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Tuesday 11 May 2010

Mardi 11 mai 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 11 May 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 11 mai 2010

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EXCELLENT CARE FOR ALL ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR L'EXCELLENCE DES SOINS POUR TOUS

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 4, 2010, on the motion for second reading of Bill 46, An Act respecting the care provided by health care organizations / *Projet de loi 46, Loi relative aux soins fournis par les organismes de soins de santé.*

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: It feels like it was a little while ago that I started the first 30 minutes of my lead, but I will pretend that everybody remembers exactly what I said and where I was at the time. For those of you whose memories are not right on, I'll do a brief summary of what I talked about.

We're talking about Bill 46, the Excellent Care for All Act, and I started by saying that one of the issues covered in the bill is executive compensation; executive compensation will now be linked to a performance-based model. But what people were asking for, fundamentally, was a way to curb executive compensation. Back then, I talked about the \$700,000 club that is made up of hospital executives in this province, and how this bill, although it talks about hospital executives, falls short when it comes down to setting a limit that people in Ontario feel is more reasonable.

I gave as an example our Premier, Mr. McGuinty, whose salary is \$208,000 a year, and who manages the budget of the province, which is close to \$100 billion, and then we have executives being paid \$700,000 and \$800,000, who manage a budget that is one one hundredth of Mr. McGuinty's. So certainly the need is there to make a conscious effort to look at executive compensation, and the bill does not address this. It brings forward a new mode of payment—part of the compensation will be based on targets that are met, quality etc.—but it certainly does not address the salient point, which is to curb executive compensation and the growth of it.

If you remember, I was talking about the executives, whose salaries were already very high, who were the only

ones who got a 7% increase last year, when I can't think of any other group of workers that did in 2009. That was the first part I talked about—I'm just trying to refresh everybody's memory.

The second thing that is addressed in the bill: The bill talks about the transparency and accountability initiatives. Certainly, this is something we support at face value. The more transparency and accountability in our health care system, health care providers and health care institutions, the better it will be for all. One of the main requests of people when they speak to accountability is the right to have their complaints heard. Most hospitals in Ontario have an excellent complaint department where, if you are not satisfied with the care you or your loved one has received, you go to a special department in the hospital and they look after you. They look after your complaint and follow through to make sure that a resolution comes to whatever has happened, whatever prompted you to bring this complaint forward.

I would say that it works well in hundreds of hospitals in Ontario; I was told that in some of them it does not work quite as well. But the main thing is that if this internal process fails, what people want is access to the Ombudsman. They want access to this independent third party who will investigate their complaints and bring them to a resolution. The bill does not allow that.

Right now, Ontario is the only province in Canada—the only one—that does not let its Ombudsman investigate complaints coming from its hospitals or other health care institutions. The Ombudsman has requested it, patient rights advocates have requested it, and here we have this Excellent Care for All Act that talks about the need for more accountability and we figure that Ombudsman oversight of our hospitals is finally coming. But it was not to be; it is not a part.

What they will develop is that they will make sure that what exists in most of our hospitals exists in all of our hospitals. To me this falls short, and it is an opportunity missed. The Ombudsman of Ontario already gets over 360 calls—people naturally call upon the Ombudsman to help them when the internal hospital process has failed them—but there's nothing he can do, because he does not have jurisdiction. This bill could, and I hope will, be amended to give the Ombudsman jurisdiction over hospitals.

Another piece of accountability that would go a long way to ensuring transparency and accountability for health care institutions, including our hospitals, would be the freedom-of-access-to-information legislation. I know that Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Com-

missioner of Ontario, will be releasing her report a few minutes from now. I hope she will continue to recommend that hospitals be covered under freedom of access to information.

Everybody understands that private health care information will never be made available, no matter that you are covered under freedom of access. That's not what we are talking about. We don't want to know the particulars of a person's personal life and of her health. What we want is access to what is going on in our hospitals. How is the money being spent? I'm not allowed to have information as simple as how much money was spent on consultants in my local hospital last year; nobody is allowed to have that information. Hospitals are not covered under freedom of access to information.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario made a presentation to the hospital association regarding this. She called it *The Best Way Forward*. The Ontario Hospital Association now sees that freedom of access is an enabler, not a barrier. We now have the association on board. We have our commissioner for information and privacy in Ontario who is on board and says that hospitals and other health care institutions should be covered under freedom of access to information, so that Ontarians have a right to know how the billions of dollars—we're talking \$42 billion for the health care system and close to \$20 billion for the hospital system alone. Ontarians should be allowed to know how this money is spent, and this is what freedom of access to information for our hospitals would do.

