jurisdictions that compete with us, and we believe we can help people to use less—

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Not only does he want to keep digging that hole, he wants to muddy the waters that are flowing into it.

This government is using its majority—and we haven't heard any names yet, Minister—to force this bill through, limiting public hearings and keeping Ontarians in the dark on its real implications. The OPA website itself says the entire energy sector in this province employs 35,000 people. You're saying you're going to create 50,000 new jobs. Are you saying this bill is going to more than double the size of Ontario's energy sector? It's time to come clean. You said the act concerns only a portion of the electricity supply, but it's going to create 50,000 jobs. Where are you getting these numbers?

For the last time, stand up and tell this House and tell the people of Ontario, do you have somebody who is giving you these numbers, or are you just inventing them like everything else?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's ample evidence of the benefit of giving opposition members three days off in a row. They get more opportunity for rehearsal.

I think one of the things that's important—the honourable member talks about process. I'm very, very pleased that the legislative committee is going to act. They added two night sittings for those legislative hearings at the request of the opposition. Those were granted. We look forward to many, many people coming forward.

What we didn't hear from the honourable member is what several of their members have said during debate. They believe in keeping coal plants open. Where are you? Be on the record around this. We know that we can eliminate them and we're making very good progress.

At the heart of the issue of the jobs that are created, the member must look as well to the retrofit initiatives. This isn't just a bill about creating more green energy; it's about making the investments in our homes and in

buildings like our schools and our public housing to allow them to use electricity. That's part of the solution—

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

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Deputy Premier. The budget tabled last month finally reveals the government's true colours. It's a budget that forks over more than \$2 billion to banks and insurance companies while picking the pockets of hard-working Ontarians. It's a budget that adds 8% to home heating and gas bills but allows CEOs to take millions of dollars in unearned bonuses. Will this government now admit that its budget takes from hard-working Ontarians and gives to those who need it the least?

Hon. George Smitherman: The Minister of Finance will by supplementary have an opportunity to respond, but as one who represents rather a lot of people in our province who live in more marginal circumstances, they saw in the budget several initiatives which spoke directly to their needs. Our government's commitment, which outstrips any promise they've ever made, to make investments in the retrofit of social housing, stands as one very, very good example of the investments that we're making in people who live in marginal circumstances. The substantial near doubling of the Ontario child benefit is a mechanism that provides families that make less than \$30,000, no matter what the sources, with important support for their children.

There are other matters in the budget that the honourable member, the Minister of Finance, will by way of supplementary have an opportunity to address. But I've been speaking to my constituents, many of whom live in more challenging circumstances. They see many, many elements of the budget which are very beneficial to their circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This budget hurts real people with real lives, people like Alvaro, who is married, with a daughter. For 24 years he worked at a Toronto furnishing company. He was laid off last year. He found another job, but was laid off again after only four and a half months. Alvaro doesn't understand why this government is shovelling billions to large corporations while he is desperate to find a job to support his family.

How does this government justify the billions going to large corporations while Alvaro and thousands like him scramble to keep a roof over their heads and feed their families?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: From the leader of the party that wants to raise the PST by 1%, that's a pretty bizarre question.

I would suggest to the member that she look at the \$10.6 billion in personal tax cuts. I would ask the member for Parkdale–High Park how many of her constituents work in the financial services sector. I would

ask the member for Trinity–Spadina what they have against those bank tellers, what they have against the 400,000 people in financial services in the greater Toronto area—it’s one of the fastest-growing workplaces. I think the Toronto members should stand up for their constituents, tens of thousands of people who have gotten new jobs.

This budget is the right balance that will help us through these very challenging times and create the jobs of the new economy. That member and her party are way behind the times. Unfortunately, they won’t stand up for the 400,000 people right here in Toronto who work in financial—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that families are going to be forced to pay 8% more at the gas pump and 8% more for home heating—that’s the reality—families like Persaud’s family. He has exhausted his EI, he doesn’t have a high school education and he’s trying to transition into his new job. But in the meanwhile there’s no money coming in, and he has a family to support. How does this government explain to people like Persaud that it’s good economics to hand over \$2 billion to large corporations while he struggles to make ends meet in this province?

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: I’d like to just rely on somebody named Hugh Mackenzie for advice on this. Here is what Hugh Mackenzie said: “Ontario’s 2009-10 budget establishes the right direction for the next few years. It provides substantial economic stimulus. It is consistent with the new orthodoxy that relies heavily on governments to help rebuild damaged economies. It imposes some coherence on an incoherent federal plan.”

We agree with you on employment insurance; unfortunately, the federal government has not responded on that. We will continue to urge them to do that. But again I would say to the leader of the third party, please stop attacking the men and women who work in financial services here in Toronto. It is one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy. Whether it’s the teller on the front line, whether it’s the clerk in the back office, those people have good-paying jobs. This budget will—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question? Leader of the third party.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Acting Premier. This budget sides with large corporations and against Ontario families. It gives away billions to companies that need it the least, while nickel-and-diming hard-working Ontarians. The \$2-billion corporate tax give away to profitable corporations is bad economics, and it reveals a government that cares only about big business and not about everyday Ontarians. Will this government admit that when big business says, “Jump”, it says, “How high?”

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Let me read to the leader of the third party what Pat Capponi of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction said: “This budget has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits and child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians.”

Let me read to her what Gail Nyberg of the Daily Bread Food Bank said: “If you’re a low-income Ontarian this is a positive budget, and I congratulate the government on recognizing that you can fight poverty and stimulate the economic scene at the same time.”

This budget strikes the right balance. We need companies that employ people. We need companies that grow. We will continue to encourage the growth in employment here in Toronto in the financial services sector. We will continue to make the investments—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to talk about someone else I met in my travels around Ontario: Jaime, a father of one girl and two boys. He worked for 25 years at Fenco before the company picked up and moved to Mexico. The union and Fenco had a three-year contract but the company did not fulfill its obligations when it downsized and shut down without any warning at all. How do you explain to Jaime that in a budget that added 8% to his heating bill and shovelled \$2 billion to large corporations there were no measures—not a single measure in that budget—to ensure that laid-off Ontarians get the money that is legally owed to them?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Let me be clear that our government is always concerned with the rights of employees. We will ensure that all businesses, all employers, abide by those rights.

I think what the member is talking about is the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act. The member knows full well that is an act that sits with the federal government. We have asked that the federal government help employees by moving them to super creditor status. My predecessors and I have written and advocated for the wage earner protection program to be enhanced, and we will continue to do that. We will continue to work with the federal government, press them to change the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, as well as enrich the wage earner protection program.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This budget makes it very clear that there are two opposed philosophies operating in this House. On the one side we have a Conservative–Liberal government that believes whatever powerful interests want, they should get. On the other side, we have the New Democratic Party that opposes corporate tax giveaways, opposes an 8% increase on the essentials, and fights for real investments that create real jobs for the people of this province. New Democrats chose to side with hard-working Ontarians. Why is this government choosing to side against them?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I think last week the Premier spoke very clearly: This is not about left, it's not about right; it's about moving forward.

Let's be clear with that member. That member, her party and a number of other members have spoken to bringing forward what would be a tax on all Ontario businesses that would cost us many, many jobs across this province. That would be irresponsible.

So what we have done is we have moved forward with a very balanced approach, with a budget to address the needs of our most vulnerable workers, but also to position us as a strong jurisdiction and to add new jobs, more jobs, in all sectors.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. Last week, it was revealed that the Smart Systems for Health Agency was quietly abolished last September, after spending \$647 million of hard-earned taxpayers' money. Since 2003, the agency spent more than \$45,000 on food for consultants, \$753,000 on travel expenses for consultants and \$231,000 on hotels for consultants. I wonder who the consultants are.

Last week, the Minister of Health asserted that I can find all of the specific breakdowns of these lavish expenses, including the renovations of the new CEO's office, in public accounts. Well, I've checked. Here is public accounts. There is no breakdown. I ask the minister to point out where these specific lavish—

Hon. David Caplan: As is the custom, all expenditures of government, whether it's through third party agencies or directly, are contained in public accounts. In fact, the member has the opportunity to come to public accounts and to question the ministry about any of those particular expenditures. I think the fact that in five years this member has not chosen to ask about those expenditures speaks a lot about the inability of this member to do her job.

I can tell you that my predecessor decided, quite appropriately, to bring an operational review of the Smart Systems for Health Agency. The Deloitte study was reviewed by the Auditor General, and he found that study quite sufficient. I took the initiative, in fact, to collapse this agency and to create eHealth Ontario. eHealth is led by CEO Sarah Kramer and it's chaired by Dr. Alan Hudson, who also does our wait times. I have tremendous confidence that they are driving out an eHealth agenda for the province of Ontario so—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Well, the minister doesn't even want to talk about the agency. He knows there's no breakdown in public accounts. I would call upon him to tell the truth, and nothing but the truth, from here on in.

Minister, on April 2 you told a group of reporters that you had spoken to the senior management of eHealth and you told them to show restraint. Well, I'll tell you how much restraint there has been.

In the first three months of the new agency's existence, nearly \$40,000 on food for employees and consul-

tants, more than \$108,000 on travel expenses for employees and consultants, and you must have had quite a Christmas party, because there was more than \$48,000 for catering. That's three months. Minister, would you tell taxpayers and the more than 300,000 people who have lost their jobs why you find this spending acceptable?

Hon. David Caplan: I think it's perfectly acceptable to bring Ontario into a future that has electronic health records. I think tackling diabetes to prevent complications and keeping out of hospital is an appropriate expenditure. I think improving the safety and the accuracy of prescription medication is an appropriate expenditure for government. I think that ensuring that patients are treated with the most appropriate care settings, making the system more effective and improving the quality of care is an appropriate expenditure. I'm sorry that the member opposite does not share these goals and does not share the desire to implement the system that will give the ability to do it.

Now, Smart Systems for Health did in fact accomplish a number of goals. It helped to build and connect approximately 7,000 secure network sites in all hospital sites, in public health units and satellite sites, in family health teams and other physicians, in continuing care agencies, in pharmacies, in Cancer Care Ontario, the cardiac care—

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

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ORGAN DONATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Kaylee Wallace-Vitelli was born in February diagnosed with terminal Joubert syndrome. Her parents and family have seen their little girl struggle for life over the past two months. They have now made the courageous decision to donate Kaylee's heart to another infant, Lillian O'Conner, but red tape is getting in the way. Will this minister step in so that both of these families can get what they so desperately want and need?

Hon. David Caplan: You know, our heart goes out to all families of children, and these ones in particular, who are experiencing these very harrowing circumstances. These are matters, I think, in which we would all rely upon clinical experts to provide their best advice about how to be able to help both of these infants, and all infants in the province of Ontario. I don't think that any member of this Legislature would expect a Minister of Health, who is a layperson, essentially, to be able to go in and say which medical procedures and how those procedures should be performed and to what extent that interference would be appropriate. I know that no member of this Legislature would want to suggest an inappropriate intervention in a medical matter by, essentially, a layperson. I know that we all, on all sides of the House, have tremendous compassion and hope and understand-

ing for the people of Ontario and the parents who are faced with these tremendously difficult circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Wallace-Vitelli family wants to turn Kaylee's tragedy into Lillian's miracle, but to do so they are being forced to resort to the courts. It's unconscionable. Both the Wallace-Vitelli and the O'Conner families are coping through incredibly difficult and heartbreaking circumstances. Why won't this minister act today and allow them to do what they think is right, preserving one life while paying tribute to another one?

Hon. David Caplan: Listen, I certainly have tremendous sympathy and admiration for the family which is going through a tremendously difficult situation with a child that they have, and admire the courage they have to make the decision for organ donation. I rely upon the advice of medical experts in what are the most appropriate steps that should be taken in order to be able to help all of these children. That is the appropriate thing to do. I don't think it is a political exercise, but rather it is one where we receive the best medical advice and take the appropriate steps and support these families in the very best way that we possibly can. I know that the member opposite would not want to suggest that politicians should be deciding these things, but rather these should be in the hands of medical professionals, people who have spent their lives providing the—

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

ST. LAWRENCE PARKS COMMISSION

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. As a member from eastern Ontario, I know that the St. Lawrence corridor is vital to the tourism industry in the area and the province. The corridor is rich in history and culture, and is important to the province and the country as a whole. It boasts the beautiful Thousand Islands, farmland, orchards, vibrant towns and cities, cultural centres, museums and world-renowned historic sites.

The 2009 Ontario budget announced on March 26 outlined funding for the revitalization of this area. Can the minister tell the House what this means to the St. Lawrence corridor and for the tourism industry in the province?

L'hon. Monique M. Smith: Merci à mon ami de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, et félicitations pour ton bon travail la semaine dernière avec le Parlement jeunesse.

I am pleased to speak to the House today about my wonderful trip to the St. Lawrence Parks Commission on Friday and the announcements that we made there, which are going to help the St. Lawrence Parks Commission become an even greater world-class attraction.

On Friday, I was at the St. Lawrence Parks Commission in Morrisburg at Upper Canada Village. I met with Pat Macdonald, the general manager, and Peter Watson, the chair of the commission. I was also in Kingston and had a chance to meet with the staff at Fort Henry. We announced on Friday that, should the budget pass, the

McGuinty government proposes to invest \$23 million in the revitalization of some of the attractions at the St. Lawrence Parks Commission, which is an agency of my ministry. The investments will contribute to the economic prosperity of communities along the St. Lawrence corridor as well as throughout eastern Ontario. We are very excited about these investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I understand that the St. Lawrence Parks Commission has many tourist attractions and offerings throughout eastern Ontario; after all, it's part of the eastern gateway to Ontario. The commission extends from west of Kingston to near the Quebec border, and I understand it holds thousands of hectares of parkland and several attractions on the St. Lawrence heritage corridor that provide a major source of recreational opportunity for residents and visitors to eastern Ontario. Can the minister provide more information on what the \$23 million is allocated to, given that the commission has numerous attractions?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Yes. The St. Lawrence Parks Commission covers a great deal of territory and has some incredible vistas and beautiful parkland, as well as some really important historical sites.

On Friday, we announced that we would be investing \$13 million at Upper Canada Village and Chrysler Park. This will be to update the visitors' centre, the retail outlet and the exhibits at Upper Canada Village. As well, we're investing \$7 million to invigorate the tourism experience at the Battle of Chrysler's Farm, in preparation for our bicentennial commemoration of the War of 1812.

We then went on, on this very rainy day, to Kingston, where I was joined by the member from Kingston and the Islands for a \$10-million announcement at Fort Henry. This will see the construction of the state-of-the-art visitors' centre and upgrading of the retail outlet, as well as enhancing the sunset ceremonies. I want to thank Jim Brownell and John Gerretsen for a wonderful day at the St. Lawrence Parks—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The member from Nepean–Carleton.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: To the Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services: Death and taxes might be inevitable, but thanks to the Liberals' HST plan, your government is putting a 13% death tax on all funeral service costs, from caskets to tombstones. Will you exempt the bereaved and dying from this 13% death tax, or will you favour the much lower 5% GST: yes or no?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Let me say this: I am very proud of the budget that was presented by the Minister of Finance. It strikes a very exact balance that we need to keep our economy moving at this point in time. This budget has actually \$10.6 billion worth of tax savings for Ontarians, and out of that, \$4 billion in cash payments to 6.5 million Ontario families and individuals. Families making less than \$160,000 will get about \$1,000 in the

HST rebate in the transitional year and about \$260 worth of tax credits going forward as well. These are some of the measures that are being taken in order to offset the impact of the HST harmonization, or the single tax, as we call it—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: What I got out of that is that your government is going to tax us to the grave and now you want to tax us to death. On July 10, 2010, Ontarians will be paying a 13% tax on funeral services, a 13% tax on caskets, a 13% tax on flowers and, yes, a 13% tax on final resting places. Under the Liberal HST plan, the bereaved and the dying will have to dish out 8% more on their funeral services. That could be at least \$1,200 per bereaved family. Since you won't exempt the dying and the bereaved from paying a 13% increase in death taxes, will you commit to Ontarians today in this chamber that you will grandfather at the 5% GST funeral home contracts that have been sold or will be sold by July 1, 2010?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: What we really need right now is to make sure that our province becomes very competitive and we can get out of this global challenge that we are facing at this point in time. The single tax system that is being supported in this budget is actually a step in the right direction to make our province competitive as we move forward. It's not only that we are advocating it; the federal government is supporting us in this. They are giving us some of the transition money so that we can help consumers to do that. The other provinces have done it, and all have actually reaped benefits of that. So I really want to encourage the member on the other side to really see the benefits of the single sales tax as we move forward and make our province more competitive.

1110

EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Ministry of Education website school finder is set up to allow parents to compare schools in the province. Why would the government provide information that would facilitate the ranking of schools based on the number of lower-income households or the university education of their parents?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What the school information finder is set up to do is to allow parents to find information about schools. It's about profiles of schools. It's all public information; it's information that's available in various sources. What we've done is brought it together. We know that, up until now, some boards have had profiles of schools; other boards have not. What we've done is provided an opportunity for schools across the province to have a profile on this website. We've known for many years that parents don't just want narrow information about test scores, they want a broader, contextualized set of information, and that's what this website allows for.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, your school website includes the number of special education students, the number of children whose first language is not English and the number of recent immigrants. Why would parents want to know that kind of information?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to be clear that this information finder is not about ranking schools. I want to read a quote from the online survey from a newcomer. This person says, "I am so grateful for all this information—as a newcomer to Canada who came here to give my children a better future—this info was critical—I had to collect most of it myself three years ago. Please, please keep this information ... I represent at least 30% ... of parents in Ontario who came from a different country and home language—we need this information to make suitable choices for our children's education...."

She goes on to say, "I'd like to know about extra-curricular activities offered at each school."

Further: "Everyone gains when statistical information is shared."

I want to make the point that I have had a conversation with folks from People for Education and from the federations. It may be that we add more information to this school information finder, and I'll be talking with folks at the partnership table this afternoon about just that.

ABORIGINAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. The minister spoke recently in the Legislature about the importance of including First Nations in the recovery of Ontario's economy. However, aboriginal people often face challenges when it comes to their engagement in economic activities. First Nations and Metis communities must often contend with challenges of distance, climate, relatively small and dispersed populations, as well as significant community infrastructure needs, including water, all-season roads, limited services and, especially, adequate housing. I've also heard from the First Nations members in my riding of how communities might struggle to balance the need for commercial and economic development with the traditional values of environmental stewardship.

Minister, can you tell us how our government accommodates this need to balance the traditional values and the need for commercial growth and economic development?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The challenges the member notes are real and significant, as is the reference he makes to the connection many aboriginal people feel to the land and surrounding natural resources. That connection, frankly, is a reflection of the uniqueness of First Nation and Metis culture, and it's something this government makes every effort to respect. Striking that balance between environmental sustainability and economic growth is something we need to work on with our aborig-

inal partners through consultation and dialogue. We do have an obligation, constitutionally, to consult, but we have to go beyond that. It's not only the right thing to do, it's the best thing to do in terms of moving economic development opportunities forward. That consultation also involves encouraging partnerships, and that's why I'm so pleased, and aboriginal communities are so pleased, with our government's commitment to the \$250-million loan guarantee program—

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

Mr. Dave Levac: The minister and I recently had the pleasure of attending a ribbon-cutting ceremony at RJ Ecosafe Homes, at the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. We learned about how this company, established in 2008, has developed an environmentally sound, energy-efficient, durable, non-wood-burning system suitable for First Nations communities, especially in remote areas, and beyond First Nations for general public use. The company builds houses and also provides training for those First Nations people in communities across Canada so that those who are certified can return to their own communities and build these very modern, exciting houses.

During the ceremony, you spoke about how this company could have a positive impact on all First Nations communities across the country at large and how it had set a positive example on many different levels. I'm excited about this possibility, and I know that within my riding it's generated an awful lot of interest. Minister, can you elaborate for us what you meant by assisting us in that aspect?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I share the member's excitement for this project within his own riding. It is indeed a very exciting project and extremely innovative.

To me, this company demonstrates that economic growth and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive. As our government is addressing environmental concerns through our Green Energy Act, RJ Ecosafe Homes continues to explore innovative, environmentally friendly, safe approaches to home building. What's remarkable about this company is that it very much reflects a lot of the nature of our recent budget. It's a great example of innovation. In fact, it stands as evidence that the entrepreneurial spirit is alive and well in First Nation communities. It's a great example of the next generation of jobs, a great example of job creation and economic development, along with the importance of incorporating the green economy. It also speaks powerfully to our government's energy conservation efforts.

I thank the member for his leadership in this area. I thank—

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

BUTTONVILLE AIRPORT

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. On February 26, my colleague from Thornhill put the question to the minister about the im-

pending closing of the Buttonville airport as the result of the loss of some \$1.5 million of support from the GTAA. At that time, the minister stated very clearly that he believes that that airport is critical to the local economy as well as the economy of the GTA. He undertook to contact the federal Minister of Transport to see if he could at that time get support for the airport.

I would like to know from the minister, has he heard back from the Minister of Transport for the federal government? Is there going to be support for the Buttonville airport?

Hon. James J. Bradley: The member raises a very good question—and all the members who, particularly, represent the area north of Toronto, including Michael Chan, my colleague; Mr. Shurman, who asked the question in the House; and the member directing the question to me.

Buttonville airport, in my opinion, does play a significant role as an airport for a lot of different reasons, one of them being a backup as well to the main airport, Pearson International Airport. I was disappointed, although they make their decisions for various reasons, to see that this had happened.

I did communicate with the federal minister about it, by letter to John Baird, who, I would think, is equally concerned about that potential closing. I have not, to this point in time, received—or I have not seen—a letter of reply from him yet, but I know that he does have that concern, and I look forward with anticipation to his—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I would like to direct my supplementary to the Minister of Economic Development.

Interjection.

Mr. Frank Klees: The reason I wanted to speak to the Minister of Economic Development is that the implication of this airport closing is the loss of some 300 direct jobs and a loss of some \$80 million directly in that local economy, at a time when the government is investing billions of dollars in infrastructure to stimulate the economy, at a time when the economic development ministry is investing millions of dollars to save jobs and create jobs.

Regardless of whether the federal government is decisive on this, will at least the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Economic Development, be prepared to invest the \$1.5 million to save 300 jobs and to save some \$80 million of economic enterprise in the—

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I cannot speak for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, but no doubt the question is heard and will be in Hansard, and he will deliberate upon it.

Airports are primarily the responsibility of the federal government. I think it's the hope of everyone in the Legislature that the federal government will see fit to investigate this matter appropriately, and if there's funding to be required or pressure to be applied, the federal government will do so.

1120

I can assure the member that those of us who are part of the Ontario government—and certainly I speak for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade—are interested in seeing that airport continue. As soon as we get a response from the federal government, we'll be in a better position to make decisions subsequent to that. I am optimistic that the federal government will respond positively and that Buttonville, as a result, will stay open.

TUITION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The University of Toronto is introducing a flat fee equivalent to the cost of five courses in the faculty of arts and sciences. This flat fee will apply whether students take three, four or five courses. Students at U of T are saying this is nothing more than a tuition hike. Students take three courses for a reason: They can't afford to pay for five courses, they can't take on more debt, they have family responsibilities, or they have to work. Some students will drop out, and some won't register at all. Minister, do you agree with the flat fee?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member raises a proposal that I've read bits and pieces of in the media. At the end of the day, I think he recognizes that any tuition formula that comes forward has to comply with the Ontario government's tuition fee framework. That not only limits the amount of tuition increase that can take place for any program but also mandates universities to offer additional student assistance to any student who is facing financial obstacles moving forward.

I'm very proud of the fact that our government came in and invested \$1.5 billion in additional student assistance for students across the province and has worked with institutions to make sure that financial obstacles never prevent any student from going to university or college.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I had asked the minister whether he agreed or disagreed with the flat fee, and he didn't answer that simple question. I don't agree with the flat fee; New Democrats don't agree; University of Toronto students don't agree. Students taking three or four courses and paying for five is simply not fair. I want to know, and students want to know, do you, as a Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, agree with the flat fee?

Hon. John Milloy: What I agree with is a funding framework, which was introduced several years ago, which protects students against massive tuition fee increases and also mandates institutions to bring forward additional student support.

I'm very proud of the fact that we are a government that doubled student assistance. I'm also very proud of the fact that we are a government that reintroduced upfront grants for students. The honourable member, I'm sure, is very familiar with upfront grants, because he was part of a government which cancelled them.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question today is for the Minister of Transportation. It is that time of year again; it's pothole complaint time. While road maintenance issues with the 401 have been brought to my attention throughout the winter, it seems that with the melting of snow and the increase of temperatures, there has also been an increase in the number of calls to my office about the state of our roads.

I know that this government works hard to keep Ontario's roads safe, but to me and many of the residents living in Durham, it would appear that this has been one of the worst winters for road damage to cars and trucks in Ontario's history. In fact, I myself have had three windshields cracked these past few months while driving on the 401, due to flying debris, and I paid for them myself.

I'm bringing this to the attention of the Minister of Transportation in the hopes that he can please share with the House and all those who drive on Ontario's highways what the province is doing to minimize the factors which lead to vehicle damage.

Hon. James J. Bradley: An excellent question. The member for Ajax-Pickering has raised a concern I've heard from many residents, as I do at this time of year, right across the province. I want to assure the member and all Ontarians that maintaining the condition of our provincial highway system is a priority for our ministry.

During the winter months, as you would know, severe changes in temperature cause freezing and thawing of the pavement. This can result in the rapid deterioration of road surfaces and the creation of numerous potholes. As a result of the harsh winter conditions that were experienced this past winter, there were sections of Highway 401, including those through Durham, which suffered pavement damage. I cannot say for certain if this has been the worst winter. What I can say is that the effectiveness of normal measures is not necessarily there.

As an interim measure, MTO contractors milled the top layer of asphalt in order to create a smoother ride until the weather conditions allow—

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'm pleased to hear that the minister recognizes there is an issue here and that his ministry has undertaken measures to mitigate the effects of winter's harsh effects on Ontario's roads.

That being said, I've heard from my constituents that the work being done so far is not enough. The milling of the roads is much appreciated; however, it has left small rocks and pieces of asphalt that, when vehicles drive over at high speed, will then fly up and hit the vehicles. There are people who regularly drive the portion of the 401 located in my riding, between Whites Road and Lake Ridge Road, as well as other portions of Durham region. I'm hearing from those individuals about chipped paint, chipped windshields and other minor damages.

I wonder if the minister could please share with this House what his ministry is doing to fix our roads, and for

those in my riding who damage their vehicles, who to speak to about repairing the damages.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The ministry realizes that more work needs to be done, and that's why we have tendered and awarded \$4 million in contracts to repave the areas in the greater Toronto area where the milling has taken place. The member from Ajax–Pickering will be pleased to know that this includes a contract of approximately \$1 million awarded for the repaving of milled areas in the Durham region. In order for the roads to be fixed as quickly as possible, we will extend the length of our overnight closures for the repaving to take place.