0910

Unfortunately, Bill 46, *Excellent Care for All*, talks about improving transparency and accountability but does not include freedom of access to information for hospitals. Here again, I hope we will see an amendment to this bill so that people who want to gain access to what is going on within those important pieces of the fabric of their community or community hospital will gain this access.

Certainly, I encourage everybody to look into the report that Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, will be putting forward this morning. I know that her position is to make changes to the legislation so that hospitals are covered, and as of recently, the Ontario Hospital Association is also on board. They see that it is a good thing for Ontario and a good thing for hospitals; it brings accountability and transparency, and this will be something good. But here again, nobody is asking about looking into private health care files; we are looking at the running of our hospitals. That was the second topic that I had talked about that had to do with accountability and transparency.

Then I had an opportunity to talk about the inter-professional advisory committee that will be responsible for the continuous quality improvement process. There is a lot to be achieved through a good continuous quality improvement process. This is how best practices are developed. This is how we learn and share, and this is certainly something that the NDP supports. But this is

something that has been in place in our hospitals for a long time. I had given the example—25 years ago—I'm old. Some 20 years ago I was working at our local hospital and I was a member of our continuous quality improvement committee back then. This committee is still in place. This committee has done some good work and will continue to do some good work. Those committees exist in most of our hospitals in Ontario. They are a link, they share good practices and they learn from one another. Is this something good? Absolutely. Is this a powerful lever for change? Absolutely. Is this something that already exists? Absolutely. So I fail to see the difference that this bill will bring.

There is one piece where they talked about the Ontario Health Quality Council being given an expanded mandate so that they can make recommendations regarding quality and best practices. Here again, this is something that we promote and this is something that we are willing to support.

I talked a bit about the experience in primary care, where last year—no, the year before—the health quality council really focused on primary care and on putting forward some of the best practices that exist in primary care. One of the key recommendations—according to me, anyway—is their recommendation for an interdisciplinary care model for primary care to better enable primary care providers to provide top-quality care for chronic disease management. Chronic disease management is everything that has to do with diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma, high cholesterol, and a list of—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I wonder if we could check to see if there is a quorum present.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the Clerk to check.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. A quorum is present. The member for Nickel Belt may continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I must say that it's a little sparsely populated in here this morning.

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Can I continue?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm talking about continuous quality improvement and how this is certainly something that the NDP supports. This is how you develop best practices, but you also have to go a step further. Once best practices have been identified, it's not a one-off seminar that will make health care professionals change the way they practise. It has to be supported, it has to be implemented at the local level and it has to become part of the fabric of the health care institution.

Although we know the theory of it, I have yet to see in the bill anything that would lead me to believe that the levers will be in place in order for best practices to really show their full potential. Quality is a strong motivator. Everybody in the health care system wants to provide the

best-quality care. The last thing you want is adverse consequences from the care that you provide. God knows that last year alone close to 24,000 Canadians died from adverse turns of events in our hospital system. We can do better than this. A way to do this is through continuous quality improvement. So although, as I said, the Ontario Health Quality Council had given out best practices in primary care, they talked about the need to have interdisciplinary team models of care to improve levels of care in primary care—all of the same ingredients as they are talking about in their bills already exist in other parts of the health care system but have yet to turn into levers for change.

To me, the part that is missing is the part where those best practices are communicated and—I would go past “share”; they are really encouraged by all of the care providers. I don’t see this in the bill. So we could have the same thing that’s happening now in primary care. We know that the best way to take on chronic disease is through interdisciplinary care. We have this family health teams model that is supposed to be the end-all of it all, but basically what we have with the family health teams is a whole bunch of physicians on an alternate payment plan with one or two what they call staff members—not exactly my idea of interdisciplinary care, where everybody works as part of a team and is a colleague.

If the family health teams were truly teams, then for the 10,000 or so physicians who have registered in this, you would see 60,000 other workers. We don’t see this. There are more physicians than all other health care professionals put together. That’s what I talked about when I talked about continuous quality improvement.

We had the health quality council do the research. They came out with the best practices; they were well documented; they even gave very good examples from Ontario. Did the government follow through and use quality as a lever for change? My answer to this is that it fell flat. There are some exceptions out there, and certainly I would say the community health centre model is an exception; and the aboriginal health access centres; and some of the community-based family health teams; and I would say our one and only practising nurse-practitioner-led clinic, which is something that I’m proud of.