If damage has occurred to an individual's vehicle, they can contact the Ministry of Government Services for information on how to make a claim. If the public wants to advise the MTO of hazardous road conditions, they can do so by e-mail or telephone and that information is available on the MTO website.

So to you and regional councillor Bill McLean, I think we have a thorough answer—

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

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a question for the Minister of Health. Today, Stats Canada reported a 38% drop in the value of building permits in Ontario. Specifically, the report pointed to a decline in medical infrastructure building. These stats are a good indication of future building activity in Canada, but in Ontario the future seems eerily quiet.

For more than a year, the minister has said that the new Trafalgar hospital in Oakville was delayed due to a lack of construction capacity. To me, the StatsCan numbers indicate there is ample construction capacity in the province of Ontario. Minister, can you promise the people of Oakville to renew construction of their hospital this spring?

Hon. David Caplan: No. In fact, we had laid out a plan that was called ReNew Ontario, which had over 100 hospital capital projects. It's a renaissance of infrastructure like this province has never seen before, I say to the member opposite. We have many of those projects in the ground today and they are proceeding accordingly.

Infrastructure Ontario, the body that is charged with being able to manage the procurement and driving out the delivery of these projects, did a market capacity survey. What they were able to find was, yes, we have put out so much work that we do have a challenge around construction capacity. Hence, we have rescoped the time when Trafalgar Memorial will go ahead.

I say to the member that we very much want to see this project move ahead as expeditiously as possible. If there is ability to move it forward quickly, the Ministry of Health is very supportive of working with my colleague the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure to do so.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Well, the minister says he's building a lot of hospitals. I guess the people in this House have a choice: We can believe what the minister says or we can believe what Stats Canada says. I think I come down on the side of Stats Canada.

The same situation exists up the road in Milton. An expansion plan for the Milton District Hospital was submitted in September of last year, seven months ago. But there is still no answer from the government. They're sitting on that report. In Milton the population is exploding under your 2005 Places to Grow Act, but the hospital can't keep up.

1130

In five years, your government has doubled revenues through taxes like the health premium; you're running a record deficit, borrowing from the next generation; and now we have a slowing in medical construction. According to Stats Canada, there is an increased capacity to build in the province. Minister, given taxing and borrowing, given high unemployment rates and now construction slowdowns, will you turn your words into action and finally fix the health care crisis in Milton?

Hon. David Caplan: This government is well under way doing so. It would have been nice if the member, when he was on this side of the House, had advocated for Milton and for Oakville and their health care needs. Unfortunately, we had deafening silence for eight years. What we have seen recently is his colleague Mr. Hudak, who vies for the leadership of their party, saying, "This \$32.5-billion spend that they're going to do on infrastructure—I don't think that's the right approach. It's too much." Tim Hudak clearly has it wrong, as does this member as well.

Interjection.

Hon. David Caplan: He most certainly did, I say to my friend from Renfrew: on TVO, the Agenda, on March 31, 2009.

Here's the reality: Conservatives, either when they're in government or when they're in opposition, don't support investment in infrastructure. It took this Premier and this government and members on this side of the House with the gumption to be able to get these projects—

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

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. St. Joseph's hospital in Hamilton is cutting its outpatient physiotherapy services. Winnie Doyle, the vice-president of clinical programs at St. Joseph's hospital, said, "The Ministry of Health asked us to look at outpatient programs to see if there are any programs we are providing in the hospital that are provided in the community." She goes on to say, "Physio services are available in a number of private for-profit clinics in the community, so that was a consideration." But the McGuinty government delisted physiotherapy services, so people in Hamilton must pay out of

pocket for outpatient physio. My question is: Why did this government encourage St. Joseph's hospital to divest their outpatient physiotherapy services to the for-profit sector?

Hon. David Caplan: I thank the member for the question. Because St. Joe's is confident that physiotherapy services can be provided in the community, patients will get the care that they need. The hospital wanted to focus on doing the things that hospitals do best: acute care, surgeries and emergency care. Hospitals may fund physiotherapy services from the global budget, but whether they do and the extent of the service provided is determined by the hospital. For a period, the hospital continued to provide free outpatient physiotherapy services funded by the hospital global budget.

I can tell you that we've increased base funding for St. Joe's by more than \$80 million since 2003-04. That's a 30% increase. I would also point out that this member and her colleagues have opposed these types of supports for St. Joe's and other hospitals in the province of Ontario consistently. I hope that this member will begin to support the investments in—

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I can't agree with the minister saying that people can get access to physiotherapy in the community. You can only do this if you have the money to pay for those services, and most people don't. For low-earner Ontarians and for people who don't have private physiotherapy clinics, they have to go without. St. Joseph's Healthcare is joining a long list of hospitals, including Hamilton Health Sciences, Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital and Grimsby's West Lincoln hospital, that have already cut most of their outpatient physiotherapy on the urging of this government.

In the long run, it makes no sense. Patients who can't afford to pay for physiotherapy out of pocket end up in pain and often end up back in the hospital. Their quality of life suffers. The question is: Why is the government so determined to completely privatize part of our health care system?

Hon. David Caplan: Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, if you just look to our hospital partners and the response that they had to the recent budget here in the province of Ontario: Tom Closson, the president of the Ontario Hospital Association, called the budget "a positive budget for Ontario's hospitals and patients." Closson also said, "By protecting hospital funding in 2009-10, the government is positioning hospitals to maintain access to high-quality health services in the challenging year ahead."

Other hospital leaders have echoed these kinds of sentiments. In fact, Murray Martin, CEO of Hamilton Health Sciences, called the base funding increase "very, very good news."

It has been because of the support of this Premier, this finance minister and members on this side of the House that hospitals today are experiencing unprecedented levels of financial support from their provincial government. That's in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CAMP 30

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise today and place on the record the historic significance of Camp 30 in Bowmanville. Camp 30 is the only known intact camp for German prisoners of war still left in the world. Camp 30 was the prisoner-of-war camp for more than 800 of the highest-ranking officials of the Third Reich captured by the Allies.

There are 18 buildings occupying over 40 hectares. Before and after World War II, the property was a training school for boys. Sadly, the cornerstone of the property, the main administration building, was heavily damaged by fire in the early morning of March 28. A second building about 200 metres away was also damaged.

Lynn Phillip-Hodgson is a local councillor from Port Perry and a recognized historian in my riding and has published several books. He described the fire "as a sad day for Canadian history." The fire comes at a time when our community has been considering, and I have been supporting, a plan to preserve the property. Clarington council had placed Camp 30 on its list of heritage buildings.

The fire is a significant loss and a reminder to all in our community, and indeed the province, of the fragility of local history. I urge everyone to support VAC-ACC and other organizations that work voluntarily to support architecture and conservation in our communities.

EARTHQUAKE IN ITALY

Mr. Mike Colle: Today, our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims, survivors and emergency response teams that are, as we speak, dealing with the tragic aftershocks of the earthquake that devastated the city of L'Aquila in Abruzzo, Italy, yesterday. With over 90 people killed, over 1,500 injured and tens of thousands left homeless, we can only hope that the rescue efforts are successful and the injured receive immediate care.

Ontario, with over one million Italian Canadians, must feel the pain in a very acute way. This is especially the case for those who are from the Abruzzo region of Italy and have relatives in the earthquake area as we speak. They have been directly and tragically affected by this horrendous event.

On behalf of all of us in the Ontario Legislature, Premier McGuinty and all Ontarians, our heartfelt condolences and prayers of hope and support go out to the people of Abruzzo and L'Aquila and the surrounding

villages in this most challenging of times. May God speed the rescue teams, and may those left injured and homeless receive the urgent care they require.

LITERACY AND BASIC SKILLS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: For months now, I have been asking the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and the minister if they are going to increase the funding for community-based literacy programs—and I repeat, community-based literacy programs. There are 111 of these agencies in Ontario and they have been frozen at poverty levels for the last decade. At the same time, with over 300,000 manufacturing jobs being lost in Ontario over the past three years, the enrolment in these agencies is growing each and every day.

The government members supported my resolution in this House calling for an increase in funding due to enrolment. There was even additional funding for literacy in the recent budget. However, now we find that somehow the government will not announce any funding to community-based agencies until late June, after this House adjourns.

Who is in control of this ministry? It is shameful and a blemish on this province that the government is turning its back on agencies that contribute to economic development in this province. The McGuinty Liberal government is turning its back on the men and women who want a hand up, not a handout.

Please: They need their funding announced now, as soon as possible, because people will soon be laid off if we do not get funding immediately for these community-based agencies in the province of Ontario.

KOREAN-CANADIAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm honoured to rise today in recognition of the Korean-Canadian Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra was founded in 1987 and is, to my knowledge, the only ethnic community orchestra in Toronto that holds regular concerts. Over the years, I've had the pleasure of attending many of the concerts that have been held by the symphony. The symphony is under the direction of musical director Richard Lee, who also serves as the assistant director of the Quebec Symphony Orchestra.

The orchestra holds two concerts every year at George Weston Recital Hall at the Toronto Centre for the Arts in Willowdale. I attended the most recent concert, entitled the Unification Concert, this past Saturday with my colleague the Honourable Aileen Carroll, Minister of Culture. The minister was welcomed by Ms. Myung Sook Kim, the president of the symphony, who has done so much over the years for the symphony.

The Unification Concert has been themed in honour of special guest soloist Mr. Cheol-Woong Kim, who will be joining the symphony. Born and educated in North

Korea, he defected in search of freedom of expression in music. He was trained in Moscow at the Tchaikovsky Conservatory of music and now resides in Seoul and teaches at the Jansei Arts College in Seoul, and performs at numerous concerts in order to help his fellow defectors.

I urge all members of this assembly: If they want to experience a tremendous classical musical experience, they ought to attend the next symphony of the Korean-Canadian Symphony Orchestra.

LAMBTON GENERATING STATION

Mr. Robert Bailey: On Friday, my constituents and residents of the neighbouring riding were treated to the rhetorical excesses of the Deputy Premier when he came to the Sarnia-Lambton area to tell them what a great thing the McGuinty government was doing by closing down the Lambton generating station and throwing more than 300 of my constituents out of work.

This government wants to close Lambton down despite the fact that they have no idea how they are going to replace the generation capacity. By closing LGS, they will be in fact driving up the cost of electricity for all of us in Ontario, just when we need some stability for the electricity costs.

If the Deputy Premier wanted to brag about how they keep their promises, they should remember their solemn promise not to raise taxes. You don't hear them bragging about that one.

I will proudly keep up the fight to maintain the Lambton generating station, whether through biomass or any combination of feedstocks. This government's green plan for electricity won't come close to generating the electricity that our province needs, and until we can get more capacity online, they should stop the ill-considered move to close down Lambton generating station. Closing Lambton generating station is one promise this government should not keep.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I would like to take the opportunity to talk about an event that I attended a couple of weeks ago in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Branch 18 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Wallaceburg held an open house for the community in celebration of the recent installation of a greatly needed elevator at their home branch. The idea for this elevator was advanced by past president Pat Hagen, who recognized the need to make the legion accessible to our seniors and, most especially, our veterans.

We know that accessibility is a constant struggle for many people, and so often it hinders their ability to be actively involved in their community. This legion made it a priority to ensure that they were able to accommodate these people and, in doing so, has allowed many past

legion members to return to a place where they are comfortable and welcomed.

Many people worked together to make this idea a reality. Dedicated volunteers raised funds and, with an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant, the legion obtained the \$100,000 needed to fund the project. Those who worked tirelessly on this have finally seen it to fruition, and I was glad to be there to celebrate with them and to see their hard work as it was brought forward.

By installing an elevator, something that many of us take for granted, this legion has been able to improve the lives of people in our community in a tangible and practical way. I want to thank them and commend them for their efforts.

AJAX ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS WEEK

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise in the House today to highlight an important upcoming event taking place in my riding of Ajax–Pickering. From April 17 to 26, we are holding our 22nd annual Ajax Environmental Affairs Week.

During this week, there will be a multitude of activities, including opportunities for Ajax residents to get involved in cleaning up and plantings and expanding our environment. There will be planned eco-waste pickup days at various locations, most notably the giant litter pickup at our Ajax waterfront. There will be tree and wildflower plantings, free compost giveaways and eco-fair seminars for residents, including the new Green Energy Act, to learn more about the role they play in keeping our environment healthy and green, as well as expanding it. We encourage everyone to participate. This will also be a prime opportunity for our government to communicate our new environmental initiatives like the Green Energy Act.

1310

Since I founded Ajax Environmental Affairs Week back in 1988—when, unfortunately, I was the only person who actually showed up—this has now expanded to become a highly successful vehicle, with over 1,000 volunteers each year, for environmental education and with a focus on greening our community, thinking globally and acting locally.

Some of our past chairs include Martin Olenroot, Ray Trempe, Deanna Fry, Sherry Brown, Elizabeth Lockett, Bob Bailey, Alan Birks and Margaret Ceconet. Of course, we thank the mayor and all members of Ajax council for this activity, continuing the many years of their activity in Ajax.

NORTHERN HOME REPAIR PROGRAM

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, I would like to talk about the unfairness of the northern home repair program. The program provides interest-free, forgivable loans to northerners with low and modest incomes in

order to make important upgrades to their homes and increase energy efficiency. Sounds pretty good so far, but the problem is that some of my constituents in the low- and modest-income brackets own manufactured mobile homes.

In my riding of Nickel Belt, there are about 20 mobile home parks which are home to hundreds of families. Unlike regular homeowners, mobile homeowners do not own the land that their home is situated upon. The repair program requires some form of collateral, like a mortgage registration or a lien, to ensure that the program's conditions are met. Requiring a mortgage as collateral prevents mobile homeowners from applying because land ownership is required to register a mortgage.

There are other forms of collateral that mobile homeowners could use to provide assurance that the program conditions are met. While this round of applications has closed, I would suggest, in the view of fairness, that in future rounds of the northern home repair program or similar programs the government find ways of ensuring that mobile homeowners are eligible. Ricky, Julian and Bubbles need energy-efficient windows and doors, too.

TOWN OF KINMOUNT

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm honoured to rise in the House to announce that April 1, 2009, was the 150th anniversary of the day that the town of Kinmount, located in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, received its official recognition from Canada Post. Kinmount, a town of 500 residents, has a long, proud history, and is located on the Burnt River in the northeast corner of the city of Kawartha Lakes.

The Austin sawmill, originally built in 1874 to service the logging industry, has played a huge role in the town's history, and although it is in need of renovations, like a James Lumbers painting, it still stands on the bank of the river as a historic reminder of our proud heritage.

Kinmount became one of the first Icelandic settlements in Canada in 1875, and that fact has been recognized with a designation as a national historic site.

Today, Kinmount is the centre for cottagers in the area. It is home to the famous Highlands Cinemas. Built by owner Keith Stata, it is a 550-seat, multiscreen movie theatre, and a museum that is a fixture in cottage country from May to Thanksgiving.

The Artisans Marketplace is a showcase of the talents of local artists and is a must-see on any visit to the town. It was established in the late 1990s by Bruce and Patti Fleury and members of the Kinmount and Area Artisans Guild.

Labour Day weekend is the weekend that cottage country residents make their way to the Kinmount Fair to celebrate the end of summer. Its unique setting makes it one of the quaintest fairs in Ontario.

I wish to congratulate Diane Austin and the members of the sesquicentennial committee, as well as the residents of Kinmount for their proud history and their ongoing commitment to their community on this day, a recognition of their 150th birthday.

PETITIONS

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This petition regards property tax assessments.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians are angry over the volatility of the MPAC tax assessment system, the near impossibility to predict one’s assessment or to understand how it is arrived at, the patent unfairness of assessments and that the current system leaves many homeowners worried they may be forced to sell their homes; and

“Whereas changes are needed that will make Ontario’s property tax system stable, understandable, fair and sensitive to homeowners; and

“Whereas property assessments in Parkdale–High Park have risen between 28% and 45% between 2005 and 2008;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: Support the ‘freeze till sale’ plan to bring fairness to Ontario’s property tax system so that new assessments happen only at the time of sale and when a building permit is obtained for renovations totalling more than \$40,000.”

I couldn’t agree more, and I’m going to give this to legislative page Mark to be delivered.

HIGHWAY 17/174

ROUTE 17/174

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Another petition on the widening of Highway 17/174, and it keeps coming in.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Highway 17/174 needs to be expanded to four lanes from Trim Road to Prescott-Russell Regional Road 8 in order to enhance road safety; and

“Whereas Highway 17/174 has been known in the past for its hazardous condition and accident rate; and

“Whereas this highway represents the main artery for the working population of Clarence-Rockland, Alfred and Plantagenet and Hawkesbury to access the national capital; and

“Whereas the united counties of Prescott-Russell have demonstrated their interest in conducting the environmental assessment for the widening of Highway 17/174 by passing a council resolution;

« Attendu que la ville d’Ottawa a passé une résolution au conseil demandant soit à la province ou aux comtés-unis de Prescott-Russell de prendre l’initiative de l’étude environnementale pour la route 17/174;

« Attendu que le gouvernement fédéral et le gouvernement provincial se sont tous deux engagés à fournir 40 \$ millions pour l’élargissement de la route 17/174;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires soient alloués aux comtés-unis de Prescott-Russell afin de

réaliser l’évaluation environnementale obligatoire à l’élargissement de la route 17/174 de deux à quatre voies, du chemin Trim à la route régionale Prescott-Russell 8. »

Avec plaisir, je rajoute ma signature.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario:

“Tay township, Simcoe county, in the riding of Simcoe North, has a population of 10,000 persons and a taxpayer base of 5,500. There are 2,144 sewer users and 3,038 water users. The burgeoning capital and operating costs as a result of provincially legislated rules and requirements are more than the limited number of taxpayers can afford.

“The following taxpayers petition the Legislature for relief with grant funds. Recent grant applications have all been turned down.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this on behalf of my constituents.

PROPERTY TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a petition from the people of Sudbury.

“Whereas 2009 is a reassessment year in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the assessments will be phased in over a four-year period from 2009 to 2012; and

“Whereas the assessed values for current value assessments collected as at January 1, 2008, were obtained during years of high real estate activity in the province of Ontario; and

“Whereas the downturn in the current global economic climate has greatly affected the real estate market, and subsequently, the assessed values in the province of Ontario;

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

“That the Minister of Finance for the province of Ontario roll back assessed values to the base year of January 1, 2005.”

I support this petition and will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Sarah.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Rick Johnson: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable foreign workers; and

“Whereas foreign workers are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

“Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect foreign workers from these abuses; and

“Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

“Whereas a great number of foreign workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection;

“We, the undersigned, support MPP Mike Colle’s bill, the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law.”

I affix my signature to this.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. John O’Toole: I am receiving literally thousands of petitions that read as follows:

“Whereas the proposed harmonization of the Ontario retail sales tax (RST) with the federal goods and services tax (GST) has the potential to increase the costs of many small businesses and their customers; and

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“Whereas these added costs would have a devastating impact in difficult economic times; and

“Organizations such as the Ontario Home Builders’ Association have estimated that harmonization would add as much as \$15,000 in taxes to the price of a new home.

“Therefore we, the undersigned, reject the harmonization of GST and RST unless there are exemptions to offset the adverse impacts of harmonization so that the outcome will be a reduction in red tape, with no higher taxes.”

I’m pleased to sign and support this on behalf of the thousands of constituents who are opposed to the harmonization tax.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition addressed:

“Whereas Ontarians are angry over the volatility of the property tax assessment system, the near impossibility to predict one’s assessment or to understand how it is arrived at, the patent unfairness of assessments, and that the current system leaves many homeowners worried that they may be forced to sell their homes; and

“Whereas Ontarians are not complaining about paying taxes; we are complaining about a system which is volatile, unfair, unpredictable and punishing; and

“Whereas changes are needed that will make Ontario’s property tax system stable, understandable, fair and sensitive to homeowners struggling on low incomes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, support a ‘freeze till sale’ plan to bring fairness to Ontario’s property tax system, uploading the provincially mandated programs that were downloaded under the Harris regime, the implementation of all of the Ontario Ombudsman’s recommendations to reform MPAC, new assessments to happen only at the time of sale and when a building permit is obtained for renovations totalling more than \$40,000, the creation of a new category of seasonal prop-

erty owners within the broader category of residential properties, and the realignment of the multiresidential rental apartment building unit sector so that rental units are no longer assessed dramatically above the identical condo units.”

I’ve affixed my signature.

I look forward to orders of the day, when Speaker DiNovo assumes the chair for the very first time, bringing a totally new style to the Speaker’s role and inevitably a special charm here at Queen’s Park.

RAILROAD BRIDGE

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: After this performance—that was just great.

This is the second time I’m rising on a similar petition to improve the Bloor Street railroad bridge. It reads as follows—it’s to the Minister of Transportation:

“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 terms that our city government immediately reactivate the 2000 reconstruction plan and CNR immediately proceed with improvements to the bridge” and that the provincial government support this plan.

“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 with this petition, I’m delighted to sign it.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with health care in Almaguin. It’s “The Burk’s Falls Health Centre Petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Burk’s Falls ... health centre provides vital health services for residents of Burk’s Falls and the Almaguin Highlands of all ages, as well as seasonal residents and tourists; and

“Whereas the health centre helps to reduce demand on the Huntsville hospital emergency room; and

“Whereas the operating budget for Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare is insufficient to meet the growing demand for service in the communities of Muskoka–East Parry Sound; and

“Whereas budget pressures could jeopardize continued operation of the Burk’s Falls health centre;

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

“That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services, including those provided by the Burk’s Falls health centre.”

I support this petition.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I have a petition here, and it’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the McGuinty government understands the present-day economic realities facing Ontario;

“Whereas the 2009 Ontario budget reflects the need to create and maintain jobs by proposing to spend \$32.5 billion in the next two years to build more public transit and improve existing infrastructure, all the while supporting and creating 300,000 jobs;

“Whereas workers are further being helped by additional job opportunities created in the green energy sector via the Green Energy and Green Economy Act that will, if passed, create 50,000 new jobs in the first three years of its existence;

“Whereas Ontarians who work hard each and every day to make ends meet will receive much-needed income tax relief in the form of a 17% tax cut to the tax rate in Ontario’s lowest tax bracket from the current 6.05% to 5.05%;

“Whereas Ontario’s future, represented by her children, will receive the Ontario child benefit two full years ahead of schedule, amounting to \$1,100 per eligible child;

“We, the undersigned, therefore applaud the McGuinty government for introducing a budget that protects all Ontarians during these very difficult economic times by investing in our greatest resource, our people.”

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Victoria, who’s beside me today.

SALES TAX

Mr. John O’Toole: This petition sort of offsets the previous one. It reads as follows:

“Provincial sales tax holiday for purchasers of North American cars and trucks.

“Whereas potential new car and truck buyers in Ontario are having trouble accessing credit and loans; and

“Whereas the North American automotive industry is having difficulty selling vehicles, and the province of Ontario has recently lost more than 270,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector alone; and

“Whereas the auto industry in Canada supports an estimated 440,000 jobs, including many in the auto parts sector, and generates many billions of dollars in tax revenues;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Dalton McGuinty government to introduce a provincial sales tax holiday in the next provincial budget for the purchase of new, North American-produced vehicles sold in Ontario.”

It looks like this petition is out of date because the budget has passed and there was nothing in it, but I will urge the government to act urgently.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I am rising in support of Bill 151 to stop the violence on public transit. It’s addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and reads as follows:

“Whereas too many innocent people are being victimized by acts of violence while using public transit; and

“Whereas too many public transit employees are being victimized by acts of violence while working to serve the public; and

“Whereas we need to send a strong message of zero tolerance for violence on public transit; and

“Whereas anyone harming or carrying a weapon on public transit should be dealt with by the full force of the law; and

“Whereas public transit riders and workers have the right to ride and work on public transit free of violence, intimidation and harm;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to put an end to violence on public transit and totally support MPP Mike Colle’s private member’s bill,” Bill 151, “to crack down on violence on public transit.”

Since I support this bill 100%, I’m delighted to put my signature to it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: To the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario:

“Tay township, Simcoe county, in the riding of Simcoe North, has a population of 10,000 persons and a taxpayer base of 5,500. There are 2,144 sewer users and 3,038 water users. The burgeoning capital and operating costs as a result of provincially legislated rules and requirements are more than the limited number of taxpayers can afford.

“The following taxpayers petition the Legislature for relief with grant funds. Recent grant applications have all been turned down.”

I’m pleased to support this on behalf of my constituents.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GREATER TORONTO AND HAMILTON AREA TRANSIT IMPLEMENTATION ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR L’AMÉNAGEMENT DU RÉSEAU DE TRANSPORT EN COMMUN DE LA RÉGION DU GRAND TORONTO ET DE HAMILTON

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 2, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 163, An Act to

amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 163, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la Régie des transports du grand Toronto.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today on this bill, the one that changes the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act that we debated a few years ago.

Before I proceed, I'll just note the new Speaker in the chair, the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Congratulations. May you never have to throw me out, Speaker, although I can nominate some candidates in the chamber whom you would be happy to throw out.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: You know it's true.

Mr. Dave Levac: It's too important to have you here. They don't want you thrown out.

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Mr. Peter Tabuns: I know; I understand. I appreciate the concern of my colleagues in this chamber.

Madam Speaker, as you are well aware, the McGuinty government is failing the people of the greater Toronto area when it comes to dealing with transit and transportation issues. I want to talk about this bill, but before I talk about the bill, I want to talk about the context within which transportation decisions are made, not only here but in any jurisdiction.

If you are actually going to have a transportation system that works, first of all, you have to have an urban form, a city form that works, that has concentrations of particular activities and designated areas that have density, so that, in fact, transportation can be set up rationally to serve the needs of those who live in an area, and set up rationally to serve the needs of commerce and serve the needs of the environment. If you don't do that, everything you do after that is a band-aid, because if you have, as you have in the 905 now, an area where there's such a broad diffusion of uses mixed together, then it's very hard to say that there's one destination that is of critical mass, one that transit lines and transportation lines should pour into. This has consistently been a problem for those who are concerned about dealing with the transportation issue, not only in the broader GTA, but in large, sprawling cities around the world.

We went through this debate a few years ago in this chamber with the growth strategy for the greater Golden Horseshoe. The original plan that came forward was one that got a lot of critical support from those in the transportation arena and those in the environmental arena, because they saw it as advancing the cause of building a rational city form here in the GTA. Unfortunately, what happened is that, in the course of going through iterations and consultations—and I use “consultation” advisably—that plan was watered down dramatically, so that by the end, when it came before us here in this chamber, the Pembina Institute, which is widely recognized for its ability to do analysis of planning issues to deal with

environmental issues, and the Neptis Foundation, also widely recognized and praised for its analytical work, said that neither of them could, from the plan that was presented to the chamber, tell that this plan would make a difference over business as usual.

Business as usual in the GTA is projected to result in an increase of about 40% in travel times for residents over the next 20 years. So if it's taking you two hours to get from Hamilton to Toronto in the morning now, it's going to take you closer to three hours 20 years from now. That's the reality of the urban form that we're developing in the GTA and the greater Golden Horseshoe. Frankly, if that's the reality of the urban form, it doesn't matter a lot what kind of transit system you put in or what kind of subsidies you put into that transit system to make it work; you are going to have continuing paralysis and gridlock.

I was going to say that that's the context, but I need to go back just to give an example. The old city of Toronto and John Sewell, who used to be mayor of the city and still is a transit advocate and transit analyst, used to do presentations on the transit system in Toronto. The centre of what is now Toronto ran transit on a profitable basis back in the 1950s. There was enough density, and thus enough passengers on the streetcars and buses, that the system actually paid for itself. That's something that people find very hard to conceive of today. But in fact, that density was there and that transit system was able to generate that revenue. Thus, investment was made to keep building up that transit system because it could fund itself.

Then, as the old city of Toronto grew out into what was Metro and densities dropped, the densities in the newer part of the city required larger and larger subsidies to keep the system going. The new part of the GTA, the 905—new relatively speaking—has been built at densities comparable to or lower than those of Los Angeles. So no wonder we have difficulties with getting around: Los Angeles is not exactly a city known for easy traffic. In fact, it's an extraordinarily difficult place to get around in.

When the greater Golden Horseshoe growth plan was presented to us, the densities in the new areas that were prescribed by that plan were such that they would support transit going through an area every 30 minutes. I have to say to you and to those who are out there, I grew up on Hamilton Mountain—

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Yay—

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: And I remember—yes, yes. I appreciate the applause. I grew up on Hamilton Mountain, and the Upper Wellington bus comes about every 20 or 30 minutes. Well, I can tell you that there's tremendous demand for people to get cars, because people don't want to stand waiting at a bus stop for 20 to 30 minutes.

What has been put forward by the government in terms of urban form in the expanded city over the next few decades is not one that's actually going to change

demand for car use; it's going to continue to feed demand for car use. That's the foundation upon which any transportation plan has to be considered, and the foundation that we have is one of sand, not of stone; one that will be washed away, one that will be highly problematic as the world changes.

We already are facing substantial problems. People in this city are dying from air pollution, from smog. They want action, not only because people want to be healthy but because they want to get around, and at the same time, this government in power today is not doing what's needed to put in place an urban form that works and an efficient, cost-effective transit system that will supply or serve the GTA and Hamilton area.

The bill that's before us today, which enacts some provisions that were in the earlier Greater Toronto Transportation Authority bill that we debated a few years ago—which we were told at the time was the greatest thing since sliced bread and would resolve all the transit and transportation problems that have been bequeathed to man and woman—continues on that bill and puts GO Transit under the authority of the transportation authority. This is not going to substantially change the problems that are before us. In fact, in the Toronto area the transit system, notwithstanding recent announcements, has been in decline. Over the last 20 years, transit's share of all trips taken in Toronto has dropped by 10%. That's very substantial. Transit's share dropped by 10%. That's a very substantial move to greater car dependence. That's a far-reduced utilization of mass transit. Toronto has the most expensive monthly transit passes of any large North American city. So in fact there's a reality here that discourages people from taking transit, that says to them, "Do you know what? You're better off holding on to your car. You're better off coming down by car because it's very expensive to take the TTC."

I was called just recently by someone who doesn't live in Toronto, who lives in Vaughan, who would drive down into the city, park in a TTC lot and then take transit down to the centre of this city. That's being changed. Now, I can't blame the TTC; they're faced with ongoing financial difficulties. But this person who contacted me said, "You know, the simple reality for me is that if I come down from Vaughan, park in this parking lot, pay all day for parking and take transit down, it's cheaper for me just to drive all the way in." I don't know all the thinking that went on at the TTC board when they discussed this matter, but I think this person who contacted me had a reasonable point. If, in fact, for a lot of people who drive it's cheaper just to drive all the way in rather than drive, park, pay and take transit, then there will probably be more people who are going to take their car. That's a negative for us.

The ongoing underfunding of public transit in this province is hugely problematic, and we see it right here in this city. If you look at the underlying financial reality, the government of Ontario once paid more than half of transit operating costs. Now it pays less than a third. You,

Madam Speaker, and many others see the impact of that when you're on busy bus and streetcar lines. I've been on Jane Street trying to get a bus downtown and passed by bus after bus absolutely packed. Now, frankly, if there's that much utilization, you'd think you'd put on more lines, but the system has been so starved for cash that even where lines are packed, it costs the TTC to put on more service, and thus the service isn't there and it discourages people from taking transit.

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From 1990 to 2000, TTC fares almost doubled and overall bus and streetcar service dropped by 10% to 20%, resulting in crowded vehicles and locker waits—and I'm sure that you've been in those vehicles and you've had those waits. Between 1998 and 2004, TTC fares increased by 14% while the city's transit operating subsidy decreased by 17%. From 2004 to 2007, cash fares increased by 75 cents and the monthly pass reached over \$100. That cements the TTC's reputation as one of the most expensive public transit systems to ride when compared to other major North American cities—not good for our future. This does not bode well for the city and this urban region when the cost of transit is such that it discourages people from using the system.

Essentially, the reality is that TTC riders are paying more than they did in the past, and they're getting less. And after five years of Liberal governments, the TTC still gets far less provincial support than it needs. Capital spending on roads, by the way, has increased by 57%. You can see where this all leads: It leads to greater and greater use of the car, and less and less use of transit. That has broad implications for the public health of people in the city, it has broad implications for climate change, and it has broad implications in terms of economic activity because of cars, individual workers, trucks, and goods being stuck in traffic. Fare hikes mean more cars on the road, dirty air and more children with asthma.

This current car-based system is costing us billions of dollars a year in lost productivity. Transport Canada did a study in 2002 and found that current congestion in urban areas costs Canadians between \$2.3 billion and \$3.7 billion per year. That's a lot of money, a lot of wasted money, earnings that people would have in their pockets if in fact we had an urban form and a transportation system that was rational and served us in the way we needed to be served.

In the 2007 election our party called for a reinvestment in transit and a restoration of the 50% operating funds for public transit. That would have allowed cash-strapped municipalities, which were struggling with the high costs of provincially downloaded services, to actually put the money into transit that was needed—a quick, simple first step that would allow cities to address the climate change crisis and the municipal funding crisis.

We also see not only transit as a way to address the congestion crisis, but as a way to create well-paying jobs in Ontario. The Metrolinx report on congestion underlines this. The implementation of the full Metrolinx re-

gional transportation plan would create 430,000 jobs. Reduced congestion would create another 18,000 jobs. One of the things that's central to actually taking advantage of that job creation is to ensure that the rolling stock and the equipment that we buy to make sure that these mass transit systems are operative are made here in Ontario, made here in Canada. In the United States and in Mexico—NAFTA partners—they have a 50% floor on the components that have to be made domestically.

I had an opportunity a few months ago to talk to a fellow in Thunder Bay who worked for Bombardier, who's worked in the United States. He said they are very, very precise when it comes to making sure that their domestic content regulations are met and respected. There's no reason that we here in Ontario can't do the same thing, making sure that people in Ontario get the opportunity to work on this technology and make these vehicles. It's completely in compliance with all our trade agreements and trade regulations, it puts people to work, gives us the technological step up for what I think is going to be far more dominant in terms of transportation in this century. There is every reason to have that in there and, frankly, to have in the act a requirement that Metrolinx respect a much higher domestic content for purchase of rolling stock and equipment needed to make transit systems work.

It's not here in the act. It's ignoring a job creation opportunity in a province that everyone in this room and everyone who's watching knows is facing huge challenges—well, maybe it's more than challenges when you have the foundation of your economy crumbling. That may be a lot bigger than a challenge.

Right now the TTC is deciding what vendor it's going to use for its new streetcars. This is an opportunity not only for the TTC but for the province to say, "Do you know what? We can make those here in Ontario; we can make them in Thunder Bay. We can put people to work, and we, at the provincial level, will assist the city of Toronto in their purchasing, will assist them in making this happen so that we can put people to work in Thunder Bay." We need to do that, and this act needs to speak to that.

There is no question, Madam Speaker—I can see that you're enjoying your new role. I can see that. This is good.

There are a lot of reasons to move ahead with the transit plan in the GTA: economic reasons, environmental reasons, public health reasons. The question that we have to ask ourselves is: Will Bill 163, as it's written, speed the implementation of a regional transit plan or not? Will it put in place a transportation plan that will work or not?

The bill will create a single agency out of Metrolinx and GO Transit—that was already in the prior bill. The agency would have a board of directors from the private sector, not with elected officials, as is currently the case. I find this very troubling, and clearly the government doesn't. I think that when you are going to be setting up these kinds of bodies that set out regional directions, that

are going to have to negotiate their way through a thicket of political interests, having local elected representatives on there who can be called to account by the citizenry is of consequence. We don't need technocrats on these boards of directors; we can hire those. If we need someone to give us technical advice: Hire them, put them on the payroll, ask them the questions; if they don't give good advice, fire them. We don't need them on the board. We need people on the board who are responsive to the public, who know, from detailed, day-in/day-out work, what's going on in this region.

It's not clear to any of us—let's set aside whether or not you want technocrats or not on the board—whether this will actually speed up the adoption or implementation of a regional transportation plan. It's not clear that the existing Metrolinx board was actually dysfunctional. Why else would you get rid of it other than to say it was dysfunctional? But that's not clear. By most accounts, the board was functioning well. It had a good balance between urban and suburban perspectives. It had worked out good links with municipalities. It was asking challenging questions about weaknesses and The Big Move plan. It had developed expertise, and frankly, it had people on that board who had expertise from the political world and was starting to deal with substantive issues of revenue tools and specific priorities of the plan.

What we have now is a situation where key decisions have to be made, particularly as it becomes clear that not all the priority projects that people want will be funded. Will a new board with a significant number of new members be able to make those difficult decisions, will they make them in the interests of the region as a whole or will they make them in the interest of a very narrow group who may be focused entirely on, "What are the business opportunities in building transportation systems?" rather than, "How does a transportation system serve the needs of the people in this region?" Is it really beneficial to the board to get rid of the elected officials? The rationale for doing so—one has to ask.

It's interesting that Jeff Gray, who's the columnist on transit issues for the *Globe and Mail*, wrote an article this morning entitled, "What if Metrolinx Started to Matter After All?" Jeff, who has a dry sense of humour, talks about some of the more interesting moments in the history of the board, but he makes some very good notes and I want to put these on the record.

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He talks about how the government is saying it wants to move very quickly on regional transit. In the 2003 election, the Liberal Party promised to put in place a regional transit system. In 2007, when the legislation was introduced—two years later, that new regional body had produced a regional plan, but as Jeff Gray says, "And Mr. McGuinty keeps changing the rules of the game. In 2007, he overrode Metrolinx and picked out \$11.5 billion worth of transit projects he wanted to happen, making it unclear what the agency was needed for." Precisely. Why do you have these boards, why do you give them authority when in fact you're going to bypass them and put in what you

want when you want? You have to ask, what on earth is the function of this authority going to be if whenever it develops a plan, it's going to be bypassed in any event?

He says as well, "Final proof that it may not matter who sits on Metrolinx came last week, when, two days after he dismembered it, Mr. McGuinty promised \$9 billion for Mayor David Miller's transformative light-rail vision and York Region's groundbreaking Viva bus lanes." Well, there's that, eh? Why do you need the board at all if the Premier is going to say, "I'm going to have transit here, there"—frankly, I don't have any quarrel with the light-rail investments that are being made in Toronto. In fact, I give credit to David Miller and Adam Giambrone for the work that they've done setting the political table for this decision to be made, the people in this region who pressed and the people in the city of Toronto who pressed for investment in light rail. Again, I have to ask, what's the importance of this bill or even this board if in fact its presence is not needed to make substantial decisions about transit and transportation in the greater Toronto area? I'll leave his other comment about board meetings to my next point.

Second concern: Will the new board be accountable and transparent? There are certainly fears that future meetings will not be open. Jeff Gray says, "At least we journalists may not have to sit through as many Metrolinx meetings. It looks like the new body will be more likely to convene in secret, except when major policies are being passed." Frankly, when you go through the legislation, the section on when meetings may occur, it's interesting. Having been a city councillor in the past, all meetings are open except those specifically deemed to be closed; that was my experience as a municipal councillor. Here, meetings are deemed to be closed unless they're specifically legislated to be open. I think we're going to be in a situation, based on what we can see here, where people will have much less information about the transit system and how the decisions are made that ultimately shape their lives. That's of great consequence.

For example, under Bill 163, capital plans will no longer have to be made public. Why would you do that? Metrolinx didn't have the greatest record in consulting on capital projects. Staff have complained. Apparently staff have sometimes claimed to have consulted with municipalities when they haven't; so it has been said. A new requirement will only make such consultation much less likely.

Another concern: It's unclear whether a new regional super agency that's without municipal and regional representation will take into account local needs. Exactly. Many of the transit systems that Metrolinx oversees are of course regional, but Metrolinx will also oversee local transit systems such as subway extensions and new LRT lines. Local priorities can be very different from regional priorities. For example, the local priority might be to have numerous stops on a light-rail transit line with medium-density development along that line—say that fast. In contrast, the regional priority might be to have only a few stops and high-density development at the

nodes of those stops. How will Metrolinx, as a regional body, take into account those local concerns?

It's also unclear, and I mentioned this at the beginning, because it's the whole question of funding, that Metrolinx will resolve the financing issues. The Metrolinx regional transportation plan is slated to cost \$55 billion—a fair amount of money. There's no clear indication of where that money will come from. The Metrolinx board was going to wait five years before even discussing financing options. They had that length of time before they had to come forward with a proposal on how to deal with those costs. Even according to this bill, it will be at least another four years before we have a proposed investment model.

A lot of new projects have been announced, but as you're aware, those new projects in many cases depend on matching federal funds, which haven't come forward, and I'm thinking specifically of the subway line to York University. I was there for the announcement—well, it must have been one of a series of announcements over the years. I was there for the announcement a number of years ago, up in Downsview. It's still not moving, still not there.

If there have been problems in getting capital funds for transit projects, there has also been complete silence on how that larger, \$55-billion project will be dealt with.

Another issue is the whole question of owning assets. It raises concerns for me and anyone who looks at the bill. The bill appears to create a very large superstructure, in some ways like the greater Vancouver transit authority, a superboard that oversees and runs a variety of sub-entities. So we could see Metrolinx overseeing a body that owns subway lines, light rail and so on, all as part of a parent company.

One of the things that is disturbing and worrisome is the potential for all of this to allow Metrolinx to move to privatization of those bodies or, if not to complete privatization, to public-private partnerships. No one in this Legislature is interested in selling off the Spadina subway line. Is in fact the reality of this new entity that it can be used as a cover for that sort of public-private partnership or privatization of existing transit? We do need to move forward with public transit, and I underline the "public." We don't need a body whose function is going to be to expedite privatization of transit in this area.

If we look at P3s, not just in transportation but in health care, we've had huge problems with the Brampton hospital. Highway 407 is a corporation that many love to hate. The simple reality in dealing with P3s is that it is cheaper for public entities to borrow the money directly, hire companies to build whatever infrastructure they want, and then keep the ownership in public hands with public money. We don't need to turn over the ownership to private bodies. We've seen the legacy of private sector consultants with Metrolinx, which has been locked into an arguably overpriced contract for Presto smart-fare cards with consulting giant Accenture.

Next point: It's not clear that the new agency will be any better than Metrolinx in shifting the emphasis away

from highway expansion and toward public transit. We know that highway expansion acts like a magnet for new sprawl, which will only drive further expansion of those roads. We know that highway expansion removes significant vegetation, destroys wetlands and threatens groundwater recharge areas.

We know that we need to build communities that are sustainable and have transit systems, and that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, not encourage them. That means no new highways should be proposed until a viable transit option is available for those communities. Yet the regional transportation plan, even 25 years into the future, would still leave us so heavily reliant on highways that it won't significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, if we continue to build an urban form that is irrational and can't be served well by public transit, then there's no question that we will continue to have more and more demand for car-dependent or car-supporting infrastructure, with the air pollution and climate change that goes with that.

The regional transportation plan proposes new highway extensions north, east and west of the city to communities already fighting the problems of urban sprawl, and that could threaten community health and safety.

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Metrolinx has outlined transportation corridors under study, all of which appear to further new highway expansion. The major transportation corridors under consideration would connect the communities of Guelph and Bolton. That would bisect the greenbelt and put pressure to develop on protected agricultural and natural areas adjacent to the highway expansion. Again, the ongoing threats to the greenbelt, the ongoing chopping it up into smaller and smaller pieces, is not something that should be aided by this regional transportation authority—a huge problem.

The budget of two weeks ago shows the McGuinty government is still more committed to highways than transit, since it aims to increase highway spending, even as public transit is kept at the same plateau. The Ministry of Transportation needs to shift its focus from highway and road building to transit, pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. It should put a moratorium on all 400-series highway expansions while the Ministry of Transportation updates its modeling to incorporate present-day realities such as higher fuel prices, reduced demand for housing distant from urban cores and climate change impacts. It should shift money currently budgeted for 400-series highways to supporting the implementation of the Metrolinx provincial transit strategy, and should develop clear criteria for provincial infrastructure support to municipalities to ensure that funding is based on advancing the Metrolinx transit plan.

Finally, we need to make sure that Metrolinx supports, rather than undermines, strong local plans for transit. TTC has embarked on its Transit City plan, which proposes to build seven new light-rail rapid transit routes which, for those who aren't familiar with them, are streetcar lines with dedicated lanes. In total, 120 kilo-

metres of service will be added. By 2021, if fully built out, the new lines would carry 175 million riders per year. The estimated cost of building the Transit City routes is \$6 billion. The province is committed to significant funding through its MoveOntario 2020 plan.

The question that comes up, though, is where the money will come from for the city of Toronto to actually operate that system when it's fully put in place, given that it's already hard pressed to deal with its operating costs today. Metrolinx is looking at prioritizing subway expansion inside and outside Toronto over light-rail options in the city, and that has the potential to threaten the funding for light rail options that are the fastest, most cost-effective method for expanding transportation in this city.

The Yonge and Bloor lines have been a great success, but it's not clear that every subway expansion is really going to help us. The Sheppard subway line was built in an area with low density. Some density has been added, but the reality is that the government subsidy in 2005 for passengers on the Sheppard line was \$8 per rider compared with an average subsidy in the rest of Toronto of 47 cents per rider—a huge difference. If you don't have adequate density, if you don't have the transit lines put where there are people who will be taking the transit on a regular basis, then you stick a huge burden of subsidy on the city or the province. If we're actually going to reshape our transit lines, we have to be reshaping the density that's on those lines or in the region of those lines as we go forward.

If we are going to build an effective regional and local transit system, we have to go back to the drawing board and make sure we reshape the urban form to support it, and we have to make sure we have the bodies—democratically run, transparent, open and accountable—that citizens can actually interact with and call to account when things aren't working properly.

Madam Speaker, I'm sorry to say that I have another committee that I'm going to have to go to.

Interjection: No.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Notwithstanding the cries of distress from my colleagues in this chamber—I know they want so much more. I know you want much more.

Interjection: You're mesmerizing.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I can see that you are mesmerized by the glaze on your eyes.

There are substantial and fundamental problems with this bill. I know it's going to go forward to committee at some point, and maybe in the course of committee hearings some of those things will be sorted out. But at the moment there are very substantial problems that the government needs to address if this bill is actually ever going to be useful in terms of transportation and transit in the greater Toronto area.

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

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I'm glad to comment on the member from Toronto—Danforth's comments on Bill 163, and I'm happy to rise in the House today to debate on

this legislation which, if passed, would merge GO Transit with Metrolinx and build transit faster and ease congestion, as well as create jobs.

I'm particularly happy because I believe Metrolinx would give the clout necessary to do its job in creating a seamless commuter network to serve the greater Toronto and Hamilton areas. In Brampton, that would mean finally upgrading our GO Georgetown expansion, which would provide all-day, two-way service from downtown Toronto to Brampton and Georgetown. That would be a wonderful thing.

As a former municipal councillor for 12 years, I know that sometimes when councillors have a transit or any other controversial decision, they delay; they defer. Those are not good things as we come into the next year or so with a municipal election looming over us. So I'm happy Metrolinx is here, because I think if politicians were still managing the regional transportation network of this province, we would still be sitting here a year from now with councillors who were unable to make a decision, paralyzed by the thought that they may upset some electorate. That's not a good thing. We need a group of people that can make transit decisions that benefit all of Ontario, can make them in a timely way, that have the authority to do it. In Brampton, that would mean two-way, all-day GO Transit service.

We're a city of over 500,000 people and we can't get down from Brampton to Toronto in a reasonable way. When I first started here five years ago, it was four trains down and four trains back, and that was it. There was no other choice. We now have GO bus service, but certainly a city of that size should have GO service all day, just as they do on the Lakeshore. So I welcome the fact that Metrolinx will have that authority. I'm optimistic and I have great faith they're going to be able to bring these projects forward in a timely way. I look forward to them being the individuals who will give us good advice and move the projects forward more quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to comment on the speech with regard to the Metrolinx bill that's before the Legislature. I would simply say that Ontario seems to be well behind the ball when compared to other areas around the world in terms of transit. If this bill helps us get more of a regional outlook where we can solve some of the problems, then I'm all for it.

I look at the system we have now where you have the TTC, which is certainly the biggest transit system in Ontario, using those crazy tokens that are my pet peeve, whether you're going a block or the whole length of the system, which doesn't seem to make any sense to me whatsoever. As well, I always lose them, so they're making a lot of money on me. Whenever I buy them, I end up buying 10 for one, it seems. But when you look at other places around the world, whether it be Hong Kong in 1988, when I was there, which had a card that would deduct value off for the distance were you going, or London, England, which has the Oyster card which can

be used on buses or their subway system—or Paris as well.

We need an integrated system so somebody can get on the GO train at Barrie and then switch to the TTC and use one card to get all the way to their final destination. Hopefully, this bill is going to get away from parochial thinking, where everyone's looking out for their own specific interests, and get to where we have a broader view where we improve the system for the betterment of the entire province.

I hope that we will be able, through this, to develop more of an integrated system that will make a lot more sense and get our province to catch up to so much of the rest of the world that is so far ahead of us.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and let me start by congratulating you for your new role. You look like you fit right in there.

It is my pleasure to make a few comments regarding the second reading of Bill 163 and the presentation that my colleague from Toronto–Danforth has done. It was certainly a good analysis that shows both the good sides of this bill and what needs to be looked at to make it a strong bill that would protect all of the people of Ontario.

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Certainly, he talked about the underfunding that is discouraging people from taking transit. The TTC is one of the most expensive forms of public transit to use, and we all know that price has a direct effect on the number of users. At the same time, we see a government that is quite willing to invest a lot of dollars on roads, which encourages people to use their cars, versus investing into public transit. Certainly, the percentage of public money going into transit has been decreasing, as he said, with stats that were quite eloquent in this regard. Basically, fare hikes spell nothing but trouble. Whether you look at the health consequences of them, with higher rates of asthma, or you look at the climate change effect or you look at congestion on our roads, it doesn't serve any of us well, yet it's not in the bill.

Another part that wasn't in the bill and that he was able to explain clearly is the "buy Ontario." If there's going to be lots of expansion, then there should be a requirement that part of those expenses are made in Ontario, or in Canada, if they cannot be made in Ontario.

A good presentation and good analysis. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Scarborough West.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you. That's South-west, though the west is part of the riding.

I want to take this opportunity, first of all, to congratulate you on your new role and wish you all the best in the days and months and years to come.

I listened carefully to the thoughtful presentation given by the member from Toronto–Danforth, and we share a lot in common in that we both come and represent ridings here in Toronto. We know that transit is one of the highest priorities in this city and that it needs to be

fixed. This bill here, Bill 163, which we're debating today, addresses a lot of those concerns.

I just want to point out one line here which states that the corporation that will be created as a result of this act "is to provide leadership in the co-ordination, planning, financing and development of an integrated, multi-modal transportation network." It sounds like something out of Star Trek, but I think in simple, plain English, what we are trying to do is coordinate all the different services—the TTC, the GO train and all the other transit systems—so that people can move more easily throughout the GTA. That's the big issue, especially in my riding of Scarborough Southwest, where we have the Kennedy subway station as well as the starting point for the rapid transit.

This bill is nothing but good news, I think, especially when I think about people in Southwest. People who want to now use the RT are going to have a rapid transit system, a new system built over the next few years. Also, the proposed legislation will allow for a linkup with the airport. People have been asking me, "How is that going to happen?" I think the fact that we're going to build this line that runs from Kennedy station all the way to the airport is astounding; it's terrifically good news. It affects a lot of people in my riding and throughout Toronto. I support it, and I'm happy to stand today and speak in favour of it. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you. It's a great opportunity to address this legislation. Obviously, Metrolinx is a very important—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I wanted to help you out.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the goodwill of the member from Nepean–Carleton in these matters.

My thanks to the members from Brampton–Springdale, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Nickel Belt and Scarborough Southwest for their commentary.

There's no question that we all want a transit system in the greater Golden Horseshoe area and the GTA that will help people move more easily. The question before us is whether or not this bill will facilitate that.

The member from Brampton–Springdale talked about the need to deal with the access to transportation from Brampton to get into downtown Toronto, a reasonable request. I have taken the GO train out to Brampton; it's incredibly convenient, but you're right: It doesn't run that frequently.

Do you actually need to remove all the elected officials from the board of directors of the transit authority to make sure that problem is dealt with? Well, apparently not. In fact, you don't even need a board of directors for the regional authority. The Premier designated that we were going to spend many billions of dollars on new transit investments—not bad decisions in and of themselves, but frankly, made without any need to consult any

board. If the Premier wanted to deal with the transit problem or the GO problem from Brampton to downtown Toronto, that could be dealt with now. We wouldn't have to be going through all of this.

The larger question is, will we have a plan for development in this urban area that will make sense and allow us to run a transit system that is cost-effective? That question is outside the scope of this act, but right now, the answer is no. Will this act actually make a substantial, positive improvement for running of regional transit because it makes the board or regional authority less transparent and less accountable? I have real concerns that it won't. I want to hear in committee exactly what the arguments are that would make anyone want to vote for it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good luck with the tender mercies of this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The parliamentary assistant: Would she like to say a few words?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: No further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Ms. Jeffrey has moved second reading of Bill 163, An Act to amend the Greater Toronto Transportation Authority Act, 2006. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Madam House leader for the government.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): So ordered.

REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PROFESSIONS DE LA SANTÉ RÉGLEMENTÉES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 24, 2009, on the motion for third reading of Bill 141, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 141, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to start by saying thank you for the indulgence of this House. I was supposed to do my lead on March 24. Unfortunately, I had to attend a funeral. I debated a long time whether I should attend the funeral, because I didn't want this bill to be delayed. I attended the funeral of Len Kaattari. Len is a long-time family friend. When he was first married, he rented an apartment in the house of my in-laws. Their oldest son, Doug, was born in the same year that my husband was

born, and they have been friends ever since. Not a week goes by that we don't visit with the Kaattaris. So, after a Costco-sized box of Kleenex, I decided that I'd better attend the funeral so that I could be here now.

As I said, I hesitated because there is a sense of urgency in passing Bill 141. There is a sense of urgency, because I feel that the people of Ontario are presently at risk, and Bill 141 will help to close this. Bill 141 is the Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act. It is a good thing that this bill is coming forward, and it's also a very good thing that the government has agreed to vote in favour of the amendments that were put forward by the New Democrats and the Tories.

I want to talk a little bit about those amendments, because it will give you a flavour as to what this bill is trying to do. The first amendment has to do with the power of investigation. Right now, the College of Physicians and Surgeons is in front of the court with some of their members, some physicians who are being investigated, who do not agree that the college should have the power to investigate them, to ask questions and to do interviews.

The second amendment had to do with co-operation, that is, that every member or former member of the college shall co-operate fully with a person appointed to make an investigation. I cannot bring my mind around to it that we have to put those kinds of amendments in the bill. To me the college is, for every health professional, whether it be physicians and surgeons or nurses or physiotherapists, there to protect the people. So when your college comes knocking on your door as a member of a college to say that you are being investigated, it is your duty, as somebody who has a licence to practise health care in Ontario, to co-operate fully.

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But this is not the case. Some of the members are actually taking their college to court, with litigation that goes on for months and years. At the end of the day, why are they doing this? The only thing that I could see, from the deputations that came from the papers that were presented to us, was greed. Because there is money to be made, they are willing to take their college to court and they are willing to put the health and safety of the people of Ontario at risk. This is unacceptable to me. It was unacceptable to every member of the committee. So we put those amendments forward, and thankfully, the government agreed to it and included them in Bill 141.

There is no question that as health care consumers and health care providers there is no greater objective than ensuring patient safety. If you can do nothing else, do no harm. In fact, this is the express purpose of the Regulated Health Professions Act. This act, which was introduced in 1991, has had the following purpose: to protect the public from unqualified, incompetent and unfit practitioners, to encourage the provision of high-quality care, to allow the public the freedom to choose safe health care providers and promote flexibility in the role of health professionals to ensure maximum efficiency in the health care system.

Sometimes when I talk to people about what the colleges are there to do, I use this anecdote. And pick any health care professional. We'll say physicians. Just remember that 50% of physicians graduated in the bottom half of their class; 50% of nurses graduated in the bottom half of their class. The colleges are there so that there are no unqualified and incompetent people practising in Ontario. Their role is so important that it should go without saying that as a member of such a college, you have a duty to your college, because that duty is to provide safe care to the people of Ontario.

As the medical procedures and medical professions change over time, it is imperative that both the regulatory college as well as the province adjust to these changes and address any issue that could affect patient safety. While it seemed like a pretty good bill in 1991, we realized over the course of the decades since the bill came into power that more needed to be done.

Ontarians rely on regulatory colleges to ensure that patient safety is protected and the highest standards are met. From time to time, a gap emerges in the power of a regulated college and it is of very high importance that quick and decisive action is taken to close this gap. The bill before us today is part of a response to this gap, a gap that ended in tragedy. In September 2007, Krista Stryland, a Toronto real estate agent, a 32-year-old mother, underwent liposuction, a procedure in an out-of-hospital facility. Following the surgery, she went into cardiac arrest and died. The physician who performed Mrs. Stryland's liposuction was not a formally trained plastic surgeon. Plastic surgeons must have five years of specialized training and pass national exams to be certified as a specialist in plastic surgery by the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada. The physician who performed Mrs. Stryland's surgery had no hospital privileges; he was a general practitioner.

Mrs. Stryland's untimely death was a wake-up call for the province, for the college and for all of us that we must take a good look at the current system of regulations surrounding cosmetic surgery.

It is a great tragedy that nothing was done sooner to prevent her death, because in 1989, another such tragedy happened to a 44-year-old woman from Unionville, who died undergoing cosmetic surgery. There was an inquest into her death, and recommendations for greater regulation of cosmetic surgery were made way back then, in 1989. Unfortunately, there was very little change between 1989 and the other death, which happened in 2007. Today we have an opportunity to take a first step in closing that gap in oversight and patient safety.

While there is no question that Bill 141 is an important step, it's also a small step. It is unfortunate that the government has not acted faster. A year ago, the college submitted a number of regulations and bylaw amendments to the ministry, and it has taken until now for the government to come back with the needed amendment to the health professions act. However, we are happy that the bill is in front of us for third reading and, hopefully, will be voted upon favourably this afternoon.

This bill does not tackle so many of the other health issues affecting our province, and it does not tackle so many of the patient safety issues throughout all health care facilities. To date, we still lack the desperately needed Ombudsman oversight of our hospitals and long-term-care facilities. We still lack regulation for retirement homes. This province is still failing to provide seniors with a minimum standard of daily care in our long-term-care facilities.

While New Democrats are happy that the government listened to the concerns and recommendations of the CPSO, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, we are also all too aware that it is just one step of many needed to protect patients and people in Ontario.

One of the things that this bill did was highlight the need for action in the medical practice of cosmetic surgery. Some might say that cosmetic surgery is the Wild West of medical practice. This is true not only in Ontario but around the world. There have been deaths reported from Vietnam to Australia, from United Arab Emirates to Thailand.

It is likely no surprise to anyone here that we live in a world obsessed with beauty and the constant drive for perfection. Cosmetic surgery is something that more and more people are turning to as it becomes increasingly affordable and socially acceptable. It is the obligation of both the government and the regulatory colleges to understand these trends, keep current with them and ensure that safety is the primary concern of any cosmetic procedure.

According to a CPSO survey, cosmetic surgery procedures climbed 150% from 2002 to 2006. That's a lot of surgery. Toronto is the sixth-biggest market of cosmetic surgery in North America. That means there are an awful lot of people undergoing these types of surgeries, that, like every invasive surgery, are complex and come with risks. It is these patients who count on the college and the province to ensure their protection and safety.

Following the death of Mrs. Stryland, the College of Physicians and Surgeons moved quickly. They created regulatory change that would prevent a future tragedy like this. The College of Physicians and Surgeons recognized that the medical community had not kept pace with the expanded field of cosmetic surgery, and that patient safety in Ontario was compromised. People's health was at risk. They recognized the need to better monitor cosmetic surgery. Recognizing that you have a problem, I guess, is the first step in solving it, and the college should be commended for taking these actions.

CPSO conducted a survey of more than 2,400 of its members, asking if they had extended their practice to include cosmetic and aesthetic procedures without having obtained proper training. This is pretty serious. They were basically asking whether physicians were advertising themselves as cosmetic surgeons without informing their patients that they were not formally qualified to perform this surgery.

The results of this survey revealed that there were indeed physicians across the province who were perform-

ing procedures that they were not properly trained for. Following the results of this survey, CPSO moved on changes within their college to fill some of the gaps they had identified. For example, the college has now changed its policy of voluntary self-reporting, which resulted in some physicians, but not all of them, reporting undergoing the training, supervision and assessment required by the policy.

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In 2007, the college made it mandatory for all of its members to submit a detailed account of the cosmetic procedures they were providing to their patients. As well, a regulation will soon be forthcoming to limit the use of specialist titles such as cosmetic surgeon. The details of this policy change are still under way, and while we support a well-thought-out strategy, we urge both the college and the province to move as quickly as possible on this change, realizing that people's lives are at risk.

Potential patients have the right to a system and terminology that clearly distinguish between doctors with different training levels and specialties. The thought that a patient would think a physician has training and experience in a specific medical procedure when they do not is reason to move as quickly as possible in this direction. From all this work that CPSO completed following the tragic death of Mrs. Stryland, the college submitted recommendations to the Ministry of Health that have formed the basis of the bill before us today.

Many of the cosmetic procedures occurring this province are occurring in clinical settings outside of hospitals. Without this bill, the college has no right to go into these practices and directly observe physicians. This was one of the primary gaps identified by the college in the Regulated Health Professions Act, and was a limit on the college's ability to directly observe their members in practice. If you think about it, it is a very serious gap when it comes to medicine.

For professions like law or accounting, it is likely that virtually every major decision, and perhaps even the thought process of how a decision was made, is recorded on paper. If you have a question about why your accountant came to the conclusion they presented to you, they will likely be able to walk through a series of figures and columns that they have recorded and explain it to you.

This is not the same when it comes to medicine, and especially not the same when it comes to surgery. Surgery is a hands-on type of activity and partially intuitive, relying on sometimes split-second decisions, a type of thought process that may not be obvious from an external standpoint. Bill 141 lays the groundwork for observation.

Thanks to the work of the lobbying of the CPSO and the amendments brought forward by us in opposition, we have a stronger amended Bill 141. The college knew that merely observing a practice was not enough; more tools were needed. Bill 141 is now amended so that the college can interview physicians about their practice and any concerns that have risen through observation. The ability to interview physicians may make all the difference in

clarifying whether the physician or surgeon understands the implications of their practice or surgical procedure, and could help identify any gaps in knowledge before another tragedy or another accident happens.

New Democrats strongly believe in oversight. We believe in accountability of our health care facilities. We believe that Ontarians deserve a place to turn when something goes wrong for them or for a loved one across the medical system and the bureaucracy they have encountered. There is perhaps no more important an area of oversight of issues and services than one that affects their health and well-being.

It would seem that this government has an aversion to oversight, and this concerns us. New Democrats know that oversight is something we need to embrace and push forward, and that transparency is essential when it comes to health care issues. It brings with it accountability. That is why we have been pushing for Ombudsman oversight of this province's hospitals and long-term-care facilities in private member's bills, in question period and across the business of this House. Ombudsman André Marin has pushed to have his role as Ontario's independent public watchdog extended to include hospitals and long-term-care homes. As Ombudsman André Marin himself states, Ontario is the only province in Canada whose Ombudsman does not have a mandate to oversee hospitals. Despite this, Mr. Marin's office receives many serious complaints about hospitals every year that he cannot investigate. It is clear that we have another issue of oversight in front of us, and today we have an opportunity to put the appropriate structure in place to avoid future mistakes and needless deaths.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario has done excellent work on moving this issue forward. New Democrats are happy that this bill will likely pass third reading today, and we are happy to support it. Thank you.

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

There being none, Mr. McMeekin has moved third reading of Bill 141. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Be it resolved that Bill 141 do now pass and be entitled as in the motion by Mr. McMeekin.

2009 ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO DE 2009

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 2, 2009, on the amendment to the motion by Mr. Duncan that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a very sore voice today and it seems that I've been talking a little bit too much.

We're here to talk about the budget, and in my role as health critic for the NDP, I decided to focus a little bit as to the health impact of this budget.

Let me start by saying this budget has missed the mark when it comes to protecting the health of Ontarians. We need smart investment. We need a commitment to prevention and the courage to innovate the health care system. None of this will be feasible within the budget that has been put forward.

We also need a government that is willing to stand up and protect our publicly funded medicare system. This means more than just empty rhetoric about supporting medicare. This means a comprehensive and accessible public health system that is equipped with the resources required to meet the needs of the people of Ontario. But instead of a robust vision for the future of our health care system, all we see are recycled promises and dead ends. We do not see a response to the crisis in care faced across the health care system and requiring real and timely responses.

To start with, Ontario long-term-care facilities are unable to provide the care needed by their residents. Although the McGuinty government is fond of skirting the issue, the fact remains that without proper staffing levels there can be little promise of improved care. In the 2008-09 budget, long-term-care facilities were promised an extra 2,500 personal support workers and an extra 2,000 nurses. However, this promise of increased staff isn't likely to materialize before the end of 2011-12. The seniors in our long-term-care facilities today are being left out in the cold and having to wait.

Ontario Association of Not-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors—better known as OANHSS—CEO Donna Rubin had this to say about the budget: Residents of long-term-care facilities “can't wait three to four years to get the care they need today. Funding the remaining positions in this budget would have brought the sector up to an average of three ... hours of direct care per resident per day, which is the very minimum of where we need to be.” It is shameful that Ontario's poor status in providing adequate care to those in our long-term-care facilities is set to repeat for yet another year, that relief is not in sight for our vulnerable family members who call these facilities home.

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Our home care has fared no better in this year's budget. Home care services help keep people independent longer, they are an economical way of keeping our seniors healthier and they reduce the need for more expensive health-care services. Yet in this budget the government provides no assistance in reviving our failing home care system.

Reviving our home care system would have meant an immediate cancellation of the competitive bidding system. Competitive bidding has been a disaster for Ontario. It has placed profit above care. It encourages a system of cutthroat bidding rather than collaboration and best practice. It has compromised the quality of care provided to Ontarians and seriously undervalued and

undercompensated those dedicated to providing home care.

We need to move the home care system to a position where they can recruit and retain a stable workforce. Quality home care services are directly linked to continuity of care, and this can only happen when home care agencies are able to recruit and retain a stable workforce. But right now, what's happening is that they are forever recruiting and forever training new employees.

As you know, over 3,000 home care workers represented by SEIU, working for the Red Cross, are now on strike. I would say that most of what's needed to change this is available to the government without a big outlay of money, but the political will to do this is not there; the political will to look at what's ailing our home care system is not there. So the government has set the table for labour unrest.

In a part of our home care system where most of the patients are so frail, this is very worrisome to the people working for the Red Cross, to the members of SEIU. Members of SEIU are not making great demands. Most of them work for about \$12 an hour. All they're asking for is to be paid for their mileage when they go from one home to the next. I attended the picket line in Sudbury, where they were on strike. I talked to each and every one of the women—because make no mistake, most of them are women—who work hard. Home care is very hard work. You are there by yourself, helping somebody who often cannot help themselves.

In my riding, the distances are huge. One of the workers told me that she clocks about 900 kilometres every two weeks—she submits her time sheets every two weeks. Well, just think about how long it takes, in northern Ontario, to drive 900 kilometres. It takes hours and hours. She doesn't get paid for those hours of work. She only gets paid when she is in the house with the client. I cannot think of a single other worker we would ask to spend three or four hours a day on their job and not get paid for them. This is unthinkable, but this is what these women are doing day in and day out. Lots of the women who came and picketed actually got up earlier that day, went and made sure that their most vulnerable clients were looked after, and then came on the picket line. They did this because they basically care about the people they look after and they take great pride, but it is hard to stay committed to a job where it seems like nobody else cares. If we valued home care, we would treat those people with respect, which would mean paying them for the time they spend at work and compensating them for the mileage they put in to do that work, but we don't do either of these.

Red Cross workers who are on strike right now are lucky they are being represented by SEIU, but I would say large parts of the home care system are not organized; they're not being represented by a union; they don't have a voice. So what happens? As soon as the worker can find a job someplace else, they go.

In Sudbury, I would say lots of personal support workers that work in home care have their resumé in

everywhere else, because they know that they'll get better pay, a better job and better respect if they go to a hospital or a long-term-care facility. Home care is the poor cousin. Yet there is nothing in this budget to change this, nothing in this budget that would show that we value this part of the health care system, that home care has a role to play in Ontario—nothing. While the McGuinty government highlighted its already announced commitment to the aging-at-home strategy in this budget, the fact remains that without addressing the fundamental ills of the system, real progress will remain a distant reality.

In the 2008-09 budget, the McGuinty government promised to hire 9,000 additional nurses. That was received by every nursing association with a sigh of relief; everybody was happy. We knew that hiring was desperately needed throughout all of our health care facilities, throughout all of our health care systems. We need those 9,000 additional nurses, yet in the latest fall economic statement the health minister, Minister Caplan, said that this promise will have to wait. He has hinted that it would likely sit on the shelf until after the next election. So it is needed, but the government is not willing to finance it—not during this mandate. New Democrats have vocally opposed this misguided decision and know the dire consequences that the delay of these 9,000 nurses will have for the entire health care system.

Of course, at the centre of so much of this crisis are our hospitals. It is our hospitals that function as the final net for our health care system. They are the place where patients end up when they cannot be treated in other health care facilities. We rely on hospitals and their emergency rooms to provide adequate and timely care in a time of crisis. They are the backbone of many of our communities, and so very often it was our community that helped to build these institutions.

By following the budget, we now know that 70% of Ontario hospitals will be facing a deficit next year. This means that 70% of our province's hospitals will have to make cuts, and in most cases very deep cuts. As you remember, last week I read the names of a series of about 50 hospitals—I ran out of time before I could read them all—that have either cut nursing hours, failed to replace nursing positions that became vacant or straight out laid off nurses. Well, this is a scenario I'm afraid we're about to see rolled out more and more by more hospitals. We have already seen what this looks like in emergency rooms, in birthing units, in mental health and physiotherapy services shut down, leaving a crisis situation in far too many of our communities.

This morning, I presented the case of a hospital in Hamilton that has to balance their books. Although the government came through with the 2.1% increase to hospitals, it is not enough to meet the cost-of-living increase that the hospitals are facing. In order to balance their budget, they're looking at cuts. What this hospital has done is divest itself of its outpatient physiotherapy services. What does that mean? It means that people who need physiotherapy services will have to look for them in the community. It didn't sound that bad, except that in

the community, you have to pay for physiotherapy services.

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People access physiotherapy services most of the time because they're in pain. They have back pain, frozen shoulders, other musculoskeletal problems. They have enough pain that they cannot keep going on with their activities of daily living. This triggers a visit to a doctor and a referral to a physiotherapy department. But unless you have a job that covers private physiotherapy or you are wealthy enough to access those services, then physiotherapy will be unavailable for most people in Ontario.

Not very many people are able to afford private physiotherapy. So what did they do? Before, they would get referred to the outpatient physio at the hospital. The hospital physiotherapy service visits were free to the patient who used them. So people who were in pain, people who needed help, could access the physiotherapy they needed to get better faster and go back to work. This is not the case anymore. As hospital after hospital is facing deficits, they balance their books by divesting themselves of outpatient physiotherapy, which has devastating impacts on low- and modest-income Ontarians who cannot afford those services.

The government may applaud itself for its 2.1% increase to the hospital budget. But the reality is that this increase will not meet the projected cost increases hospitals are facing; the hospital association put that increase at an average of 5%. The Ontario Health Coalition has said, "This budget does not provide even what is needed to maintain existing services, or save our local hospitals from major cuts." We are standing on the edge of a crisis with our hospitals, facing restructuring that has not been seen since the Mike Harris days. It is because of these issues that New Democrats are concerned about our ability to address the crisis in alternate-level-of-care patients: people who are in our hospitals, people who are in our acute care setting, which is not appropriate for their needs.

The real strategy addressing alternate level of care would first address the fundamentals of long-term care. It would address the broken home care system and our hospitals and the desperately needed regulatory framework for retirement homes. But these tough, yet necessary, actions are nowhere to be seen in that budget.

We are very concerned about this government's ability to ignore the good advice of the organizations and individuals who know the health care system best. We listened to the deputations at the pre-budget consultations. We listened as stakeholders presented balanced and innovative approaches that were tailored to the economic reality of our time. However, the budget contains none of these recommendations, and it will be the people of Ontario who suffer because of it.

New Democrats are concerned that we saw no real investment in preventive care—what we call the second stage of medicare. Health promotion remains the impoverished cousin of the health care system. Investment

in primary care continues to roll out at a snail's pace. We are still waiting for the vast majority of nurse practitioner clinics. There's one in my riding; I'm very happy about it. There have been three more announced, yet to be rolled out, but we were promised 25. The community health centres and aboriginal health access centres still do not have the funding that is required for them to be rolled out. The money promised for dental care remains uncommitted, and the oral health needs of so many Ontarians continue to go unmet.

P3 hospitals will continue to be built, in spite of delivering less for more money and wasting taxpayers' money.

For a few priorities that New Democrats had for health care in this budget, we see that the McGuinty government has let our province down. For a province that is hurting, with families facing unemployment and stress mounting every day, the failure to address the more pressing health care needs of Ontario is a mistake that will have great repercussions on the well-being of everybody in Ontario.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I enjoyed the member's presentation. At one point in her presentation, she asked rhetorically about the political will of the government to take this kind of a bold measure. Let me just expand on a couple of measures in the budget that do indicate the political will that the member asked about.

Minimum wage was up every year that our government has been in office. It had been frozen at \$6.85 for eight years between 1995 and 2003, but it's been up every single year since 2004. It now stands at \$9.50 an hour, and if I understand the member's comment, she is saying that she's going to vote against that.

The member talked about long-term-care homes, and I think it's worth mentioning some of the issues in the budget that are important to seniors. The seniors' property tax grant is going to double to \$500 a year starting next year, 2010. This helps people stay in the same homes that they raised their families in. It will benefit more than 600,000 seniors with about a billion dollars in assistance, but if I understand the member correctly, she has indicated that she's going to vote against that.

There is more than \$360 million in the budget that the member from Nickel Belt, if I understand her correctly, says that she won't support, that will help create new affordable housing for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities; some \$175 million over the next two years to extend the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program to create new homes for low-income families, senior citizens, persons with mental disabilities and victims of domestic violence.

The member asked about the political will, and I think that the budget very clearly shows that it's there.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's always nice to see a fellow woman in the

chair, so congratulations. I know that you are very excited to be there today, and you're doing a brilliant job. I know all my colleagues agree.

I appreciate the opportunity to do a two-minute hit today on the budget, and I always appreciate my colleague from Nickel Belt's assessment of the circumstances both in her portfolio of health and also on how the budget will impact her community. We in this chamber can always count on an honest assessment from her of where she believes the Liberals' policy impacts her. We don't always agree, but I will be very honest: I always appreciate how forthright she is in bringing those concerns to this chamber.

We ought to be concerned, and I look forward to speaking about this at length this afternoon. We ought to be concerned with this budget. It was a bad-news budget for Ontario. Mr. McGuinty and his government earned the triple crown of high taxes, high deficit and high debt. This is very sad when are you looking at an economy the size of Ontario's, and also its importance. I don't have to tell you how disappointing it has become in recent years to see Ontario as the economic engine of this great nation go from first to worst.

It was just five days ago when this province, for the first time since Confederation, started accepting equalization payments from the federal government.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I think that is probably, as my colleague from Trinity–Spadina points out, hurtful. It's also shameful. This budget has done nothing to restore the confidence in Ontario's consumers, small business community, medium business community or even our corporate community that we will once again be the economic engine and pride and joy of this great nation.

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this piece of legislation.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate my colleague and friend from Nickel Belt on being very assiduous in her efforts to identify gaps and deficiencies in the health care system as it relates to nurses or home care or nursing homes, and other issues that she raised, and talking about the need to repair the system and provide the services that are so desperately needed.

What does the government do? It gives \$4.5 billion over a three-year period to corporations by way of tax cuts they don't need. These are profitable organizations that don't need my money, yet McGuinty is happily giving away \$4.5 billion or more over a three-year period and we're starving for cash to repair our health care system—and they're proud of that. Then they give a tax cut to any individual earning under \$36,000—a percentage cut from 6% to 5%. That gives me a tax cut. It gives us all, those of us who are earning over \$100,000, a tax cut. Do you or I or anyone earning anything over \$100,000 need a tax cut? Money is desperately needed to repair our health care system and make it whole and sane,

and you give me a tax cut I don't need. I just don't understand it.

To boot, they harmonize the PST and the GST, meaning that on everything you honest citizens and taxpayers pay at the counter, you're going to get whacked with a 13% tax in perpetuity. Not only are you going to get whacked in sales tax, but the corporations are going to get \$4.5 billion in tax cuts and I'm getting an income tax cut I don't need when we could use the money for our health care system. Merci beaucoup.

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

Mr. Dave Levac: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I want to jump in on the congratulatory theme that has been offered to you. Best wishes in the chair for the remainder of the House sittings.

Let me first talk to the member from Nickel Belt on her one-hour leadoff, and quickly say thank you for the comments she made in a fair and balanced way, which I know she always does.

Let me then continue with some of the effects that would happen on a local level. I did have an opportunity to speak to some business leaders and some individuals and some of the affected and disfranchised people. In terms of the budget allocation, there were some concerns raised; of course there were. Anyone who would stand up in this House on any budget at any given time would not be standing up and saying there are some concerns being laid on the table about how this bill would affect their local community. Let me tell you some of the feedback I got.

There were some concerns raised about some of the misinformation that seemed to be out there regarding harmonization as a stand-alone issue. We can stand up and start playing the game back and forth, and I don't want to do that. Here's what's happening: In terms of what we are talking about, many members on that side, in Her Majesty's loyal opposition, are on record as supporting harmonization at one time or another. Now they're saying it doesn't happen: "We don't want it now; we're not for it now."

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Say it, say it.

Mr. Dave Levac: Well, I should, but I'm not going to. I said Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

I want to suggest to you that there are the goods that are penalized out, and once we have a moment to speak to my constituents about the other benefits lying inside that budget, they begin to take a sober second thought about whether or not we're setting the table for the future. My reality is that this is an opportunity for us to set the future heading for all businesses—and the loyal opposition keeps claiming they're for business. When business says they like it, and now they don't, I think there are some misgivings—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Nickel Belt has two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First I'd like to answer my colleague from Mississauga—

Streetsville. Basically, I talked about long-term care, and he brings back things like minimum wage and talks about the credit for elderly people in their houses, etc., and says, “She’s going to be voting against all this.” I didn’t talk about minimum wage, and we’re on record as saying we want the \$10.25 an hour right now. We’re also on record saying—

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I was talking about long-term care and minimum standards of care that are not in, that had been promised, and those promises were broken. I don’t want this to be all lumped up together and pretend that I said something that I didn’t say. I never said anything about the credit for elderly people and I never said anything about the minimum wage either, although I support having \$10.25 an hour right now for a minimum-wage earner.

I want to thank my colleague from Nepean–Carleton. Certainly, she sums it up: high tax, high deficit, high debt. I’ll leave it there.

My colleague from Trinity–Spadina: The tax cuts to profitable corporations to the tune of \$4.5 billion, that’s a lot of money. We could have fixed our home care system with that money. We could have put into place the second stage of medicare and started to keep people healthy. Certainly we could have done a whole lot of things that would have helped all of the parts of the health care system that I’ve talked about, from long-term care to home care to hospitals. But none of this happened. We gave a tax cut—

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on the budget motion, and congratulations on assuming the seat of the Speaker. I’m sure you will do a great job in the years to come.