By the way, this week is Nursing Week, Madam Speaker, so allow me to send some congratulations to the Sudbury nurse-practitioner-led clinic, which is presently expanding. They will be opening up a satellite site in the community of Lively soon. Their team is also expanding, where they will have a nutritionist and a social worker added to their team. To me, those are real interdisciplinary teams. People are colleagues; they work together; they work as a team to tackle the challenges of chronic disease management, which makes up the bulk of the work in primary care. So much more can be done. But here again the model that is being put forward is a model that is known, that is trusted, that has been tried before, but the government always falls short of using it as a lever to go to the next step where it becomes implement-

ed and where it becomes the norm. Here again there is nothing in the bill right now that leads me to believe that continuous quality improvement will be able to do the powerful work it is capable of doing—that is, motivating a culture change—because the bill falls short on some of the levers that are needed to go from an idea of clinical practice guidelines and best practices to actual care on the ground where people practise.

0920

The bill also talked about how it will make it mandatory for institutional health care providers to have a declaration of values. I agree wholly that nothing motivates an agency like a good set of values, a mission statement and a vision statement. This is your strategic goal. Everybody knows the direction that you want to go in if you have a good value system and a good mission statement. I would like to quote from the Sudbury Regional Hospital; their vision is, “Leading and innovating for excellence in patient care.” The message is clear: They want to be leaders and they want to be innovators. We have a new CEO, Dr. Denis Roy, at the Sudbury Regional Hospital. He is certainly a leader and he certainly supports innovation and research. I could see that under his leadership and with the clear vision that they have given themselves, they will bring the hospital there. So I agree that vision is a powerful motivator for everybody who works within a health care agency.

They also have their mission, and anybody who goes on the Internet can see it. It goes as follows:

“As a regional hospital serving the residents of the city of Greater Sudbury and northeastern Ontario, we:

“—deliver high quality patient- and family-centred care, in both official languages;

“—provide reliable and timely access to care;

“—support the development of employees, medical staff, volunteers and students”—I may add that we now have medical students;

“—participate in research and the development and application of evidence-based practices; and

“—respond to changing needs and advocate for resources and services that promote health and wellness in the communities we serve.”

This is their mission. It is posted on their website and throughout the hallways of the hospital. It is a strong motivator. So for the bill to say that they will regulate or legislate a set of values for each and every hospital—I say that hospitals already do this. Sudbury Regional Hospital is very good. It’s a hospital that covers my riding. But the other 150 or so hospitals in Ontario are just as good. They have a vision statement. They have a mission statement.

I will now read the values from the Sudbury Regional Hospital. When I was talking about the mission, you noticed that the fourth point in the mission statement is “participate in research and the development and application of evidence-based practices.” This is the link to their continuous quality improvement. This is the link to the best practices that they are trying to develop and implement into their hospital already as we speak and that

has been there for some time. Here again I want to make the link that although the goal of the government toward a cultural shift is good, some of the levers to get there are yet to be defined and are certainly not in the legislation that we see. But a lot of what they're talking about, the pillars of their reforms, are things that are already living proof. Sudbury Regional Hospital is certainly living proof that it is already taking place in our hospitals and other health care institutions here in Ontario.

I will go on with their values: compassionate care; our employees, medical staff, volunteers and students and their quality of work life; respect for diversity; teamwork, collaboration and partnerships; learning, research and professional development; wise use of our resources; accountability within an integrated regional system; a safe environment for our patients and all who work at Hôpital régional de Sudbury Regional Hospital; and open, honest and ethical communication and decision-making. That is the set of values that has been put together and agreed upon by the entire family that makes up Sudbury Regional Hospital, and they are values that they live with each and every day. Are they powerful? Absolutely. Do they serve as a motivator? Absolutely. Are they new and innovative? I would say, probably not.

Hospitals have been working with sets of values for many years. The boards of directors have spent many a meeting talking about what sets of values are needed. So it's a little bit hard to believe that in Bill 46, the Excellent Care for All Act, one of the pillars would be to develop values, when this is something that already exists, that has already done its work. I fail to see how it can do different work, given the length of time that it has been in place and given the success that it already has. If you want to motivate a cultural shift away from the volume-driven hospital system we have now toward a quality-based system, I'm all for the shift. But the pillars that you have identified fail to have the levers necessary to motivate that shift and motivate that change.