I want to take my time talking about an issue which is extremely important to my riding of Ottawa Centre, and that is the issue around the need for affordable housing. It’s an issue we have often discussed in this House. It’s an issue which I hear about constantly in my riding. I just want to take the time to share with this House as to the feedback I have received in my riding and the kind of things we need to do and the kind of actions which are being taken in this particular budget.

I think some of the members know that before I was elected in October 2007 I was quite involved in the community. I sat on the board of the Centretown Community Health Centre, a great organization in the riding of Ottawa Centre which works with vulnerable people and provides health care, both primary health care and other social and health care services, to those individuals who live in the Centretown area. One of the issues, of course, that in that capacity I had to deal with, is the need for affordable housing, the need for upgrades of existing affordable housing and the need for new affordable housing in order to undermine the existing waiting list.

Once elected, I undertook to focus on that particular issue because it impacts so many lives. It impacts the

lives of individuals who are already living on quite low incomes. It affects the lives of single mothers and their young kids. It affects the lives of new Canadians who are making their new home in the great city of Ottawa. We have to make sure we do everything in our capacity to ensure that they are living in a safe environment, in a healthy environment, in a community that fosters a positive atmosphere so they can continue on with their life and build on it.

Over the past year and a half since I’ve been elected, I’ve undertaken many consultations on this particular issue, the issue dealing with affordable housing. I had the opportunity to hold three consultations on property reduction, which I know, Madam Speaker, you have a keen interest in. Among many issues that are discussed, the need for appropriate affordable housing is an issue which comes up again and again.

I also had the opportunity to hold a pre-budget consultation in the month of January with members of the community to get their feedback, get their opinion as to where the government should be investing. There were a couple of interesting points that came out, the highlights of which I wanted to take a moment to illustrate.

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One was the need for having a stimulus package. There was almost a consensus among the group that we needed to invest in our economy, especially in these tough economic times. The point was made that we need to invest in a “smart stimulus.” I asked the question: “What do you all mean by ‘smart stimulus’?” The advice I got was that, “‘Smart stimulus’ means that we invest in infrastructure projects that will pay dividends in the long term.”

So when I raised the example such as affordable housing, everybody agreed that that’s exactly the kind of smart stimulus they’re talking about, where we invest our hard-earned taxpayer dollars in order to reignite this slackening economy through projects like affordable housing, which will not only create jobs here today but also will ensure that we are helping to better the lives of others in the long term. That really struck me because I thought that was a very important point.

The other feedback I received in that pre-budget consultation was that it’s okay to have a deficit. It was yet again a consensus opinion of that group of people that, due to the tough economic times we are in, it is okay for the government to incur a deficit to make sure that we, as an economy, grow.

So with that context, what I undertook was to inform, on behalf of my constituents in Ottawa Centre, the Minister of Finance as to the kinds of things we need to undertake. One of them was urging the Minister of Finance to invest in affordable housing in this budget. I’ll be very frank that I was quite concerned that in these tough economic times there may be this argument that, “This is not the time to invest in something like affordable housing.” A few times, I made the argument to the minister that it is extremely important. I was quite heartened to learn that the government will be making a

significant investment in affordable housing in this budget. That was news which I very much cherish, and it's news which I can assure you that the social housing providers in my community in Ottawa Centre and the greater city of Ottawa have very much relished. They have been incredibly thankful for the investment the government is undertaking to make.

I want to mention a few people who I consult on a regular basis and have an opportunity to work with, who are doing some incredible, phenomenal work in the community: Jo-Anne Poirier, for example, who is the president of Ottawa Community Housing; Catherine Boucher, who is the executive director of the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corp., another not-for-profit housing corporation, and I'll speak about one of their very important projects in a minute; Dr. Tareen, who is involved with the Multifaith Housing Initiative; Karen Sexsmith, who's the executive director of Co-operative Housing Association of Eastern Ontario, CHASEO, another great organization; and then there is a broader network of social housing providers in Ottawa called OSHN, the Ottawa Social Housing Network. All of them are collectively working together to ensure that we have affordable housing available in the city of Ottawa.

I have approached and spoken to all these organizations about the budget. In this budget, the government is investing \$1.2 billion, half coming from the federal government through their budget, which was great news to hear that the federal government is willing to invest in affordable and social housing, and the other half coming from the provincial government to ensure that we renew the existing social housing infrastructure, which in some instances is in a shambles, but also to build new affordable housing for both low-income Ontarians and for senior Ontarians.

I continued to go door-to-door as the MPP for Ottawa Centre. During this whole winter, I made sure that I visited a majority of the affordable housing buildings, mostly by Ottawa Community Housing, and to go door to door in those units to hear from the people to be able to see first-hand what shape or form these buildings are in.

Of course, there is a lot of work to do be done. None of these buildings are in a perfect state. But I'm happy to report that I have noted that work is constantly going on, there are improvements going on, and they are indicative of the investments which have been made.

In 2007, the government announced \$100 million for repair of affordable housing. Ottawa received \$8 million out of the \$100 million, based on the formula used, of which roughly \$4 million was given to Ottawa Community Housing, and the other \$4 million was given to other not-for-profit social housing providers.

Just a few weeks ago, Minister Meilleur, Minister Watson, MPP McNeely, MPP Lalonde and I had the opportunity to visit 20 Rochester, a not-for-profit housing corporation, sort of townhouses, in my riding of Ottawa Centre, where, due to the \$8 million which was given to the city of Ottawa, a lot of renovations are going on—and not just renovations, actually. Ottawa Community Hous-

ing is doing a great thing: They are actually retrofitting these units to be energy-efficient, which is an excellent way of using these dollars. Not only do you renew these properties, but you also make them energy-efficient, so the long-term cost savings are significant. It was incredible to see the kinds of positive changes which these renovations were making in the neighbourhood.

I'm very proud to stand here and report on that type of investment just taking shape, which was announced towards the end of 2007. Last year, in 2008, as part of the Investing in Ontario funding which was made, the city of Ottawa received \$77 million. Along with the city councillors in my riding, I worked very hard to make sure that a significant portion of that money is being invested towards affordable housing. I'm very happy to report, and I thank the Ottawa city council for taking that step, that \$13 million from that \$77 million is being invested in the repair of affordable and social housing: \$9 million is being allocated to Ottawa Community Housing, because they do have the largest amount of stock within the city of Ottawa; and another \$4 million is being allocated to other not-for-profit-housing.

All these investments are making a tremendous impact on the community. Like I said, when I do go door to door in Ottawa Community Housing buildings and other CCOC buildings, I can see the changes coming about, and I am starting to hear from the people that all the elevators are working, as opposed to just one or two; that units are being refurbished; and that it is having a positive impact on their health and their children's health.

But of course, unfortunately, there lingers the problem of a growing waiting list. In Ottawa we have a significant waiting list which we need to continue to address. That's why I was very happy to see that in this budget there is—where are my numbers?—about \$360 million over the next two years to create or build 4,500 new affordable housing units for low-income seniors and persons with disabilities—a significant investment.

Of course, we can use more; no doubt about it. But in these tough economic times, it is a great example of smart stimulus to ensure that we build new affordable housing units for those who very much need the assistance.

More money is also being invested in the Canada-Ontario affordable housing program—about \$175 million—which will be creating new homes for low-income families, seniors, persons living with mental illness, and victims of domestic violence.

I also want to talk about the affordable housing program funding allocated before 2007 in the city of Ottawa in the amount of \$44.8 million for 973 new units. I am happy to report that as of February 27, 2009, 17 projects with 768 units for \$42.81 million in affordable housing program funding have been approved; and 410 units are occupied and 358 units are in the planning approval stage under that program. These are new units, in addition to 4,500 units that will come through this budget, which is going to result in more affordable housing for those who are on the waiting list.

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Just in my riding, work has begun on a site called Beaver Barracks. It's on Argyle Avenue, next to the Metro Y project which has been undertaken by CCOC—the Centretown Citizens Ottawa Corp. These units are being built for people with low incomes and people with disabilities in terms of ensuring that there is accessibility in this particular project.

I am very happy to also report that CCOC is doing such good work that these units are going to be almost LEED gold standard, in that rank, in terms of the steps they're taking to ensure that the life of these units is long in terms of sustainability and cost savings. These brand new units, which hopefully should be all built by the middle of next year, will again result in helping seniors of low income, individuals of low income and persons with disabilities to make sure that they have affordable housing to live in.

All these things combined show a positive direction, a positive force in terms of things this government has been doing to alleviate the problem around affordable housing, an issue which I think we all collectively agree that we need to continue to invest in. Although we need to do more, we are moving in the right direction. As I mentioned earlier, I was quite concerned that, given that the economy is not doing well, the government may step back from the issue of affordable housing. But this budget is proof positive that that is not the case and that we are actually making a very enhanced, substantial investment in affordable housing.

Towards the end of my comments, I wanted to also talk about other steps that the government is taking in terms of reducing poverty. I mentioned earlier that I had the opportunity of doing three poverty reduction consultations in my community. Two of them were attended by Minister Matthews, who came down to Ottawa to hear directly from social service providers and from members of the community as to the kinds of things the government needs to do. And the government, through its poverty reduction strategy, has taken a very active, stepped-up role in reducing poverty for our children and their families. The aim or the target is 25% reduction in five years. That's why, once again, I was very heartened to see that in this budget, the government has decided to almost double the Ontario child benefit supplement for families with low income. So, right now, families are getting about \$600 per child annually, and once the budget is passed—if the budget is passed—that supplement will increase to \$1,100 per child annually.

Once again, when I'm out there in my community, I'm hearing from single mothers, from those who very much rely on that kind of support. I'm receiving a lot of thank yous, which is great to hear in public life when people tell you, "Thank you very much for looking after our plight. Thank you very much for considering us. Every little bit helps."

The fact that the economy is down does not mean that it only impacts those who have the means to sustain themselves. The fact that the economy is down impacts

poor people as much as anybody else. The fact that this government is investing in the needs of people who are vulnerable, people who are disabled, people who are poorer, demonstrates that the economic argument, not only from a moral persuasion point of view that it is the right thing to do, but also from the economic point of view the government realizes that that is smart economics; that investing in our vulnerable communities is ensuring that our economy grows, that it is the right thing to do.

I'm very glad that these steps are being taken in this budget, which will result in creating a more compassionate and caring Ontario. It will ensure that those who need the help, for whatever circumstances, across this province or in my riding of Ottawa Centre, have that help very much available.

At this point my time has almost run out. Again, I'm very much thankful for the investment that is being made, in the affordable housing sector through investment of \$1.2 billion and also through the increasing supplements of the Ontario child benefit. I think we will all agree, no matter which side of the aisle we sit on, that these are the right kinds of investments and that these are the people, even in tough economic times—in fact, even more because of tough economic times—who we need to invest in to make sure they have the resources necessary to live a healthy and vibrant life as equal Ontarians in this province.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for your indulgence, and I look forward to hearing views from other members.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I appreciate making comments to the speech by the member from Ottawa Centre. Obviously, as a member of the government, he's trying to sell the government message, whatever it would be. I'm not so sure if they've been at a lot of events and heard what the general public is saying about this budget. I've seen, probably, over the course of this last weekend, 500 or 600 people at different kinds of events, and I've never had one person come up and tell me they really like that budget, particularly real estate agents—real estate agents love the budget, you know? They absolutely detest this government right now, because they can't believe that after all the lobbying they did against the harmonization, the government actually put it through.

But I think what really got my attention, more than anything, were the comments this morning from the question from my colleague Ms. MacLeod, when she talked about the funeral services. I think that tops it all off. People have been used to paying a 5% fee on all funeral services, and now this government has found a way to get 13% in taxes out of someone who's lost a loved one, whether it's the coffin or the services by the undertaker. I find that a little bit detestable, in hard economic times particularly. There are some people who have had to save a lot of money to try to put money aside for a future funeral, and you know, a lot of people

preplan. It'll be very interesting to see how this government deals with those people who have already paid in advance for preplanned funerals.

We on this side of the House, the members of the PC Party, absolutely will not support this budget. We think it's probably the worst budget they've ever come out with. It's not a good budget for the future. It's not a good budget for our children. As I said earlier, we won't be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to make a few comments to the member from Ottawa Centre, who certainly was trying to sell his government's budget. I mean, he talked about social housing, which is something that we have been advocating for for a long time. There is a little bit of social housing in it, to the tune of 4,500 units, I think, and a large part of those units could all be used in my riding alone. The waiting list for social housing in Sudbury and Nickel Belt is huge, and certainly there will be very few coming our way once it's split province-wide.

As he says he has been attending events, so have I been around my riding. A lot of people in my riding work either in the mining industry or the forestry industry. Forestry was left completely out of this budget. There is nothing targeted to help start the forestry industry, and when we talk about the people from my riding who work in the mining industry, the same thing applies. There are lots of people in northern Ontario who have lost their jobs who used to work in the forestry industry. They have put forward, and certainly our party has put forward, solutions that would help the forestry industry to regain some momentum and work against the massive layoffs that have happened in that industry. But none of those ideas we can find in the budget. Same thing with the mining industry, where in the last couple of months we've seen over a thousand people from my riding lose their jobs. Those are good jobs with good benefits. Nothing in the budget will help those people.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and I have to tell you you look great in that chair. Congratulations.

I'm glad to stand this afternoon and comment on my colleague's great debate about the budget motion specifically. He spoke a lot about investment in social housing. If the budget is passed, that's going to mean a lot of money to Hamilton, to my riding, as well as his riding. It's unfortunate that the honourable member of the third party got up and said that's not enough: \$1.2 billion. I'd say that's a lot. It's not enough—there's more to do—but it sure is a step in the right direction.

On March 27, the Minister of Government Services and I held a post-budget meeting. I will tell you that at that meeting we had many positive comments, specifically about the infrastructure money, the \$32.5 billion that

will be coming to this province. That shows a great commitment to the new jobs that it's going to create for all of our cities.

What I also want to talk about is that, as the member did say, 93% of all Ontarians will be receiving a tax cut.

Again, this is a good budget for Ontario. It's the right budget for the right time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and congratulations on assuming the chair. I know you'll do a great job.

I'd like to comment on the remarks from the member from Ottawa Centre. I too listened with interest as he tried to sell, defend, the budget being proposed, Bill 141.

Just a few statistics to read into the record: The budget predicts a decline in GDP of 2.5% in the coming year, in corporate profits. This is going to lead to an increase in unemployment, with estimates of 135,000 more job losses. The total spending projected for 2009-10 is up 58% since 2003. The debt in Ontario now stands at over \$200 billion, almost double the \$111 billion it was when the government first took office.

A number of other items are also going to be taxed. It's all well and good to talk about the impressive—

Interjection: List them.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Should I list them? Okay, I can do that; I've got 57 seconds.

Just some of the items that are going to be increased: Prepared food sold for \$4 or less, postal stamps, home heating oil, Internet access fees, home renovations, manicures, dry cleaning, veterinary fees. Even when you take your dog—I was going to say take your dog to the cleaner's—to the vet, you're going to have to pay more. Your golf green fees, for those that are so engaged—I don't golf myself; no good. Anyway, there are health foods, accountant services, tobacco. It would be fine with me if they put the taxes up more—I don't smoke anymore; Haircuts and styling, air conditioning, etc.

The point I'm trying to make is that there are a number of people who are going to be hit with this budget's increased costs at a time in a recession when they can least afford it.

I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I want to extend my gratitude to the members from Simcoe North, Nickel Belt, Hamilton Mountain and Sarnia-Lambton for their comments.

I'm a bit distraught that none of them—I think the member from Hamilton Mountain, a bit—talked about what I talked about for 20 minutes: that is, the investment in affordable housing. I wasn't trying to sell a budget or anything. I spent 20 minutes actually talking about the needs of my community and how this budget will address those needs.

I don't think it comes as a surprise to me that the official opposition will not be supporting our budget, but

I think, by that token, what they are saying is that they don't agree with a \$1.2-billion investment in affordable housing, an investment which is very much needed.

I think that three times in my comments I said yes, that more needs to be done. I don't think anybody can stand here and say "This is it; we've resolved the problem." But I think that acknowledging that there is an issue and then putting substantive funding, substantive dollars to address that issue, is a positive step in the right direction, and I think we should acknowledge that. One point two billion dollars will result in 50,000 units being renovated across this province, which will result in 4,500 new units for low-income seniors, for persons with disabilities. Yes, that won't alone resolve this issue in Sudbury, but that doesn't mean that we don't do anything. The resources are always limited and we have to do our best within the resources available. I'm very proud that in this budget, one of the priorities of the government is to resolve or work towards the issue of affordable housing. The government could have easily taken a backseat and said, "We've already invested over \$100 million last year through interim money and we don't need to do any more," but no. This budget contains a smart stimulus, a stimulus which definitely my community in Ottawa Centre will benefit from.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: Madam Speaker, congratulations on your new position.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the budget motion this afternoon. Starting out, I would certainly characterize this budget as being a typical Liberal big tax-and-spend budget. I don't think there's any denying that; you just need to look back at recent history in 2003 when the McGuinty government first came into power. The budget, in rough numbers, was about \$68 billion in 2003. What we've seen since that time is really a ramping up of spending and increasing of the civil service in great numbers. So I would say that we're now in a situation where, really, spending is out of control in the government. That's the thing that the government is having the greatest difficulty in controlling.

We've had some pretty good years in the last five and a half years—boom times, really. It's a time when, if we were, as a government, as a province, being smart, we would have been getting the economy as efficient as possible and we would have been putting some money aside for the rainy day that is now hitting us big-time. Unfortunately, that's not what happened. The government, over the past five and a half years, has had far more money than they planned on having. Every budget they made, they'd end up getting more money, and they'd always spend every dime they ever got. That has happened successfully every year, so that now, the plan for the 2009-10 budget is \$109 billion. That is, on an annual basis, \$41 billion a year more than the 2003 budget.

We've seen the story before, because it was back in the Peterson years, 1986 to 1990—again, the same thing

happened. We had a boom economy, and what happened? In the time right before that, my father happened to be the Premier and Treasurer leading up to that point, and government spending was being controlled through attrition in the civil service. In fact, over a number of years, the civil service was reduced by about 5,000 members and it was done in a way that didn't affect services, and through attrition, mainly. When the Peterson government came into power, within six months of being in power it had hired all those people back and more and, in those boom years, put the province of Ontario into a precarious situation which the NDP inherited. We ended up with record deficits.

We're heading back into that territory again, where, as I say, the spending has increased dramatically. If we look at this year we just finished, the 2008-09 budget year—the budget year for the province of Ontario goes from April 1 to March 31. We just finished a financial year. Back a year ago, the government forecast a surplus for this year. Then we had the fall economic statement come out and the government was forecasting things—all of a sudden, things were unwinding pretty quickly. The government then changed to a \$500-million deficit. In the few short months until we got to the end of the financial year, we actually had a \$4-billion deficit.

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But the surprising thing, over that time frame—I think everybody was caught by surprise in the fall with the huge and rapid change of the world economic situation, but you would have thought, with this happening, the government might have tried to control spending, but they still spent more than they forecast at the beginning of the year, despite everything unwinding in the world economy.

This government's biggest challenge is that they absolutely cannot control spending. With many of the contracts they've given out to the big groups—most of them are over 12% increases over the next three or four years—they've committed to huge increases in spending with so many groups out there.

So certainly their spending being out of control is a huge concern. We just need to look at their plan for the next few years to do with the deficit and debt. I can say that I characterize it as being scary, because I think it is. No matter what you like about all the various aspects of the budget, their plan for the deficit and debt is scary. As I mentioned, for the year that just ended, which is the 2008-09 year, we had a \$4-billion deficit, despite their forecasting a surplus just a few months ago.

For next year, we're going to set an all-time record and outdo Bob Rae's deficit. If the plan goes through, they're planning on a \$14-billion deficit for 2009-10. Go to 2010-11, and they're planning on a \$12.2-billion deficit. If you go to 2011-12, they're planning on a \$9.7-billion deficit. Go to 2012-13, and they're planning on a \$8-billion deficit. If you go to 2013-14, they're planning on a \$5.8-billion deficit. If you go to 2014-15, they're planning on a \$3.1-billion deficit. So, then, in 2015-16, if it all works out, they're back to a balanced budget. Over

that time period, that's an extra \$57 billion in additional debt on top of the debt that we already have, so the government, since 2003, will have more than doubled the debt of the province in a very short time.

But I think the part that's scariest, based on the past track record of this government and past Liberal governments, is that to reach this plan which I've just outlined, they need to restrain spending to a point that they never have in the past. I'll read directly from the budget where it states, on page 89 in the plan to eliminate the deficit, "For this reason, during this same period, program expense growth will be held to an average annual growth rate of 2.3% in order to achieve balance while protecting core public services."

Well, that sounds just wonderful, except the track record of this government is 8% annual increases in spending, so for them to reach 2.3% will mean—well, I just don't believe that they're actually going to do it. That means that even though this plan of a balanced budget by 2015-16 is an awfully long way out there, I don't think it's realistic, especially when you look at the past track record of this government.

Of course, when you have these huge deficits and debt, the other thing you have as a result of that is higher interest charges. That's another real concern that goes hand in hand with this. If you look at the interest from the budget papers on page 90 of the budget—look at the interest that we're going to be paying on this deficit and debt—you'll see that it was less than \$9 billion last year, going up to the planned \$9.3 billion in interest this year, up to \$9.9 billion in 2010-11, \$11.1 billion in 2011-12, \$11.6 billion in 2012-13, \$12 billion in 2013-14, \$12.2 billion in 2014-15—up to \$12.2 billion. They're basically planning on an additional \$3 billion in interest payments to service the debt in the next few short years. That's \$3 billion that can't be used for roads, can't be used for hospitals, can't be used for nurses, health care, whatever, because it's going to be used to service the debt on this plan. I certainly have real problems with that.

Now, there are some parts of the budget which I think are positive, although for some reason the positive aspects are being delayed. For example, they're planning on eventually reducing the corporate income tax from the current rate, which is 14%, down to 10%. The problem I have with that is that first of all, if the PC government had remained in power, our current corporate income tax rate would be 8%, based on the schedule we were on, and we would be much more competitive with the other Canadian provinces and with the United States.

Secondly, their planned modest reduction is not going to take effect in this budget year, so I'm not quite sure why it is even in this budget, because it will come into effect after next year's budget. They could have just announced it next year. They go from 14% to 12% on July 1, 2010.

The same holds true for another positive aspect I recall, which is a reduction in the small business tax. That doesn't happen until next year's budget—July 1, 2010, so they go from 5.5% to 4.5%, a reduction in the tax rates for small businesses as well.

Those are positive things. We'd like to see them. We're in a crisis right now. We'd like to see action a little bit quicker on that front.

We, as the opposition, did put forward what we thought were some positive proposals for the budget. Unfortunately, the government didn't see fit to pick up really any of those proposals. We had made the suggestion of a retail sales tax holiday for the purchase of new cars to try to stimulate auto sales in this province. Certainly, the North American car companies are struggling. They have basically one customer, and that customer is the car dealers. If the car dealers aren't ordering cars, obviously there's no need to produce cars. Based on that logic and based on some past experience in this province—actually back in 1980, when my father was Treasurer and also in 1981, three times in total, my father, as Treasurer, brought in a sales tax holiday. In all cases, the result was very positive and very beneficial to the auto sector. Of course, that's a huge part of the economy here in Ontario. We had recommended that the government bring in a three-month sales tax holiday to get the dealers ordering cars and to help stimulate the manufacture of cars. That ends up working its way through so you get a requirement for more steel coming out of Hamilton etc. Unfortunately, the government didn't take us up on that.

We also had a proposal to follow the lead of countries like Germany, where they have a retire-your-ride program. I think in Germany they give you around 2,500 euros, which is roughly about \$5,000, if you trade in your car that's more than 10 years old. We in the opposition had a similar but more modest proposal recommending that the government do a couple of things to help stimulate auto sales, once again, and also to get the old cars, more than 10 years old, which are by far bigger polluters, off the road. We thought that was a reasonable suggestion, and we would have liked to have seen the government act on that suggestion. Unfortunately, they didn't pick up on that suggestion either.

We also had a suggestion to bring in a program through the credit unions to free up credit, because if you're dealing with and talking to any small companies at all, you know that getting access to credit right now is very difficult. It's a key part of growing the economy, so we had a proposal to bring in a program like they have through the banks backed up by the federal government, where the credit unions loaning out money to small companies would be backstopped by the province to 85%. In the federal program, basically the exposure for the government is the bad debts, and it has not cost a lot of money; it has been very successful. We thought that would be a good idea at this critical point in the economy, where companies are having a difficult time borrowing money, to bring in a similar program in Ontario. Unfortunately, the government didn't pick up on it.

But one of the big things that they certainly did pick up on and that I'm hearing a lot about is the HST, the harmonized sales tax. That has certainly stimulated hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of e-mails from

constituents in Parry Sound–Muskoka who are opposed to the harmonized sales tax. Basically that expands the provincial sales tax, the 8%, to many more products. It will be on hamburgers. It will be on haircuts. It will be on heating oil. Importantly, for a rural and northern area, it will be on gasoline that we put in our automobiles, and electricity. Heating oil, gasoline and electricity are some pretty basic things that, certainly, in rural and northern Ontario, you don't really have a lot of choice about. It's rare that you don't rely on an automobile in rural and northern Ontario, and that's a pretty big hit for people who live in rural areas, an 8% increase in the cost. As well, with heating oil and electricity, the further north you get, the colder it is and the bigger your bills are. That's a pretty challenging extra cost, particularly in this time when the economy is pretty slow. So I'm certainly questioning—I'm hearing from lots of constituents about this issue.

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In fact, I'd like to get on the record a couple of different concerns I've heard. Maybe I will start with somebody who is in the building business. Kaye Brothers from Milford Bay wrote to me:

"We are very much opposed to this change and hope that you will not support the proposal. Every contractor that I have spoken to is also opposed to a harmonized sales tax.

"Presently, when residential contractors (carpenters, plumbers, electricians, landscapers, painters, stone-masons and others) work for clients, there is no PST calculated or charged. If the harmonized tax is put into effect, then there will be a tax of 8% added to all the labour that is charged to every job."

They go on and on—I'm not going to have time to get all these various letters on—and this part is good:

"We believe that the underground construction industry in this area is absolutely huge. When we bid against contractors who work under the table now, we are already at a huge disadvantage because those workers are probably not charging GST (5%) nor are most paying WSIB premiums (10%), so they can undercut us by 15% and still charge the same for their labour. When the WSIB start charging owners of companies premiums on personal income, the spread will increase for us by 2% and now with PST another 8%. The incentive to work under the table will then be 5% plus 10% plus 2% plus 8%, or 25%. I have heard stories about how these changes will level the playing field, but whoever thinks this needs to have a major touch of reality. The province, in our mind, will increase the incentive for labour to work under the table, decrease the incentive for home owners to spend money on their property and therefore reduce the amount of work directed at legitimate tax-paying companies. This will reduce the amount of income tax that will be collected and then further drive up the need for more taxes."