The bill also talks about a number of other things. One of the other things the bill talks about is patient-based funding. Patient-based funding is something that never sounds good to anybody who comes from a northern or rural area. If you're from remote Ontario, forget it; you should run away from this thing as fast as you can. Let's make it clear: The more concentrated care you do, the better you will be and the better the outcomes. There's no denying this. If you do 1,000 cataract surgeries every month, you will be very, very good at doing cataract surgeries. You will have excellent outcomes; you will have excellent best practices. Nobody denies that. But that comes at a cost. This concentration of resources to drive those volumes comes at a cost of access to care. In areas like northeastern Ontario, we will never have the types of volumes that downtown Toronto or downtown Ottawa will have. But that doesn't mean that we don't deserve equitable access to care. Patient-based funding is always a trade-off between developing centres of excellence that deliver good care with good outcomes to a mass of people, versus access to care.

0930

I want to give the example, one of many, that in Sudbury right now there is a long wait-list for hip and knee replacements, versus in Toronto where, within a maximum of four weeks, you can get a total hip replacement. What does that mean? It means that people in Sudbury who have the means—they can take the time off, they have the money to go to Toronto and pay for the hotel room, they have the physical strength to make the trip down—go down to Toronto and have the surgery done within four weeks. People who are too weak or too elderly, are in need of follow-up care or have higher needs don't go to Toronto. They stay in Sudbury and have very good-quality surgery done with good post-surgical care.

What does that do? It skews the population. The population that is mobile, high-level and high-functioning goes to Toronto and feeds a system of volume that provides very good care. Anybody who is not part of those big urban centres continues to provide very good care, but to a skewed population that is more frail, that needs more care, that needs more follow-up and that often has higher needs. So right off, you're not competing equally.

The patient-based funding model has an opportunity to deliver good-quality care with good outcomes, but it comes at a cost. I want to make sure that the balance is always there. The cost will be paid by decreased access for people who live in northern, remote and rural Ontario, and this has to be taken into account.

The Ontario Health Quality Council just did a 12-community tour of rural Ontario, where hundreds of people came and gave testimony about the decrease in access to care—often hospital care, but sometimes community care—and the devastating impact it has had on their communities. At this point, you're not talking quality outcomes; rural, northern and remote Ontario is able to deliver quality outcomes and care. What we're talking about is how this shift toward centralization of care is to the detriment of access to care in northern, rural and remote areas and also comes with an awful cost to those communities.

We hear things like their now having difficulty recruiting primary care and more difficulty recruiting physicians. We hear about outpatient physiotherapy services being cut back. We heard about an outpatient diabetes management centre being cut completely or curbed back. All of those have an impact on the fabric of a small community.

A hospital is part of the community. People invest themselves in it; it belongs to them. It is part of their community and part of the social fabric of who they are. They've invested; they've donated. In lots of communities you see that the volunteers are the ones who plant the flowers, who decorate the hospital, who do the volunteer work in the wards, who do all those extras that make hospital care, if you have to go to the hospital, that much more, if not enjoyable, at least tolerable.

But what are we doing? We are focusing on outcomes and big centres, to the detriment of rural Ontario, and I'm

very much afraid. Although the bill is very high-level when it talks about patient-based funding models and does say it will protect northern and rural areas, it doesn't say how, it doesn't say when and it doesn't give any details. I want to be on record that if you live in northern, rural or remote Ontario, this bill, with its patient-based funding model, has the potential to do more damage to the fabric of rural and northern Ontario because of the important role our hospitals play. I'm from the north, and hospitals are part of our community. I would say that they are often the heart of our community. And as their services get cut, as their opportunity to continue to offer high-quality services are curtailed, then the community suffers at all sorts of levels.

I wanted to talk a little bit about elder care, which is something that sometimes is labelled as alternate level of care in our hospitals. Certainly, for excellent care for all, this is something that this province has to address, and it has to address it swiftly and quickly. We all know that the population in Ontario is aging, and there is lots of good that comes with having our elders around and with having an aged population as part of our communities, to be there with us, to share their wisdom and just to share their company. But they often need a little bit of help to do that safely in their community, in their own home. If you don't do this, the possibility of elderly people ending up in trouble is very high. When they end up in trouble, the ultimate social safety net is always the emergency department of your local hospital.

I can give you an example in Sudbury. On Sunday, there were 28 people waiting at the Sudbury Regional Hospital in the emergency department. There were six cases that had to do with mental health that were looked after well, and out of the 22 left, 20 of them were over 80 years old. They were all people whose community-based services had failed them. If we continue to fail our seniors, if we don't provide good-quality senior care, they end up in the hospital. We end up medicalizing the aging process, which is completely wrong.

Elderly people should be supported in their community, and the way to support them is not by high-tech medical care; it's by basic social support. It's to make sure that they have something to eat, somebody to clean the house, to shovel the driveway, to help them with their laundry, to check that they take their pills when they're supposed to—basic things that have very little to do with what hospitals can offer. But those people, when all else fails, get picked up by our safety net, end up in emergency, end up in our hospitals and, sadly, end up labelled as an alternate-level-of-care patient. An alternate-level-of-care patient does not get good care in the hospital. That's not what they need.

I don't believe that building more long-term-care homes is the way to go either. I believe in working upstream. I believe that we have to curb the number of seniors that end up in trouble in our hospitals. How do we do this? We do this by having a good home care system.

Our home care system is broken. Since the competitive bidding process has been put into place, we have

seen the deterioration of our home care. Because home care is not there to support people, with respect and dignity, in their own home, elderly people end up in trouble, they end up in emergency, they get admitted into our hospitals, and they become an alternate-level-of-care patient. We must do better than this.

This bill is called the Excellent Care for All Act. I hope it includes the elderly. I want excellent care for elderly Ontarians. They deserve nothing less. They don't need fancy and high-tech; they need to be supported in their communities. Here, again, what a great opportunity. I love the title: Excellent Care for All. One would think that that would include elderly Ontarians. They're part of this province. According to StatsCan, they are the fastest-growing part of our community.

Why don't we set out to give them good care? Why don't we set out to bring back homemaking and to provide good-quality care, where the agencies that provide the care are able to recruit and retain a stable workforce? Because quality care comes by continuity of care, and that means continuity of caregiver. When you pay your workers 11 bucks an hour, you get 11 bucks an hour's worth of care. That means that as soon as your other part-time job—because all of the jobs in home care are part-time—which pays \$11.50 an hour calls you, you dump your shift in home care and you go to Walmart. Well, this is not a way to protect and provide good excellent care to our elders. The way to do this is really to invest into up-front care, give good-quality elder care, and support them in their communities, and then our hospital system will do better.

0940

I see that I only have a few seconds left. The Excellent Care for All Act is full of good ideas but short as to what will be the levers to get there, and also recycles a lot of what already exists, whether in continuous quality improvement, in best practices, in accountability, in transparency, or in description of values. They are pieces of the puzzle that will go toward excellent care for all, but the bill fails to give them levers that will allow us to go from nice clichés to actual care on the ground where the people will benefit, and hopefully excellent care for all will include the elderly population of Ontario. They deserve nothing less.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd just like to add a few comments to the input by my colleague across the way from Nickel Belt. I just want to remind my colleague that all of us recognize that the system has to change, the system has to improve, and we all have to work together to do this and make this happen. I respect the comments of my colleague on the opposite side, because she has extensive experience in the health care field and I think she brings a lot of good input to this particular debate. But I just want to raise some statistical data with regard to some of her comments.

She mentioned that the Sudbury hospital has a lot of the things that are in the bill already being done. But I

want to clarify to her that the OHA suggests that less than 50% of the hospitals in Ontario have a formal declaration of patient values, and without that, the whole patient relations process also gets affected. So what this bill does is bring a uniform process across the entire province. It also makes the process very public, and when you make things open to the public, you will see improvements. Many of us will remember the wait-times strategy of the government. As soon as it was posted on the Internet, we started to see improvements in the system. So I believe this bill will certainly bring the same results as we move forward with this change to improve our health care system.

The OHA also suggests that approximately 30% of hospital CEOs have at-risk, variable-compensation contracts. This bill will make it across the province and hopefully improve things. So we're hoping —

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The member from Nickel Belt of course has a great deal of experience in this area, being a former nurse. Are you still a nurse or are you a former nurse?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I never was.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Oh, you never were.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Physiotherapist.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Sorry; I assumed she was a nurse. I know she had a lot of experience in the health care system and speaks to the bill from the point of view of a patient receiving that care, the care that they have received and the care that they might receive under this bill.

She raises a number of red flags concerning small northern hospitals and rural hospitals, as to where the quality of care will come from and how that quality of care will be delivered. I think it's a well-known fact, certainly in the medical community, that the hospitals that do the most volume, the operations that get the most volume and the doctors who do the most operations of a particular nature get the best results. Given those criteria, in theory it would be best to send all your patients to the areas that get the highest volumes; therefore, we would get the best patient results.