That's from Kaye Brothers, a builder in Parry Sound. I have another one; I'm trying to get to a few different sectors who have written to me. As I say, I have hundreds

of e-mails. Here is somebody in the tourism business, Nancy Tapley from the Tapley Bondi cottage resort. First of all, she brings up the return-to-school issue, saying:

"Norm, thank you for taking up the cudgels for the early return to school, even if we weren't successful. As a follow-up comment, I can tell you that this has blown the last two weeks of the summer season wide open on my reservation board, but perhaps I can still find some retired folks whose pensions/investments haven't collapsed in the economy" So that's another issue, that it is negatively affecting tourism in Parry Sound–Muskoka.

"I am writing today, however, about the 'new and improved' harmonized tax. This will add 3% immediately in all housekeeping tourist accommodation. That will obviously have an impact on our competitiveness in a market where the cruise ships are currently offering \$35/night to try to fill their ships and other southern destinations that do not have to cope with taxes, insurance, water requirements and on and on."

She goes on to talk about how the government is talking about a district marketing fund:

"I'm actually relieved that the DMF (room tax) of 3% on accommodations is being shelved, because when it was suggested that this be made mandatory it, too, would force an increase in what we have to charge our customers, and customers are in short supply up here in the great white north, let me assure you. (It perhaps bodes well for the upcoming G8 security details, because at present you could fire a proverbial canon down main street in town and no one would be there to notice)"

She goes on to say:

"There is no reassurance that if we give them more money there will suddenly be an improvement in performance. Interestingly, my cousins were recently in Miami where they discovered that the huge pot of money raised by the DMF—that's the district marketing fund—"is now an enormous amount and the city wants to take it for upgrading hospitals and other infrastructure."

So there are concerns from tourism. I'm going quickly because I have only a couple of minutes left. I was trying to get to a few different businesses that have concerns. I have an e-mail here also from an individual:

"My wife and I are long-time residents of Muskoka. After reviewing the government's plan to harmonize the GST and PST, we feel that the plan has failed to address the economic problems that this province and the nation are currently experiencing." I would agree with that; certainly the timing is not good. "The one thing that stands out more than anything is the tax on services provided on resale houses. We understand that new housing can stimulate the economy by providing jobs, but we think you are missing the main point. The resale market is the market that most first-time buyers and seniors target, mainly because it is more affordable for them. By imposing this new 8% tax on related services on resale housing, you are unfairly penalizing the two most vulnerable groups of buyers in the country, first-time buyers and seniors. We are asking to bring this to the Premier's attention. Remember, these two groups have a

powerful voice in election year. Giving people incentives to spend their money is the way to stimulate the economy, not placing more tax on one of the necessities of life.” That was from George and Sandra McEachran.

As my time winds down, I will just wrap up, because I don't have time to get through the many various e-mails, and just say that certainly one of my biggest concerns with this budget is the huge deficits that are going to be planned for the next number of years, the huge amount of debt that is being piled on to the people of Ontario and the unrealistic plan the government has to get out of debt. I believe that's going to be a tax on future generations, and I have real concerns with that. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do appreciate the comments made by the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka. He has covered a fair amount of ground. I want to comment specifically in the area of harmonization, and I want him to speak to this because I find that many Tories and Liberals are in complete harmony with the issue of harmonization. I want him to correct me where it's possible, because I find it enigmatic here and there because I saw the quote by the member from Leeds–Grenville where he talks about how “in theory, we're supportive of harmonization.” I could never separate the theory from practice—me, at least. Maybe the member from Muskoka has a better way of separating theory from practice. He might also help me with John Tory, the former leader, who was here for a while—a respectable man—and who obviously supported harmonization. I quoted his remarks from the paper in this regard.

I know that Jim Flaherty, the finance minister, is a big booster of harmonization, and he used to be here as a provincial member, big-time. Mr. Harper is another big booster of harmonization, i.e., making sure we combine the PST and GST together so people get whacked in perpetuity on all the consumption they make. Iggy, the most erudite and learned of opposition members, supports harmonization.

So you see, member from Muskoka, there's a great deal of—how shall I say it?—collusion when it comes to the issue of harmonization between Libs and Tories. You just might want to help me to clear it up, because I really like the campaign we've got against harmonization, at least as New Democrats put it, because we're pretty clear on this. I know you are opposed to it as well, but could you demystify that connection that you have with the Liberals in this regard?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Richmond Hill.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to rise in this House and comment on the budget. At the outset, Madam Speaker, I wish to congratulate you on your new position as the Acting Speaker.

Also, I wish to commend the Minister of Finance on preparing this very specific budget to address this unique time in our economy, a time when our economy—and the

world's economy, for that matter—is in difficulty. This budget is specifically designed to address those very points of the economy.

When you look at this budget from just one specific point, for example, harmonizing or cutting taxes, yes, you may start talking about this budget and criticizing this budget. But one should look at this budget as a package. On one side, the budget provides \$1.2 billion for social housing. This budget provides construction for 4,500 new houses. This budget provides rehabilitation of 50,000 existing social housing units. This budget provides doubling of child benefits—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Do you support harmonization?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Yes, of course I support harmonization.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Say it.

Mr. Reza Moridi: Yes, harmonization: We are going to unite both taxes.

Now, this is going to stimulate our economy; this is going to help our people; and, in the meantime, we are going to provide a \$1,000 rebate for our people.

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In the meantime, this budget is proposing a massive investment in our economy—a \$32.5-billion investment in our economy. The Premier just announced a \$9-billion investment in our economy last week, which will help transit systems in Toronto and York region, in my riding of Richmond Hill, which will benefit from part of this investment.

This budget is uniquely designed for this unique time, and one should look at it as a whole, as a package.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka's interpretation of the bill, because I quite agree with it.

For the member from Trinity–Spadina, let me assure you of one thing: We opposed the harmonized sales tax, and I have never been on record as supporting it.

I don't mind telling Ontarians and this entire chamber one thing. I remember growing up, and for those of you in this chamber who are unfamiliar with my background, I grew up in a little province called Nova Scotia, and I will never forget when my father came home, as a small businessman, wondering how he was going to continue to make ends meet when the Liberal government of the day brought in the harmonized sales tax.

With that comes a little message, and my colleague the minister for colleges will remember this, because he was working on Parliament Hill at the time. The federal Liberals had 11 members in—every seat federally; the next election, after harmonization, they lost every single seat in Nova Scotia. In fact, that was where there was a resurgence of the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada. In addition to that, the Liberals in Nova Scotia also were the government; they haven't been in power since the HST. So for all the members opposite who are

receiving the same e-mails I did—and 130 of those e-mails came the day that they announced the HST—beware, your days are numbered. The Progressive Conservative Party will be back in government as a result of this budget and of this tax grab, which, by the way, will increase funeral services costs by 8%. The 13% death tax—that's what we're going to be confronted with in this chamber and this province.

This is a terrible budget for Ontario, and one person who has the most authority in this place to talk about it is Frank Miller's son, and he did a great job today in his 20-minute deputation. Thank you.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: I guess the question I have for the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka is, is there a country that he knows of that is not into deficit financing? Is there a country that he knows of that is not faced with this gravest economic downturn in 70 years? Is there a country in the world that is not involved in trying to inject money into the economy to ensure that people aren't out on the streets, that you don't fire nurses, you don't fire teachers, you don't fire police officers, that you pay their salaries?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Even Harper has changed. Come on.

Mr. Mike Colle: I remember, yes, the great Prime Minister of this country, before the election, said, "There will never be a deficit," but even Prime Minister Harper is a pragmatist, and he knows that countries like Iceland are bankrupt; he knows Ireland is bankrupt; he knows England is in a huge economic downturn; he knows that Czechoslovakia, despite IMF help, is in deep trouble; he knows that Hungary, despite IMF billions, is in deep trouble. Is there a country that he knows of that is immune from this economic climate change? Name that country that is not into deficit financing—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That sounds like a game, Mike.

Mr. Mike Colle: Well, it is. Name that country, because I don't think the Conservatives in Ontario are even alerted to the problem that the Conservatives in Ottawa understand. The world has changed dramatically. It's not the world of Mike Harris, of 1995, anymore. This is the world that has new leadership to face the new problems.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka has two minutes in which to respond.

Mr. Norm Miller: I thank the members for adding comments to my speech. Members from Trinity–Spadina, Richmond Hill, Nepean–Carleton and Eglinton–Lawrence, I appreciate your comments.

To the comments by the member from Eglinton–Lawrence with regard to deficits, which I spoke at reasonable length about, I would simply say that we don't need to be in as bad a situation as we are right now and we don't need to prolong it and make it quite as bad as is forecast. My worry is that it's going to be worse

than the plan, because as I pointed out, over the six or seven years you're planning on having deficits—an extra \$57 billion in deficits—your plan to get out of a deficit situation relies on this government doing something it has never done before, which is control spending. I argue that controlling spending is the biggest challenge of this government, particularly when you look at the sort of wage settlements they are doing with a number of significant groups out there. I see that as something that's a real threat to our future economic viability in the province. We're racking up \$57 billion in debt.

It will be interesting to see, when this is all over, whether we can spend ourselves out of recession. I think we've proven once before in the Ontario scenario that it didn't work, back in Bob Rae's day. I question whether it's going to work this time around. It seems all governments have decided to try that, so we'll see what happens. I would simply say that this government could manage their dollars much more effectively, and we don't need to be incurring the sort of debt for our kids that we are taking on, and they could do a much better job in that regard.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased today to say that I'll be splitting my time with the member for Ottawa–Vanier.

I've been following the debate very closely. Before I speak in some detail about the budget, I'd like to speak about the continuity of some of the budgets we've presented in this House in the past and some of the differences they've made. Six years ago, our schools—to use one example, our schools in western Mississauga—were all surrounded by many portable classrooms. Our Tory colleagues have just finished saying that Ontario's spending is out of control. I don't feel that way about our province, and I don't feel that way about our people and our future. Let me go back to the schools example. After a whole decade of financial starvation, our educators would disagree that Ontario's spending is out of control.

Our school boards no longer live in dread of a large snowfall causing, for example, a roof on a classroom to collapse. That's because the schools are properly maintained now, and the reason the schools are properly maintained is because the province of Ontario has spent money bringing them all up to standard. In my own area, in western Mississauga, we put some \$15 million into our Catholic schools to bring old schools up to the current standard, and we put some \$56 million into the public school system to bring some of those older schools up to standard. Now they're places kids can go to and know those facilities are the best we can deliver. That's not spending that's out of control.

Our educators now have sustainable, responsible, workable collective agreements, and we have properly maintained schools. We don't have that many portables in western Mississauga, because we've actually built new schools. In the area I represented before riding redistribution, by the year 2007 in the neighbourhoods of Churchill Meadows, central Erin Mills, Lisgar, Streets-

ville and Meadowvale, we built six brand new public and secondary schools—six new schools—and that's where all the portables went. We actually have new schools. I don't think that indicates spending is out of control. Because we've invested the money in the bricks and mortar to teach the children who are, indeed, our future, that doesn't indicate that spending is out of control. But to the members in the opposition, investing in our future means that spending is out of control. Respectfully, I disagree.

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The same is true in health care. In all that fast-growing 905 area I'm pleased to call home, we desperately needed expansion of our hospitals. We needed it for years, and it never happened between 1995 and 2003. The previous PC government didn't do anything about it; they just talked about it.

I ask: Is the money more valuable in the pockets of bondholders or in the facilities that look after our sick people? I think our community knows the answer. In my home community, Mississauga–Streetsville, the hospital that serves the neighbourhoods of Clarkson, Erin Mills, Churchill Meadows, Meadowvale, Streetsville, Lisgar and Cooksville has a quarter-billion dollar expansion under way. It's just one of more than 100 hospital projects. The Trillium hospital, which serves most of east and central Mississauga, has a brand spanking new capital program. It's finished; they're going to turn on the lights. It's going to expand and be able to serve the Trillium hospital community and the community surrounding it.

That's the intelligent use of money. That's the difference that a progressive budget makes. And building expansions to your hospitals doesn't mean that spending is out of control. Our opponents would look at that and say, "Well, let the private sector look after it," and indeed their party's program is to cut \$3.5 billion out of health care. I would say that that's out of control. You could say the same thing about our roads. You could say the same thing about our water distribution systems, our railways and our city infrastructure.

I ask: Does Her Majesty's opposition suggest to this Legislature, to the people they represent and to the province of Ontario, that building the competitive advantage that our province needs as we emerge from this recession to compete in a global economy indicates that spending is out of control? On this side of the House, Her Majesty's government says, "No, we do not think that spending is out of control." We think the province is investing wisely in the things it is going to need when we go head-to-head against every other economy in the world.

When people come to Ontario, they want to look here and say, "Is electricity affordable and available? Is your grid in good shape? How about your hospitals and schools? If people get sick here, can they go and get treatment? Is your infrastructure up to date? Are your roads well maintained? Can you transport people between where they live, where they work, where they study and where they go to be entertained?" We can in

tomorrow's Ontario, because our government has taken money we had yesterday, invested it while the sun was shining and built the kind of Ontario we need now and that we're going to need in years to come.

The centerpiece of the budget in 2009-10 is a comprehensive series of tax reforms. Our opponents have focused on just one thing: the need to harmonize two taxes that are levied to two different levels of government at two different rates under two different sets of rules, collected by two different sets of bureaucrats. Frankly, that's nuts. We have one tax that we are proposing to reform. The tax was put in place nearly 50 years ago. The world has changed in 50 years.

Fifty years ago, most of the economy revolved around the manufacture, distribution and sale of tangible goods: things you could see and touch, things you could measure. Today, a great deal of the economy revolves around the sale of services, and one doesn't speak anymore about a tangible good per se. The kind of business we attract in Ontario involves the bundling of professional services, goods, fees and all other things that those who framed the now obsolete retail sales tax 50 years ago couldn't have been expected to imagine. That's just one part of the reform.

Under the reform, some—wait for it—93% of Ontarians will pay less tax. Ninety-three per cent of the people who are watching this right now: After Ontario's proposals are implemented, should this House approve them, your tax bill is going to be lower. That's good. If you're running a small business, your taxes will be lower. This is going to be the most friendly place in North America to be able to come and set up a new business. This is the place that people are going to come to innovate.

I'd like to conclude my remarks here. Thank you very much for the time. My colleague from Ottawa–Vanier will take it from here.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais aujourd'hui vous lire une lettre qui a été publiée dans le *Droit* aujourd'hui, écrite par le président du Collège Algonquin, M. Gillett, la présidente de La Cité collégiale, M^{me} Lortie, la présidente et vice-chancelière de l'Université Carleton, et le recteur et vice-chancelier de l'Université d'Ottawa. La lettre se lit comme suit:

« En tant que dirigeants d'universités et de collèges d'Ottawa, nous avons conscience du lien vital qui unit l'éducation et la croissance économique. La formation et l'enseignement peuvent transformer des vies et une main-d'œuvre qualifiée et compétente peut produire et attirer de nouvelles occasions de développement. Pour sa part, la recherche crée de nouvelles connaissances qui stimulent l'activité économique, attirent des investissements et rehaussent à la fois notre qualité et notre niveau de vie.

« Mais pour que tout cela arrive, le gouvernement doit comprendre ce lien et faire de l'éducation une priorité. Et c'est exactement ce que le gouvernement McGuinty a fait la semaine dernière.

« En investissant plus de 780 millions de dollars dans des projets d'immobilisations, le gouvernement de

l'Ontario permettra aux universités et aux collèges de moderniser leurs installations et d'augmenter leurs capacités à long terme en matière de recherche, d'enseignement et de formation professionnelle.

«Jumelés à une contribution de contrepartie du gouvernement fédéral, ces nouveaux fonds permettront à des campus aux budgets serrés de développer ou rénover leurs installations et se doter des équipements de pointe essentiels au maintien de leur dynamisme.

«De plus, le budget de cette année aidera l'Ontario à gagner, à l'échelle mondiale, la réputation d'une province qui se démarque dans l'économie du savoir et où le talent afflue. Les 715 millions de dollars à l'appui de la recherche et des partenariats pour l'innovation, de même que les 10 millions consentis pour enrichir les bourses d'études supérieures.

«Nous saluons aussi l'investissement de 150 millions de dollars en aide immédiate non renouvelable destinée à atténuer les importantes pressions financières découlant de l'accroissement des effectifs étudiants et des frais de fonctionnement des universités et des collèges.

«Le gouvernement de l'Ontario a prévu du financement au cours des deux prochaines années pour la formation professionnelle et des initiatives d'alphabétisation. Les emplois de demain dépendent des programmes de formation disponibles aujourd'hui. Aussi, les universités et les collèges doivent être en mesure d'outiller adéquatement les travailleurs actuels et futurs. Qu'il s'agisse d'un finissant du secondaire à la recherche d'un diplôme collégial ou universitaire ou d'un adulte cherchant à perfectionner ses compétences, le résultat sera le même : une main-d'œuvre ontarienne hautement qualifiée.

«Le budget 2009 n'oublie pas l'entreprise privée; il propose entre autres une bonification substantielle du crédit d'impôt applicable aux salaires versés aux étudiants stagiaires inscrits aux programmes d'enseignement coopératif des universités et des collèges ontariens. De plus, le Réseau collégial pour l'innovation industrielle recevra 10 millions de dollars sur trois ans pour soutenir les petites et moyennes entreprises dans leurs activités de recherche appliquée, de transfert de technologie et de commercialisation.

«Une récente étude—commandée par le premier ministre Dalton McGuinty—sur les moyens d'assurer la prospérité et la compétitivité indique que l'Ontario "doit augmenter le pourcentage de jeunes qui fréquentent les collèges et les universités afin de créer un bassin de candidats suffisant pour pourvoir les postes exigeant une éducation postsecondaire, ce qui représente 70 % des emplois qui seront créés au cours des prochaines décennies".

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«Le gouvernement McGuinty mérite un "A" à son bulletin pour avoir inscrit l'éducation, la recherche et la formation professionnelle parmi les priorités de son budget 2009.»

These college and university presidents believe that the McGuinty government deserves an A on their report

card because they have put an emphasis on education, research and professional training among the priorities in the 2009 budget.

Ça me fait plaisir de me lever aujourd'hui pour parler sur ce budget, un budget dans un temps où la conjoncture économique est quand même assez chancelante. Nous ne sommes pas la seule province, nous ne sommes pas le seul pays, mais partout en Amérique du Nord et au monde, on vit des bouleversements économiques qui ne se sont pas vus depuis la fin des années 1930 et le début des années 1940. Moi, j'applaudis notre budget, et je félicite mon premier ministre pour avoir mis de l'avant un budget qui va non seulement aider les grandes entreprises à compétitionner avec les marchés extérieurs, attirer d'autres entreprises ici au Canada et en Ontario, mais aussi aider les plus démunis de notre communauté.

Alors, c'est un budget qui est vraiment équilibré et qui aide aussi la classe moyenne. Souvent, la classe moyenne, c'est la classe qui est oubliée dans les budgets. Puis, cette année, ce qui est beau dans notre budget, c'est que tout le monde y trouve son compte dans ce budget-là, que ce soit les grandes entreprises ou la petite et moyenne entreprise. On sait que les petites et moyennes entreprises sont le cœur de l'économie ici en Ontario parce qu'elles créent la majorité des emplois, et nous devons les appuyer. Nous devons les aider à se renouveler, les aider à devenir ou à rester compétitives, les aider aussi dans la formation, à former les gens dont ils ont besoin pour aujourd'hui et pour demain.

On sait, comme disaient les présidents des collèges et universités, que dans les prochaines années, 70 % des emplois qui vont être créés vont demander un diplôme collégial ou universitaire. Alors, il ne faut pas attendre, il faut le faire aujourd'hui. On a commencé, nous, depuis 2003 à investir dans la formation. C'est un investissement qui est sûr. Je dis toujours, aujourd'hui, vous faites mieux d'investir dans l'éducation et la formation, parce que ce sont des investissements sûrs. Je ne peux pas en dire autrement, là, quand on met son argent dans la banque, mais la formation dans le collège, l'éducation, c'est une formation sûre.

Je m'en voudrais aussi de ne pas mentionner l'investissement que l'on continue à faire du côté de la santé. Mes deux présidents, M. Gérald Savoie de l'Hôpital Montfort et M. Jean Bartkowiak du Centre Bruyère, sont très heureux des investissements qu'on a faits jusqu'à date dans le domaine de la santé et qu'on continue à faire. On sait qu'on a une population qui est vieillissante. On va toujours avoir besoin de plus de soins de santé parce qu'on a une population qui vieillit. Les «Baby Boomers» vieillissent, alors on ne peut pas réduire nos investissements en santé. C'est ce que l'on entend encore. Nos personnes âgées veulent s'assurer qu'elles vont pouvoir bénéficier des bons soins de santé.

Ça commence encore par la formation. C'est de former nos professionnels de la santé, encourager nos jeunes à aller dans les professions de la santé. Moi, lorsque je suis entrée pour faire mon cours d'infirmière, c'était la quatrième profession que les femmes

choisissaient, et la dernière fois que j'ai vérifié, c'était la 68^e profession que les femmes choisissaient. Alors, il faut les encourager en facilitant la formation, en les aidant, parce que moi, j'ai fait mon cours dans un hôpital. Maintenant les jeunes font leurs cours dans un collège ou une université. Lorsqu'ils arrivent dans le milieu hospitalier, ils sont un petit peu intimidés par ce qu'on leur demande de faire et ils n'ont pas la monitrice qui est à côté d'eux autres pour les aider. Alors, en gardant nos infirmières d'expérience—je ne dirais pas nos vieilles infirmières—elles peuvent les appuyer lorsqu'elles arrivent dans le milieu du travail et, de là, freiner le décrochage, je dirais, des jeunes infirmières lorsqu'elles arrivent dans le milieu hospitalier.

Aussi, c'est d'accueillir nos médecins qui arrivent ici au Canada, qui arrivent de l'étranger et qui ont une formation souvent très comparable à celle de nos médecins ici, alors qu'on puisse les aider à s'adapter en leur offrant soit une formation de pointe ou une résidence pour qu'ils puissent par la suite nous faire bénéficier de leurs talents et de leur formation.

Alors, du côté de la santé, on ne pourra jamais réduire.

Il faut investir aussi dans la prévention, ce qui a toujours été négligé. À peu près 10 % à 12 % du budget était investi dans la prévention. Il faut investir plus dans la prévention, et c'est à travers nos centres de santé communautaires, nos centres de santé familiale.

Je suis heureuse d'appuyer le budget, et oui, l'harmonisation de la taxe de vente. C'est ce que nos entreprises nous demandaient. Elles vont utiliser beaucoup d'argent avec l'harmonisation, et la petite et moyenne entreprise favorise—et les grandes entreprises, bien sûr.

Alors, madame, merci beaucoup, et je vous félicite encore pour votre nouvelle position.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add some comments on the speech on the budget motion from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville. He spent quite a bit of time talking about the education system and all the wonderful things that the current government has done. I would just like to bring some perspective from my riding of Parry Sound—Muskoka.

He was talking about the wonderful condition of the schools. I would invite him to come and look at Parry Sound High School, which I would argue is in need of repair and replacement; I would ask him to look at Huntsville High School, which, I would say, similarly is an old school that needs to be replaced; and also the fact that in Parry Sound they've gone through the accommodation review process for a primary school. They spent a lot of time at it and decided that the best thing to do was to close two schools and open a brand new school, but now the government hasn't reacted. That happened a while back, and their community is patiently waiting for some sort of announcement from this government.

I would also like to highlight the fact that in today's Toronto Star, the chair of the Toronto District School

Board points out how the government's salary negotiations are resulting in cuts to student services. He says:

"The government's decision to raise school board salaries by up to 12.55% over four years triggered a budget trade-off that comes at the expense of support for students....

"[D]ue to the latest budget, the Toronto District School Board will now have to absorb \$16 million in specific budget-line cuts to textbooks, computers and the professional development of teachers. More troubling is a \$2-million cut to support special needs children and a \$4.8-million (3.8%) cut in Learning Opportunity funds used for educational assistants, school safety measures, social workers and outdoor education."

That's the chair of the Toronto District School Board, who's saying that the salary negotiations that have been negotiated are going to result to cuts in services to kids who most need it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais faire quelques commentaires suite à la présentation de la députée d'Ottawa—Vanier.

Dans un premier temps, elle nous a lu une lettre des collèges et universités de la région d'Ottawa que je n'avais pas lue, mais qui me surprend parce que moi, j'ai fini ma maîtrise à l'Université Laurentienne à Sudbury en 1987. En 1987, j'allais à l'école dans un « portatif » parce qu'il n'y avait pas assez de salles de classe à l'Université Laurentienne pour tous les étudiants de maîtrise. On est maintenant en 2009, et les mêmes « portatifs » sont encore là parce que l'université ne reçoit pas un financement suffisant pour venir à bout de renouveler leur infrastructure.

Je ne sais pas d'où les universités d'Ottawa tiennent pour acquis qu'elles vont recevoir des fonds, mais je peux vous dire que l'Université Laurentienne, elle, voudrait bien recevoir des fonds d'infrastructure, et je peux vous dire qu'il n'y a pas une étudiante qui a hâte de retourner dans les « portatifs ». Les portatifs étaient vieux en 1987, quand j'étais là. Maintenant ils sont rendus très vieux. Il y a des maringouins qui rentrent là-dedans l'été : vraiment déplaisant. En tout cas, j'espère qu'il y aura de cet argent-là qui viendra à Sudbury également.

1630

Le deuxième est par rapport au décrochage des infirmières. Ça prend un certain culot pour dire que c'est parce que les infirmières sont mal formées, qu'elles ne sont pas prêtes à travailler dans les hôpitaux. Moi, je vous dirais plutôt que quand le gouvernement fait des promesses de 9 000 nouveaux postes d'infirmière puis qu'il ne tient pas sa promesse, ça décourage une infirmière.

La semaine dernière, j'ai lu la liste d'une cinquantaine d'hôpitaux qui ont soit diminué les heures de soins infirmiers, qui n'ont pas fait de recrutement pour des postes vacants, ou qui ont tout simplement mis des infirmières à pied. Ça aussi décourage une ou deux infirmières de se lancer dans la profession. Moi, je trouve

que nos infirmières sont bien formées. Ce serait les respecter, que ce gouvernement-là respecte leur engagement d'en embaucher 9 000 nouvelles.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Madame la Présidente, laissez-moi vous dire que j'étais vraiment enchanté d'entendre l'exposé de la ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires et ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

Je dois dire que les points sur lesquels elle a touché reflètent vraiment ce qui était inclus dans le budget. Le premier ministre Dalton McGuinty a toujours dit qu'on doit voir à l'avenir de nos Ontariens et Ontariennes. Elle a bel et bien mentionné que dans quelques années d'ici, 70 % des entreprises seront à la recherche de personnes diplômées des collèges et universités.

Les investisseurs qui veulent venir s'implanter ici même en Ontario veulent toujours s'assurer que nous avons la main-d'œuvre disponible pour rencontrer les besoins mondiaux—je dis bien mondiaux—non seulement sur le côté d'avoir les argents nécessaires pour la formation, mais on doit s'assurer que nous avons sur place l'équipement pour donner cette formation-là. Lorsque je regarde maintenant, presque tout est robotique. Si les collèges auxquels on a référés, les trois collèges, n'ont pas l'équipement en place, comment voulons-nous donner la formation nécessaire à ces personnes ?

Donc, je crois qu'il est très, très important. C'est un budget d'avenir pour nos Ontariens et Ontariennes. Madame la ministre a bel et bien touché les points qui sont très, très importants lorsqu'on regarde la formation et le développement pour les jeunes de notre province afin d'assurer l'avenir de notre province.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to add some comments to the speaker from Mississauga–Streetsville and also just a few comments. This budget is a triple-crown budget in tax-and-spend: the largest deficit and doubling of the debt on top of the largest tax hike in history. I think the Premier and the government hit the triple crown there. It was interesting to listen to a number of the comments from the member, also talking about increased spending and investments in schools and institutions to increase the viability of those institutions, which no one would argue with.

The only argument we would have is that they're doubling the debt from \$111 billion, when they took office, to over \$200 billion, and that debt will have to be paid on the backs of our children and grandchildren down the road. That debt will have to be paid. That's the only concern we've asked about is, have they got a plan in place to do that? They're relying on revenue growth that they're predicting into the future. No one could predict the situation we're in today, as one member said earlier, so I don't know how they can rely on those revenue growth projections out into the future as well.

I've heard from a number of people in my riding. Most of those people, so far, have not been in favour of

this budget; they've panned it, actually. We'll listen to the rest of the debate, and I look forward to comments from other members as the afternoon goes on.

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

M. Bob Delaney: Je veux dire merci à ma collègue la députée d'Ottawa–Vanier.

To my colleague from Parry Sound–Muskoka, five years from now we'll be talking about the success of the comprehensive tax measures that were set in motion in the budget of 2009-10. Make no mistake, no matter how many elections we're talking about, no future government will take us back 50 years to the way we did stuff in the 1940s and the 1950s.

To my colleague from Nickel Belt: In fact, nurses are very well trained in Ontario, and we look forward in the years ahead to hiring an additional 9,000 of them and to see them in our hospitals, administering care.

To my colleague from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell: merci pour vos remarques. Ce budget saura créer une économie forte et dynamique qui est capable de générer les nouvelles carrières du 20^e siècle.

To my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton: These measure are exactly what Ontario needs to emerge from this current global recession, a global recession that didn't start here, a global recession in which our principal challenge is to position the companies that are going to create wealth, create jobs, create opportunities right here in Ontario. We need those companies to be globally competitive, and one of the clearest ways that we can do that is to remove a significant impediment to them, and part of that is the series of comprehensive tax measures which, as I said in my remarks, will benefit 93% of Ontario's taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The member from Nepean–Carleton.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I appreciate the applause from my very good friend and colleague on the other side.

The very first time I was elected to this chamber was three years ago last week, and I had an opportunity to—

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you very much. My first opportunity to speak in the Legislature—we all know we have our maiden speeches. Well, my maiden speech was on the budget for 2006. As members who were here at the time would recall, the budget was actually tabled and presented in this chamber during that by-election. At the time, Ontarians from Toronto–Danforth sent a New Democrat; Ontarians from Whitby–Oshawa—Whitby–Ajax at the time—and Nepean–Carleton sent two Conservatives. We heard daily, going door to door, about the issues that were either in the budget at the time or weren't addressed in the budget.

For example, during that debate, farmers had received the brunt of cutbacks, and that was very important in Nepean–Carleton, and it still is. But what it reminds me of—and it brings me back, in a sense, to my roots, my

ability during that period of time to speak with so many constituents on a daily basis at their doorstep and hearing about what their concerns were. It doesn't take a genius when you go door to door that you don't need a polling firm; you just need to hear the good folks we represent. I have, ever since that day, represented them on some very core values, which are stronger families, safer streets and self-reliance.

Members in this chamber from the city of Ottawa or anywhere near will know the name Aubrey Moodie. Aubrey passed away last year, just shy of making his hundred-year birthday, but Aubrey was also a man—although a Conservative, he was the founder of Nepean. He rooted Nepean's pay-as-you-go philosophy and later would be not only the mayor but the long-time reeve. He was a farmer who was very centred on the value of self-reliance and living within your means and again, as I said, putting in place a principle in the former city of Nepean which was very much pay-as-you-go, so you didn't incur debt.

At the time, before amalgamation, the city of Nepean was actually the envy of what is now the city of Ottawa and the 11 municipalities that comprise the new city of Ottawa because it was able to spend within its means and build the proper infrastructure and still have money in the bank. In fact, when it went into amalgamation, Nepean actually had millions of dollars in reserves that have thus far been spent by the new city of Ottawa. At the time, I remember standing here in my place, humbled that I had an opportunity to address this chamber, and through this chamber directly to my constituents, on the values that they told me were important to them and which I had shared. Since then, I have now seen three budgets, none of which the folks in Nepean–Carleton have sent me here to support. In fact, of the e-mails and the phone calls and the people stopping me at the grocery store since this budget was tabled, I have not heard one positive sentiment from my constituents. I have heard from young mothers, many of whom my daughter shares time with their children—because I have a four-year-old and I tend to see parents at the library. They're concerned.

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I've been with business people from the Barrhaven Business Exchange. I spoke to a group of 50 business people the day this budget was tabled. They were concerned. On Friday, I hosted a semi-annual women-in-business breakfast, where over 100 businesswomen from Nepean–Carleton converge twice a year to talk shop. They were scared. There wasn't one of them that spoke positively about this budget or the rapid increase in the minimum wage or the double whammy which is called Bill 150, which we're in committee hearings for right now, which is The Green Energy Act, which will tax these business people even further.

I've had my share of phone calls as well, and people walking into the constituency office in Nepean–Carleton, right in Barrhaven, telling me that this budget will be bad for them. I look forward to reading into the record a number of e-mails that I have received from my

constituents on what they believe this budget will do to them and to our community. I just want to speak, before I get into a few of the issues around the harmonized sales tax, which is, I think, perhaps my biggest beef with this legislation, about the economic circumstances surrounding our province.

You know, it was only last year when we stood in this chamber and the Liberals told us there would be a \$6-billion surplus. They were rushing money out the back door to get to municipalities in time to spend before year-end. They were talking about how great Ontario's economy was. At the time, though, we were warning them on this side, in the official opposition, that we were headed for have-not status in Confederation, that this economic downturn was looming, and that their spending, as unprecedented as it was, was also unsustainable. A few short months later, I believe six months later, we all stood in this chamber again when the grave news was delivered by the finance minister of this province, Dwight Duncan, that our province was going to be \$500 million in the red. He hadn't seen it coming, though we had been warning him on this side for a very long period of time prior to that.

Today, we see employment in Ontario that is at its highest rate in 12 years. Ontario's spending has skyrocketed past \$100 billion. It was only 20-some short years ago when my colleague Mr. Miller's father, Frank Miller, was the Treasurer of this province and spending had reached \$18 billion; just to give you an indication of how rapidly this government has grown spending, again, at an unsustainable rate.

Since this government has taken office, almost 300,000 manufacturing jobs have up and left. To put that into context—that's an easy number to say, and wow, it sounds scary. But do you want to know something? Those 300,000 jobs that have been lost mean 300,000 moms and dads are not working in this province. It means 300,000 people trying to pay a mortgage are finding it a little bit tougher. It means 300,000 people trying to put a loved one through university or through increased medical costs or trying to purchase their first home or their first car had a few of their dreams dashed.

I think that we have to put this into perspective. When I was, I don't know, I must have been 12 or 14 years old, my dad was laid off. It was the late 1980s, early 1990s; maybe I was a little bit younger. But I will never forget that: the look of a father's face who is the breadwinner in the family, coming home, scratching his head, wondering, "How am I going to put groceries on the table?" Well, guess what? That's happening to almost half a million people in this province right now. And what have they done? They've raised their taxes by 8%.

How could you do that, especially when we look in this document of the 2009 Ontario budget, and on page 95 we look at the interest on the debt? I want to talk about not only the economic circumstances, but right now, I want to talk to debt and deficit.

On page 95, we look at the expenses that this government has incurred. It says that on programs, we're

at \$100 billion, which I mentioned. The interest on the debt—I want Ontarians who are listening to sit down, because they are going to be shocked that we are spending \$11.1 billion on paying people in New York who are bond raters, to the tune of \$1 million an hour, to meet that debt: \$11.1 billion, and it's going to grow. It's going to grow because spending hasn't been reduced, it's going to grow because taxes keep going up, and the people of this province are sending their hard-earned tax dollars to New York to foreign lenders.

That \$1 million an hour isn't being spent on the Strandherd-Armstrong bridge, which desperately needs to be built to connect two of the most vibrant villages in the city of Ottawa. It's not being used to put another MRI at the Queensway Carleton Hospital, which we found out just weeks ago is desperately required. That \$1 million is not being put to use on brand new schools that are needed in high-growth communities or to fix the crumbling infrastructure that we see in the city of Ottawa.

By the way, the last statistic I received from the Ottawa heavy construction association on what is needed to fix the current and crumbling infrastructure in the city of Ottawa is \$1 billion. That's one eleventh of the money that we're sending to New York to financiers on our debt.

This budget has brought in the largest deficit in Ontario's history. The McGuinty Liberals, in seven short years, will have doubled our debt from \$100 billion to close to \$211 billion.

On top of that—and I look forward to speaking to this a little bit more as I proceed—is the single largest tax increase in Ontario's history.

I remember when I was still a young staffer in Ottawa.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: You're still young.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm still young. I was a young staffer in Ottawa, and I remember that the current member for Ottawa West-Nepean, who was the previous MPP for Nepean-Carleton, the transportation minister of this great nation, John Baird—I remember when the Liberals brought in what we thought was the single largest tax increase in Ontario's history, the tax hike called the health premium, which goes to roads and sewers, not health care. I remember him, and I remember listening on CFRA that day for this budget that Mr. McGuinty was going to deliver. I remember that Mr. Baird at the time—I believe he was actually ejected from the Legislature, because he believed so strongly, as did the residents he represented then and the residents I represent today. They vehemently opposed the fact that they were tax-hiked.

What they equally opposed was that they were told one thing during an election, and they were given another thing after that election. They were told, "No new taxes." This is the second time we've heard, "No new taxes." It's also the second time since this government has taken office that we have been confronted with the largest tax hike in Ontario's history. That, I will tell you, is a challenge.

1650

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Pass it on to your grandchildren.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: When we talk about grandchildren—I talk about my own daughter, obviously; I have a daughter of similar age to my colleague from Simcoe North's granddaughter—it's that generation who are going to be paying for this excessive spending. The budget predicts a decline in the GDP of 2.5%, a further decline in corporate profits of 25% and a 2% decrease in employment, with 135,000 job losses within the next year. The revenue for 2009-10 is projected at \$96 billion, but total spending is projected at \$108.9 billion. That's up 58% since 2003. Program spending for 2009-10 is projected at \$99.6 billion, up 69% since 2003. The government is now projecting a \$3.9-billion deficit in 2008-09 and a \$14.1-billion deficit in 2009-10.

Let's get this straight: A year ago today we were debating a \$6-billion surplus, and in the last 12 months we have seen that \$6-billion surplus equate to a \$3.9-billion deficit—not exactly money managers over there.

Let me talk about what I think is probably the most egregious point in the 2009 budget, and that is the harmonized sales tax. I have never been a fan of the harmonized sales tax. I have seen what it has done to families across Ontario. I have seen what it has done to families across other provinces as well, but we are going to see very quickly what the people of this province are going to be confronted with.

For the sake of perspective for the folks at home, and of course those in this chamber—particularly those in the government who haven't yet briefed themselves on what the harmonized sales tax will do—the 2009 budget will increase the cost of a variety of items, starting on Canada Day, 2010. Here's a partial list.

Prepared foods sold for \$4.00 or less, so those folks who are heading off to Tim Hortons on a Monday morning to buy coffee and doughnuts for the crowd at work—it's going up by 8%. The gasoline they're going to use to get to work and pick up those increased-price coffee and doughnuts is going to go up. The newspaper on their way to work—the Ottawa Sun and the Ottawa Citizen—are now going to go up by 8%. The stamps they're going to use for postage to pay their bills—8% more. Their home heating fuel, Internet access fees, home renovations, financial services, gym fees, snow-plowing, bus fares, taxi fares, train fares, homes over \$500,000, courier fees, landscaping are all going to be subject to an 8% increase.

Let me talk to you about what I find is probably the most dim, dark and twisted initiative in this budget. They are going to, in fact, increase funeral services by 8%.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Oh, no. That can't be true.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's true. We've all heard that taxes and death are inevitable, but thanks to Mr. McGuinty and his Liberals, the HST and the plan they're putting in place will add a 13% death tax to all funeral services, from caskets to tombstones to flowers to virtually everything to do with a funeral. This government is taxing us to the grave, and now they will tax us into death. I asked earlier today if the minister responsible for consumer services would exempt funeral

services or, at the very least, grandfather funeral services that are prepaid up to July 1, 2010, and he refused to answer.

According to the Board of Funeral Services, the average cost of a funeral in Ontario is around \$5,500, and when you add flowers, reception and casket, the costs go up to anywhere between \$9,000 and \$10,000. We're talking modestly. At the rate this group is taxing people while they're living and now while they're dead, Ontarians will be paying \$1,200 more—at least—for funeral services.

My colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke made a statement today in the Legislature. Do you know what he said? “If they're not going to stand up for the living, at least they should stand up for the dead.” That's exactly what we're doing over here.

I'm going to conclude. I have a minute left, and I'm going to read into the record a few comments from the people of Nepean–Carleton, who sent me here to challenge this “say one thing, do another thing” government who promised them twice no new taxes and twice has increased their taxes substantially.

“Please add” my name “to, I am sure, the hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who are absolutely incensed over the harmonization tax the Premier has now proposed.

“He started off with ‘no new tax ... ,’ then introduced the infamous health tax, and now the harmonization tax. We are seniors on pretty fixed incomes. We do not get the right to negotiate for any pension increase....

“We plead to you to exercise whatever means you and your party can do to stop this total madness....

“John and Carol-Lynne Cyr.”

To Mr. McGuinty: “The purpose of this e-mail is to express my disgust at the blatant tax grab associated with the tax harmonization proposed by the Liberal government.... As a former Liberal supporter, I want to advise you that I will be transferring my full support to the PC or NDP, whichever party I believe can defeat your government....

“Barrie Reynolds,” Nepean.

To Mr. McGuinty: “I would like to apply for a bailout grant. Because of the soon-to-be much higher cost of owning a house in Ontario....

“First we had the terrible health tax....

“Next higher municipal taxes....

“Next the introduction of smart meters....

“And the last straw—the big tax grab of the harmonized” sales “tax.

“Hugh Turner, Nepean.”

“I am sending this email to protest the harmonized” sales “tax. I realize it is not the Conservatives bringing this tax in. However, I hope if enough people protest this, it will be reversed.

“Pam Champagne,” Nepean.

“As a taxpayer of Ontario I would like to you know that I am vehemently opposed to the HST”—

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have some strong sympathy for the arguments that the member from Nepean–Carleton makes. I feel her anger. It's palpable. She argues that the Liberal government is leaving a deficit to her grandchildren and others.

I can just imagine how angry she is with Mr. Harper as well. Although she doesn't express it, I think it's bubbling inside, and it's exploring a way to get out. She hasn't been able to find that opportunity yet to attack Mr. Harper, but I'm waiting for it; I really am. I'm looking forward to her and other members attacking Mr. Harper for the wasteful spending and the fact that he's leaving our grandchildren and their grandchildren an approximate deficit from \$50 billion to \$87 billion. How could a good Tory do that? You've got to go after him. You have to—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Don't worry. I did.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Because I can feel the anger that you have. Don't hold back.

With respect to the issue of harmonization, I feel your anger as well. I can feel how angry you are with Jim Flaherty for agreeing to go along in the backrooms and give \$4 billion to the government so that he could do this harmonization. I know how angry you are—just say it publicly. Don't hold back. Just say it, express it, how angry you are with Harper and all the federal Tories—including Monsieur Ignatieff, our most learned of men, our most erudite of men, who is also supportive of this harmonization. Go after them. Let your heart out. Don't hold back the way you are.

By the way, to the member from Leeds–Grenville, you've got to tell him: “Why did you say in theory you support it?” Ask him to take it back. Don't hold back.

And John Tory—you tell them how you feel. Don't hold back. Give it all you've got.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's what you're here for. I can see you holding back. Don't do it anymore. Don't do it.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker, and congratulations on your appointment to the Chair. I'm sure you'll do a wonderful job.

There's been all sorts of rumours circulating out there about just what the Ontario budget is in 2009, just what it's going to mean for families and for individuals. I think Ontarians need a clear picture and I think, hopefully, this debate will bring that clear picture forward. Let's start to set the record straight on that.

1700

I think, first of all, we would all agree in this room that Ontario is in the grips of a global economic crisis. It's something we all need to come to grips with, all three parties that are represented here, and we need to do everything we can to get the people of Ontario through these difficult times and to build an Ontario that's ready to prosper when this turns around. The majority of Ontarians work for a business of some type, of some sort,

in a variety of industries, manufacturing, finance. When business is slow, it's simple: Workers suffer when business gets slow.

So what this budget has done is, it's provided Ontario firms and the companies that operate within our borders with the tools to increase global competitiveness, to attract people to begin to invest in this province in a way that's going to allow those businesses to prosper, and in a way, instead of laying off people, that companies are able to hire people, that we're going to start to be able to make announcements that Ford is hiring, GM is hiring and whoever else out there that's going through a tough time is hiring.

Now, to do this, Ontario has proposed a tax reform package that has some controversial aspects to it and something that we need to come to grips with in a mature way, and that's what this debate is all about. We're proposing, as part of the reform, to combine the two sales taxes paid into one. People should understand that that starts July 1, 2010, and it's going to combine the GST and the PST. We understand that that's going to be a hardship for some Ontarians, and we've proposed a program that's going to assist with that. I think, as the information is more forthcoming, people will begin to understand this more.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I forgot to congratulate you earlier on your appointment as Acting Speaker.

I fully support the comments made by my colleague from Nepean–Carleton. As a young mother and the youngest member in this Legislature, it probably has a bigger impact on her generation of people, more than anyone else or any other group of people in this House, because the impact will be on Ontario families. We carefully caucused harmonization before this and came to the understanding in our caucus that this was just the wrong time to even consider such a huge tax increase on the citizens of the province of Ontario.

We haven't seen the tip of the iceberg for what the impact will actually be. For someone to stand on the opposite side and say that Ford's going to start hiring more people as of 2010, or General Motors—where do you get these kinds of numbers from? Must be the same people that drew the 300,000 new jobs out of the air, or the 50,000 green energy jobs. Where do people come up with these numbers? That's one of the things that I think is important in this House, that we start to ask the government to actually show us some data that would indicate where those jobs would be created—not just a speech and a comment on the Minister of Finance's speech.

So as we move forward, and we've mentioned this before already, I'm proud of my colleagues on this side of the House. They've taken a stand against this harmonization. We're adamantly opposed to it. We will not support this budget in any way, shape or form. We look forward to the government actually caving in on some of

these things, because we think there'll be a lot of things that they'll want to exempt as they take a lot of pressure from the general public and the citizens of the province of Ontario. And as we lead up to the election in 2011, I can see them actually caving on a lot of them.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I wanted to make a few comments about the presentation that was made by the member from Nepean–Carleton and basically congratulate her on the way she was able to bring forward the views of her constituents toward the budget. Certainly, her party has a position on the budget, but she was also bringing forward the views of all of her constituents, basically, that speak of the worries and that speak of the negative perception that people from our ridings have of the budget because of the impact it will have on them and on their families. She was able to articulate that very clearly.

I thought her analysis as well as to what the debt and the repayment of the debt will mean—it means a whole bunch of opportunity lost; certainly, money that for many years in the future will have to be targeted towards the paying back of that huge debt. It's money that will not be available for creating strong programs and services for the people of Ontario. She was able to give some clear examples as to other ways that this money could be used for the good of the people of her riding, giving specific examples in health care with the MRI or other examples that we could certainly support.

So, well done. It's in the view of the Tories, which is not always something that I share fully, but I certainly share the example that she gave of her riding and the hardship that this budget will bring to the people of her riding.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to thank my colleague from Oakville, my colleague from Nickel Belt and my colleague from Simcoe North for engaging me in debate during the question period.

It's incredibly important that each member understands the budget document and its implications. When you look at seven consecutive deficits, the impact that will have on our overall debt, the problems we are going to have with our GDP, our unemployment rate—and certainly I think the biggest problem we're going to have is actually getting more Ontarians back to work. It's the name of the game. Self-reliance, meaning people working, with enough money to pay their own bills, send their own children off to school, and ensure that there's food on the table—there's no greater ability for any Ontarian than to be able to do that and work for their family.

We have in this province, no question about it, a struggling yet vast middle class who aren't looking for a handout or a big expensive government program. What they're looking for is opportunity. In the years of prosperity, the years of plenty, this province went on a massive spending spree and raided the cupboards bare. Right now we're in a moment that will be remembered

for generations to come as one of gloom and dimness. There could have been money saved during those periods of time, stored away for these rainy days that we are now faced with in this province, yet it wasn't, and now my generation and my children's generation will pay for it.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate this opportunity to make a few comments on the 2009 Ontario budget this afternoon and to present a view that's a little bit different than that presented by my friend from Nepean–Carleton just a few moments ago.

Instead of doom and gloom, I'd rather think of hope, opportunity and change. Change is not always easy. Nobody likes change. I don't like change sometimes. In general, the human condition is one that doesn't like or want to promote change. However, in this moment, in this time, we have nothing else available to us but to change. The world has changed and we must change. We cannot do what we did in the past. We cannot follow the policies, the economy and the system of the past. So we have charted a route, and our finance minister and the Premier, along with other members of the government, have worked hard to create a path of change.

I want to start off in my few minutes that I have here by reading a little quote that I have, which reads as follows: "We believe that if men have the talent to invent new machines that put men out of work, they have the talent to put those men back to work." Once again: "We believe that if men have the talent to invent new machines that put men out of work, they have the talent to put those men back to work." That's what we're doing. That, by the way, was John Kennedy. Anyway, that's what we're doing. In this budget we have invested more than ever in making Ontario's economy more competitive, which will lead to job creation and ensure that as prosperity returns, Ontario's families benefit and businesses benefit as well. If families and businesses don't benefit, then we have not done our job. But I believe we will do our job.

1710

We're helping to develop new opportunities in the green economy by investing \$250 million in a new emerging technologies fund. These are new technologies. The BlackBerry itself came from Ontario. It didn't come from the United States or from Silicon Valley; it came from Ontario. Other technologies are out there to be invented, and we're trying to encourage those new technologies, because once those new technologies are created, they create jobs.

We're providing \$50 million over five years to encourage the development of a smart electricity grid. We're developing a new \$5-million Green Jobs Skills strategy, so that Ontarians have the skills they need to seize new opportunities in the emerging green energy sector. No word is used more these days than the word "green." We want to be green, and it's talked about here in this Legislature, it's talked about in the city of Toronto, it's talked about throughout Ontario and through-

out the whole world. One of the headlines in today's newspaper was that a large piece of the Antarctic shelf collapsed. Global warming is continuing, and we need to look at ways to divert the gases, the heat and the stuff that's coming out of our machines into something that's greener. We're committed to that as a government, and that is very clear in our budget here.

We're also investing \$100 million in support of new biomedical research. We're helping turn Ontario ideas into Ontario jobs with \$50 million for the innovation demonstration fund. We're building much-needed research infrastructure with \$300 million over six years. Think of the research that has come from this province. Insulin was invented here; it wasn't invented elsewhere. It wasn't invented in the United States or England or Europe or wherever; it was invented right here at the University of Toronto. So many other innovations and so many other medicines have been invented here. Mount Sinai Hospital and the other hospitals that line University Avenue, just south of here, are full of research facilities that continue to be on the front lines of new inventions, and we want to be there with them helping them create the new medicines, the new machines and the new things needed to make people live healthier, longer and better lives.

Ontario's entertainment and creative industries employ hundreds of thousands of Ontarians. We're providing approximately \$100 million per year in proposed tax relief and \$30 million in additional supports to these industries. Everyone knows that Toronto is called Hollywood North. We want to ensure that people come here, make movies here and invest here. People who are directing and acting and all the support crew, that whole long list you see at the end whenever you watch a movie: Many of them come to Toronto, do their work, and we help them come here and make this environment fertile for them to work in. This budget does that, but it also does a lot more.

I want to go on and point out some other key points—unfortunately, I don't have much time. There's another quote here: "I believe in human dignity as the source of national purpose, human liberty as the source of national action, the human heart as the source of national compassion, and the human mind as the source of our invention and our ideas"—again, using our minds the right way, not yelling and screaming at each other but thinking things through, allowing things to happen.

We worked with the city of Toronto and the TTC, and they have a list of priorities of what they want to see to improve transit in Toronto and the GTA. We are fully funding three of their top priorities with provincial dollars, one, to get people moving around the city and, two, to create jobs.

We'll have the York Viva BRT, which will connect and run across—it's a rapid transit system that will run across town. The estimated cost of that is \$1.4 billion.

We have the Scarborough rapid transit, and I know this well because it's located, or it starts off, in the riding of Scarborough Southwest. We're going to replace the

existing RT vehicles, which is long overdue, and upgrade the infrastructure along the 7.2-kilometre route from Kennedy station to McCowan station. The Scarborough RT will be extended to Malvern Town Centre, or Markham Road. It presently stops just past the Scarborough Town Centre. This is a significant change, and an increase.

The Scarborough RT connects commuters to the Bloor-Danforth subway, the proposed Sheppard East LRT and GO rail service. It's something that the TTC has asked for, for many years. We are finally acting on that. The TTC has put this on their list—we didn't; they did—and we said to them, "Because it's at the very top of your list, or near the top, we'll undertake to do this."

There are two other key projects that have been waiting to be done and sitting in a room of the TTC somewhere, which are now going to be brought forward. One of the most exciting ones, I think, is the Eglinton Crosstown RT. It's going to be a 30-kilometre east-west rapid transit line along Eglinton Avenue from Pearson International Airport to Kennedy station in Scarborough, with an extension to Malvern. It's going to include a 10-kilometre tunnel running through central Toronto. Commuters will be able to connect to other transit services, including the TTC, Eglinton West, Eglinton and Kennedy subway stations, and to GO Transit itself.

Again, the cost is expensive—it's \$4.6 billion—but we're building for the future. This is something that will be here for a long, long time. Every successful major city that I've been to has a functioning transit system and one that many people use. Ours needs this very badly.

The third thing is the Finch light rapid transit. This will extend from Yonge Street to Humber College and east to Don Mills subway station. Commuters will have better connections to the Yonge, Spadina and Sheppard subway lines and the proposed Sheppard Avenue East LRT. Again, the cost is expensive—\$1.2 billion. Again, my comments apply: This is something we need. It's an investment that we need.

One thing that I didn't mention earlier was the Scarborough rapid transit. The cost of that is \$1.4 billion.

These are significant dollars being spent in infrastructure. Again, these are well-thought-out ideas, because they're not thought out just by ourselves. They're ideas that were thought out by the TTC and brought forward there. We consulted with them and said, "What are your key priorities?" They gave them to us, and we're acting on them.

It's expensive, but it's worth it. It creates the city of Toronto, and beyond that, it allows people from the 905, from as far away as Hamilton or Burlington, to be able to access points in Toronto without having to use cars. Perhaps the idea of using transit vehicles will become a reality.

There's a saying from a few years ago, when someone ran for President, and it is, quite simply, "It's the economy, stupid." And here it is, and it is the economy. We don't have the option to sit pat today and not do any-

thing. We don't have the option to do nothing. We have to act.

We've created a plan—it's in our budget—and that plan has been extremely well thought out. The more I go into the details of this budget, the more I see that it serves to help the families of Ontario as well as the businesses of Ontario: 93% of Ontarians will receive a tax cut as a result of this budget. So we can hoot and holler all we want about the fact that we're going to harmonize the GST and the PST. But in the end, we're not going to make money from it. We're actually doing this to help business and to make things better. Provinces that have enacted this—there have been at least three; I think they're mostly east coast provinces—have all indicated that their economies run better and that the people are better off because of this harmonization.

1720

The harmonization is not something that just we support; the federal Conservatives support it: The finance minister, Mr. Flaherty; the Prime Minister, Mr. Harper; and the Conservative government itself supports the harmonization. So when our friends across the aisle stand up and say, "How dare you harmonize the PST and the GST," they shouldn't look this way; they should look towards Ottawa and ask why Mr. Harper and Mr. Flaherty are so in favour of this and why it has been so successful in the provinces where it has already been implemented. In fact—it was discussed earlier—in British Columbia they're thinking of doing it as well. Now some of the newspapers are saying that we want to do this thing as well.

There are all sorts of tax credits in here, and generous tax credits, that provide for savings. For example, if a family makes a total income below \$160,000, they will receive three payments from the provincial government totalling \$1,000. The provincial government will also provide permanent tax relief to people with low and middle incomes through one of the most generous refundable sales tax credits in Canada. This new credit will provide up to \$260 per year for each adult and child.

I want to underline one other point. If people listening are not concerned with what I have to say, at least remember this one point—and it's kind of hidden in the budget, but it's quite important—a 16.5% cut in the tax rate on the first \$36,840 of taxable income earned by all Ontarians. So when you do your income taxes and you have to do the part that is exempt from taxes, we're going to have a larger portion that's exempt from taxes than any other province. No other province will have this sort of tax relief. When I do my income taxes in the years ahead, I will know that Ontario—not British Columbia, not Quebec, not Nova Scotia, but Ontario—has the lowest income tax rate available in that portion that you don't pay taxes on at the start.

The list goes on and on. It would take me hours to talk about all of it, but I want to focus on a few last points. One of them is something that appeared in the Toronto Star. It was an editorial on April 4, 2009. I didn't write this. This didn't come from the Premier's office or from

any other Liberal office. This came from the Toronto Star, and I want to read it. The headline on the editorial for April 4 says, “Scaring Voters on Harmonized Tax.”

“All week at Queen’s Park, the opposition Conservatives have been hammering the Liberal government’s plan to ‘harmonize’ the GST and the provincial sales tax. They have called it ‘the biggest tax grab in Ontario’s history’ and ‘a war on Ontario families.’

“There is a word for this: demagoguery, or pandering to people’s fears in order to win votes.

“The Conservatives don’t really believe that the harmonization of the two sales taxes is a bad idea. Indeed, in the recent past they supported the idea. That is understandable, because one of the biggest advocates of harmonization is their soulmate and former Queen’s Park colleague, federal Finance Minister Jim Flaherty.

“Flaherty likes harmonization because it would substantially lessen the tax burden on businesses, which he believes is too high. The provincial Conservatives used to believe that, too. Until now.

“Seeing an opportunity to lure middle-class voters away from the governing Liberals, the Conservatives are now attacking harmonization as a new tax on everything from the Internet to home heating fuel. ‘Even on a cup of Tim Hortons coffee,’ intones interim Conservative leader Bob Runciman.

“These and other items are currently subject to the 5% GST but not to the 8% provincial sales tax. Under harmonization—due to take effect July 1, 2010—they will all be subject to the combined 13% tax, thereby increasing the burden for consumers. But this would be offset in two ways.

“First of all, experience in the four provinces that have already harmonized their sales taxes shows that consumers benefited as businesses reduced their prices—not increased their prices, reduced their prices—“to reflect their lower costs, as their inputs were no longer subject to the provincial sales tax.

“Secondly, the Ontario government has wisely taken steps to ease the tax burden on individuals, including a one-time payment of \$1,000 to every family with a combined income below \$160,000 and a permanent cut in the personal income tax rate and increase in the refundable sales tax credit.” There are three different things there. “By the government’s calculation, 93% of Ontarians will pay less tax as a result. That can hardly be described as a ‘tax grab,’ as the Conservatives have called it.

“The New Democrats are also opposing harmonization, on the ground that it will mainly benefit business. Unlike the Conservatives, they are at least being consistent; the NDP rarely support tax breaks for business.

“But it should be noted that the Ontario New Democrats recently called for a hike of one percentage point in the provincial sales tax to raise money for municipalities. That would have had roughly the same impact on consumers as harmonization.

“As well, the NDP’s opposition to harmonization flies in the face of advice from most economists—including

left-leaning ones—who say the move will benefit the province by encouraging business investment, which in turn will create jobs.

“In sum, opposition to harmonization may be good politics, for both the Conservatives and the NDP. But it is bad economics and bad policy for the province and its people.” That’s the Toronto Star.

I only have a couple of minutes left, but I want to just tell a little story, and that story is this. I had an opportunity once to speak to a pollster who used to work many years ago for a Prime Minister—he now works in private practice—and he said something very interesting to me: “Why are all the head offices of all the multinational corporations gone from Ontario?” He asked me to name a multinational corporation that was here in Ontario, besides the banks—the Royal Bank, CIBC and Scotiabank and the other banks and so on. There are five of them I think, but beyond that, there are no other ones here. I couldn’t think of a single company, whether it be Hewlett-Packard or whether it be Texas Instruments or whether it be Eli Lilly or any pharmaceutical company. They’re all located in the United States, and there’s a trickle-down effect because of this.

Because their head offices are there instead of here, if you want to get money—if you’re a museum, an art gallery or a symphony—you go to the head office, and the person in the head office is located somewhere like Houston or Phoenix or Los Angeles or Pittsburgh. And guess what? They’re going to give the money to those art locations and those places like the symphonies there, and not here. Here in Ontario, instead, we have to subsidize our art gallery—we don’t mind doing it—and we have to subsidize so many of our other services because we don’t have that same opportunity. Those people are gone.

In closing, the budget is smart. It’s hard to understand, it’s heavy to digest, but it makes sense, and I ask that all support—

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

Mr. Norm Miller: I’m pleased to respond to the speech from the member from Scarborough Southwest on the budget motion. In his speech, he made reference to the government’s green energy bill, Bill 150, and all the wonderful things they’re doing to encourage green energy. It just so happens, today, the PC caucus had commissioned a third-party look at the bill, and particularly the costs that the bill is going to bring into the energy field in Ontario, because we just didn’t buy the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure’s line that costs would increase for energy consumers by 1%; that’s what he has been repeating here in the Legislature. We didn’t buy that. We didn’t have the expertise in our caucus to really point out succinctly that that’s not correct, so we commissioned London Economics, who are experts, to look at this situation. They are still working on it, but they had their executive summary summarizing it today, with a press conference with our energy critic, Mr. Yakabuski, and our leader, Mr. Runciman.

Basically, what they’ve pointed out is that the costs—they’ve made an estimate—are going to be far greater

than this 1%; it could be substantially greater. Also, they really question the projection of 50,000 jobs, pointing out there's only 35,000 jobs in total in the energy sector at this point. So really, this 50,000-job projection is just a number out of the air, and it's probably going to be remembered in the same way as the coal promise this government has made many times. They were going to shut down the coal-fired generation in 2007, and I think it's 2014 now. The 1% increase and this 50,000-job figure are really very questionable.

1730

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to make a few comments to the presentation made by the member from Scarborough Southwest. I didn't agree with much of what he had to say, but I do agree on two points. The first one is the comments he made about the Conservative Party being in favour of the harmonized sales tax. This is certainly something that we have their previous leader, Mr. John Tory, on record as saying—that he supports the harmonization of the PST and GST. We also have Mr. Runciman saying that theoretically he supports the harmonization of the PST and the GST. I tend to agree with what the member has said, that this is a switch from their position from before, although they are arguing against it now. Some of the members are protesting against it with much energy. They are certainly on record as favouring it before. For the NDP, we have made our case clear: that we oppose harmonization.

The second part that he was talking about is the example that he couldn't think of any multinationals that were based in Ontario. I can tell you that Xstrata Nickel division, which is a company that has holdings everywhere from Europe to Australia, has their headquarters just down the road at the corner of Bay and Lakeshore, or in around there. Anyway, Bay Street is all the way down, and you can't miss it: They have a huge building, and they own it all.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure again to rise in this House and make a few comments about the budget. The honourable member from Simcoe North spoke about harmonization of retail taxes and indicated that this is going to increase taxes. Actually, the budget states that the revenue of the government is going to be reduced by a significant amount, and that will be by \$2.3 billion over four years. So harmonization of sales taxes with retail taxes is not going to increase taxes on individuals. Actually, the budget document addresses that point very well, and the tax cuts that will be included in the budget are going to reduce \$10.6 billion of taxes on individuals, which will affect 93% of Ontarians, and that is a significant number.

Again, when you look at this harmonization of taxes, this is something which our colleagues from the Conservative Party have supported all along. Their former leader and the current interim leader of the Conservative Party and also the federal Conservatives are supporting this. It is the right move in the right direction. Many, many countries around the world have only a single tax. We in Ontario are one of the rare jurisdictions where we

have two taxes. Harmonization of taxes is going to not only assist individuals, it's going to assist our businesses. At this time, we need to create jobs, we need to boost the economy, and this is one of the many elements of this budget where the designer of the budget intended to boost our economy at this very point.

I support this, and I hope our honourable colleagues from the Conservative Party will consider this.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I appreciate being able to make a few comments on the remarks of the member from Scarborough Southwest. I just want to make it clear that comments in the House today are trying to make it sound as though this caucus was all in favour of harmonization. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our leaders looked at it at specific times. Some provinces had done this, and the federal government was urging them to do so. We caucused this very, very carefully in our caucus on a couple of occasions.

The week before the budget, we asked a number of questions; they were all opposed to the HST. Clearly if you go back in Hansard, you'll find that, and the questions were asked by Mr. Runciman. Clearly, our caucus is unanimously opposed to the HST, the harmonization. We consider this to be a new tax on Ontario families. Specifically, it's at a very, very bad time in the history of this province. We don't think it's going to invigorate the economy. We don't think there will be a lot of new jobs created as a result of this.

I can tell you, in my riding of Simcoe North—as mentioned earlier, I was in front of around 500 people this weekend; many of them in the room were business people. Not one person came forward and said, “That HST is a good idea”—not one person. In fact, in our media, we had a lot of comments against this. Particularly, real estate agents and people in the legal field came forward and said, “You're on the right page. Do not support this. It's nothing but a new tax on the families of Ontario, and it will hurt business.”

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Again, I want to thank the members from Parry Sound—Muskoka, Nickel Belt, Richmond Hill and Simcoe North for their comments. A number of the former members of the provincial Conservatives, Mr. Flaherty, Mr. Baird and Mr. Clement, who have all gone on to become federal ministers, all stand behind their leader, and that's clear. I would challenge anyone to go and speak to those individuals and ask them, “Do you support the HST or not?” I'm sure we know what the answer would be.

I want to finalize with one little quote, because I like quotes once in a while. Actually, this one is probably well-known: “All politics is local.” That's Tip O'Neill. What I want to say is this: All politics is local, so as a politician or as an individual, we all talk to people. I talk to my family members. I talk to my brother and sister, who both have children. There are eight children there. You look at the budget again, and when you talk about

the HST, if people want to start getting upset about it, all sorts of things for children, from car seats to some of the other things that are used by children, are all exempt from the HST.

The other thing I want to say, too, with regard to all politics being local, is that I speak to my father on a regular basis, and what he says to me a lot is, "What happened at work today? What's going on?" He watches the news; he knows what's going on. He said, "How come you're bringing in these new taxes?" But he didn't get the chance to hear the sound bite regarding the property taxes that he's going to save on, as well as the \$1,000 he's going to be eligible for, the \$300 he's going to be eligible for and the lower tax rate that he'll be in. After I explained it all to him, he supported the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The member from Sarnia-Lambton.

Applause.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you to my colleagues across the floor.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yeah, I know, it's not too late.

The member was quoting. I'm a fan of Tip O'Neill as well. He said, "All politics is local." I think of another quote. I think it was P.T. Barnum—I don't think he was any relation of mine, Barnum and Bailey—who said, "You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time." That was another quote.

Anyway, this budget is what we're speaking against. Here are some quotes I'm going to read in: "Ontario's Liberal government was among the last provinces to bring down its budget this year. Sadly, it was not a budget worth waiting for. Except maybe for historians" because it was the last one. "Dalton McGuinty has now secured his place in Ontario history, by adding the largest deficit in history to the largest tax hike in history."

1740

I was just watching a show last night on TV, *The Premiers*. Somewhere in the early 1950s, Premier Leslie Frost introduced the first budget in this House of a billion dollars, and that was a landmark. That was the first province in Canada, at that time, that ever spent a billion dollars. We go into the 1980s, the Honourable Frank Miller, I'm not sure exactly which year, but his budget was approximately \$18 billion. Then we move into the budget this year, and we're going to spend somewhere around \$108 billion, I think. So spending has increased. Of course, the services that are provided are a lot more today than in those days. I'm not sure whether the quality of life is any better; I guess some people would say it is. I watched that show last night, *The Premiers*, and it certainly was a different pace and it was certainly a different quality of life that Premier Frost and those other members who were in the House at that time on all sides of the House experienced, and I think sometimes we should go back to some of that. He worried over whether he would introduce twilight racing, because he thought it would lead to the decline of the family because of people

gambling and staying out late in the evening. They didn't even allow—and I don't think there's anybody in this room who's old enough, but maybe a couple on the other side there; I see some grey hair like me. When the trains went through Ontario, there was no liquor served on those trains for a number of years because he didn't think that was right. That was Ontario of the 1950s. It was certainly a far cry from today, and I'm not so sure that we've advanced.

While some news stories have focused on what will be exempted from this combined provincial and federal sales tax, the months ahead will be filled with very unpleasant surprises as people, the general public and the taxpayers, realize how much more they will be paying for everyday goods and services. You will pay more every time you fill up your car. You will pay more for home heating fuel. You will pay more for your cable, Internet and cellphone service, and you will pay more if you happen to need a lawyer to close that house purchase or sale.

The \$1,000 rebate that this government is promising to families will be more than offset by the \$1,100 or more in taxes—or why would they do it?—and it's only a one-time thing. I hope that the people are watching as they start to get their head around this, because a lot of people still don't even understand the impact, and that's what I think the government is hoping: that they can get it through the House, passed and implemented. They think that in this hurly-burly world we're in today, people will file it away. But I think after next July, when people start filling up their gas tanks, going to Tim Hortons or their local restaurant—especially the gasoline, where you're paying a tax on a tax—it will come back to remind them.

But the government says, "Don't worry." They promise to have Ontario back in the black by 2015. There's just one hitch: To achieve that goal, we require this McGuinty government to control their spending to a degree that they have never been able to so far. This government has increased program spending by approximately 8% every year since 2004, but they say they've learned their lesson and they will cut that rate by more than half in the years ahead. Now, this is a lot like Santa Claus saying he's going to lose 100 pounds and run a three-hour marathon nine months from now.

Like the last five Liberal budgets, this one is full of promises, many promises, but Ontarians are on to this government. They know that this government's promises are worthless. They promised no tax increases and then delivered the largest tax increase in Ontario's history. They loudly and repeatedly promised parents full-day junior and senior kindergarten. That promise has been quietly dropped—

Interjection: It's coming.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Some people say it's coming. The plan about transit, the 2020 plan, we're not sure if that's going to come or not. They promised skills training; that program has also been a failure. They promised 9,000 new nurses. But don't bother pressing the call button, because the nurses aren't coming either. The only thing

this government has always delivered on and kept their promise on is on higher taxes. That is one promise from the budget that we know they will keep.

This government had the good fortune to inherit a good economy, an economy that was able to survive shocks such as SARS and the blackout, but the government seems to have played out the old joke about the guy who woke up on third base and just figured he'd hit a triple. We in the PC caucus, along with many others, have warned the Liberals not to take Ontario's prosperity for granted. We warned them again and again not to raise taxes on families and the job creators of this province. We warned them not to keep growing the public sector, but they failed to listen.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Take your time.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you. On this government's watch, half of the new jobs created in Ontario were in the public sector, and many of these jobs were needed, in fact, for our lives and communities. But these jobs do not create wealth. They require the private sector to create wealth first. To put it simply, without the farmer, there is no teacher; without the construction worker, there is no nurse; and without the chef, there is no transit driver, and you could go on.

This government thinks that after these high taxes and red tape have destroyed Ontario's competitive advantage, they can just harmonize the sales tax, green-light some highway projects, and the jobs and investments are going to come running back to Ontario into their open arms. But that's not how the real world works, especially when provinces such as Manitoba and New Brunswick are keen to offer better investment environments than Ontario. Some media have referred to the province of Saskatchewan as "Saskaboom" because that economy there is thriving.

This Ontario government has had five budgets prior to this one, and not one of them focused on what this economy needed to keep creating wealth and jobs. Like the Premier, who went from being the education Premier to the innovation Premier to the whatever's trendy Premier, they have been short term and unfocused.

This government has called this budget "Confronting the Challenge." The Liberals haven't confronted Ontario's challenge for the last five years, and there is nothing in their past behaviour to suggest they're going to start now. The only thing that the McGuinty government means to confront is your wallet. They're like that old commercial on TV, "hands in your pocket."

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I love that commercial.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I do too. I like it as well.

When your house is on fire, it's a little late to start pricing the insurance policy. We know a number of people in the insurance business in the House.

One budget is not going to turn around five years of Liberal neglect. High taxes drove away these jobs and economic activity from Ontario. The Liberal solution is to lower some of the taxes they raised on business while increasing taxes on individuals. Unfortunately, our children and grandchildren will be paying a long time for

the McGuinty government's inability to learn from their mistakes.

Some of the highlights from this 2009 Liberal budget: This 2009 Liberal budget earns the McGuinty government the triple crown of tax-and-spend politicians, for the Premier himself, the largest deficit and a doubling of the debt on top of the largest tax hike in Ontario's history—the trifecta.

Spending: This budget predicts a decline in GDP—that's the gross domestic product, for those of you back in Inniskillin—of 2.5%; a decline in corporate profits of 25%; in fact, a 2% decrease in employment and 135,000 more job losses. This is their own document predicting this. They're predicting revenue for 2009-10 of \$96 billion, but total spending is projected at \$109 billion, up 58%, I would remind Madam Speaker, since 2003. Those people you hear outside I think are the small business people who are starting to protest. They're getting organized. I can hear them all the way in the House, and that's what we're going to hear as we go forward once people in the private sector and the small business people and the ordinary person realize how much more they're going to pay in taxes.

Ontario's total debt now stands at over \$200 billion, almost double the \$111 billion it was when the McGuinty government took office. Under Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, we will not see another balanced budget again until 2016, at the earliest. Now those are their numbers, not ours, numbers from the Treasurer's own budget. But to get there, the Premier, who has spent unheralded spending increases—to get there, the McGuinty government will have to hold growth in its program spending to less than 3.6% average, annually, between 2009 and 2012. However, that excludes non-core spending. After that program spending, he will have to be held to 2.3% annual average growth. However, until this year—this is the important part, and I know the member from Durham will know this well—Dalton McGuinty has increased program spending at an average annual rate of 8%. So to see them being able to cut back the spending regime that they're on—I think the proof will be in the eating of a pudding.

Tax hikes: Starting on July 1, 2010, Ontario will move to a single value-added sales tax. Gasoline, electricity, cellphones, Internet bills—I could go on and on. In fact, I will. I've got a couple of minutes, so maybe I will.

1750

Prepared food sold for \$4 or less, including coffee, doughnuts and snacks; electricity, gasoline, newspapers and magazines, haircuts, home heating oil, theatre admission, adult footwear costing \$30 or less, financial advisory services—it goes on and on and on.

Funeral services—a wag said earlier this morning that the Minister of Small Business hasn't stood up for business all along or for the living, so will he at least stand up for the dead? It sounds like they won't, because they're going to tax you before you die, on prearranged funerals; after you die, on the coffin; on the funeral service; and then when somebody is going in to settle up their poor

Aunt Mary's or Aunt Frieda's estate, there will be an 8% tax levied at that time. This goes on and on.

Bicycle safety gear—they talk about Bill 150, the energy bill. I call them the toaster police. They say they're going to create 50,000 jobs. We think they're going to basically be toaster police. If somebody has their toaster oven plugged in, they're going to get up and pull it out if it doesn't have the Energy Star rating.

Golf green fees are going to be increased, health foods, accountant services, furnace repairs—the member from Durham knows this well; he has lectured me about these increases in costs—courier fees, landscaping. I know he could go on ad infinitum. Did you want to speak to it? Domestic air travel will be increased, bicycles, legal services—the list goes on at great length.

This budget fails to provide Ontario families with the help they need in the face of the current economic crisis. This budget does not provide Ontarians with the plan they deserve, the plan to get our economy going again. The Dalton McGuinty response to a global recession was to raise taxes on Ontario's families, on heating fuel, gas at the pumps, monthly bills by cable, Internet and your cellphone.

Dalton McGuinty earned his place in history with the 2009 budget. He brought in the largest deficit in Ontario's history. He will have doubled the debt in seven years. This is on top of the single largest tax hike in Ontario's history. This, I say again, without repeating myself, is the triple crown for tax-and-spend politicians—the trifecta. The budget claims to confront the economic crisis. The only thing that this budget confronts is the taxpayer's wallet. The only people who benefit from this—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Pursuant to standing order 58(d), there having been eight hours of debate on the budget motion, I am now required to put the question.

On March 26, 2009, Mr. Duncan moved, seconded by Mr. McGuinty, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

On March 30, 2009, Mr. Runciman moved “that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on March 26, 2009, ‘that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government,’ be amended by deleting the words after ‘that this House’ and adding the following:

“acknowledges that budget 2009 brings in the biggest deficit in Ontario's history of \$14 billion, when the McGuinty Liberals had a \$6-billion surplus just last year; and

“acknowledges that under this government's watch, nearly 300,000 manufacturing jobs have disappeared, with another 135,000 expected to be lost this year; and

“acknowledges that the Premier broke his promise not to raise taxes after the 2003 election by imposing a health tax of up to \$900; and

“acknowledges that the Premier again broke his promise with this budget by announcing his scheme to create a single sales tax, the biggest tax grab in Ontario's history, that will force people to pay taxes on everything from a cup of coffee to funeral services; and

“acknowledges that serial promise-breaking on tax increases, coupled with serial spending and mismanagement of public money, will not be tolerated by the people of Ontario.’

“Therefore, the government has lost the confidence of this House.”

The first question to be decided is the amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr. Runciman's amendment to the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will be calling in all the members, and the division bells are limited to a maximum of 10 minutes.

I've just received, pursuant to standing order 28(h), a request that the vote on the motion by Minister Duncan, government order 20, be deferred until April 7, 2009, by the chief government whip.

Is it the pleasure of the House that this deferral pass? So ordered.

Vote deferred.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: We have no further business today. I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? The motion is carried. The House is adjourned and will reconvene tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1756.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Bryant, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development / Ministre du Développement économique
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
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
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	
Murdoch, Bill (IND)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	Minister of International Trade and Investment / Ministre du Commerce international et de l'Investissement
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Small Business and Consumer Services / Ministre des Petites Entreprises et des Services aux consommateurs
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Tim Hudak
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Bob Delaney
Garfield Dunlop, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Tim Hudak, Amrit Mangat
Phil McNeely, Yasir Naqvi
John O'Toole
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jean-Marc Lalonde
Sophia Aggelonitis, Ted Arnott
Wayne Arthurs, Toby Barrett
Pat Hoy, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Leeanna Pendergast, Michael Prue
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jim Brownell
Robert Bailey, Jim Brownell
Linda Jeffrey, Kuldip Kular
Rosario Marchese, Bill Mauro
Carol Mitchell, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Présidente: Julia Munro
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Michael A. Brown, France Gélinas
Lisa MacLeod, Gerry Martiniuk
Julia Munro, David Ramsay
Lou Rinaldi, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Jeff Leal
Dave Levac, Reza Moridi
Lou Rinaldi, John Yakabuski
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Kevin Daniel Flynn, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jerry J. Ouellette
Laura Albanese, Ernie Hardeman
Andrea Horwath, Phil McNeely
Jerry J. Ouellette, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Rick Johnson, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Tony Ruprecht, Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Laurel C. Broten, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Helena Jaczek, Shafiq Qaadri
Khalil Ramal, Peter Shurman
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Elections / Comité spécial des élections

Chair / Président: Greg Sorbara
Howard Hampton, Greg Sorbara
Norman W. Sterling, David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
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Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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