That may not be very practical, particularly when it comes to northern and small rural hospitals. That would gut much of their services and it would make them very difficult places to practise medicine. It would make it very difficult for them to recruit doctors and nurses and would not lead to better care overall in that particular area. So that's how the government is going to handle those situations when it comes to this bill.

There's much in this bill to applaud. As the speaker mentioned, the devil is in the details. It'll be interesting to see the regulations of this bill and how they take effect in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Certainly Ms. Gélinas, who is our member from Nickel Belt and our health critic, is one of

the pre-eminent defenders of health care and patient care in this province. It's always a delight to hear her speak, because she knows her subject matter so well.

A couple of the points that she made that I think are extremely important: Her bill, our bill as the New Democratic Party, to demand Ombudsman oversight of hospitals is critical. We're the only province in Canada that doesn't do that. There's no excuse for that. We have a good Ombudsman, and we need Ombudsman oversight.

Her point about making hospitals transparent in terms of freedom-of-information requests about expenses: That's a good point. That's absolutely essential. That should be in place. That should be in this bill.

Her point about access to home care for our elderly population is also excellent. Far, far too many people use the emergency room as their primary care stop. That certainly happens in my riding all the time. People who don't have access to a family physician—a lot of Ontarians, half a million or so, do not have access to a family physician. If they have something wrong, they go to the emergency room. This is ridiculous. This is an expensive way of delivering primary care. Certainly, it's not a place for our seniors, who, as she pointed out, simply need long-term assistance to be able to live healthfully at home. It's interesting when you look at European examples. My husband and I were in Sweden. They do health care very, very differently. There isn't the emphasis on the institutions. There is the emphasis on providing high-quality home care. It's cheaper; it's better; it's more humane. Again, all of these points are made by our member from Nickel Belt and our health critic. Hopefully, the government will listen and actually give this bill some teeth so it does what it purports to do in its title.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to comment on the member from Nickel Belt. As I was listening—obviously, she understands the system. I was delighted to hear the member talk about some of the things that have happened in a positive way. I would say that things have happened since 2003. For example, she spoke very highly of nurse-led clinics. They do a great job. They are something that our government has certainly been very supportive of, that we're rolling out that weren't there before.

CHCs: I have a brand new CHC in my riding and one that's going to come online. I tell you, that's something that these communities have been awaiting for a long time. The one in Port Hope—the former government closed the hospital, they left them totally shut out, but we opened a CHC. The work that the CHC has undertaken in the last couple of years has been phenomenal.

Family health teams: The cluster of primary health care professionals that we've created since forming government is leading to those things that—I think we're making some headway. I was delighted to hear the member acknowledge those good things.

In the some seven years that I've been in this place on the government side, in every piece of legislation—it

doesn't have to be health care—there are always comments from the opposition that we need to do better. I think we recognize that, but I think most people, even the OMA, has recognized that Bill 46 is the right step. We need to do more—absolutely—but recognizing the giant that health delivery is in this province is going to take some time, so I was delighted to hear her acknowledge those things. And yes, we need to do better; I do agree with her on that part.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'll start by thanking the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, the member from Halton, my colleague from Parkdale–High Park and the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for their comments. The Excellent Care for All Act is something that is needed. It is something that puts the emphasis on quality, and I think quality has the potential to move and motivate a lot of change. I would have liked to see stronger levers in the bill to enact this change, but nevertheless, the focus on quality is certainly something that the New Democrats can support.

I'll take this opportunity, this being Nursing Week, to again echo the member from Northumberland–Quinte West that certainly the nurse practitioners' clinic in Sudbury, the first, is something to be proud of. It is a very innovative model, and they do really good work. I would say that people who have the opportunity to receive their care from nurse practitioners are always very satisfied and in awe. Nurse practitioners at the basis are nurses. They teach like a nurse; they communicate like a nurse; they are nurses, and people really appreciate the type of care that those health care professionals deliver. So, hats off to all of the nurses. Happy Nursing Week. Bonne semaine des infirmiers et infirmières. They are an important part.

I have a few seconds to say that the bill also makes it mandatory to have patient satisfaction. I have the 2008 patient satisfaction survey from the Sudbury Regional Hospital. It is something that, through their continuous quality improvement, they have been doing. It is a worthwhile tool and it motivates change.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My goodness, I'm surprised that the government isn't taking an opportunity to say a few words on this bill. You would think that, at the beginning of second reading, just after the leadoff statement, the government would really want to talk about the attributes of this bill. It's actually—coming from this government—not a bad bill. Of course, the devil may still be in the details. And as did the former speaker, I would also like to supply my congratulations and profound thanks to the nurses in this province who have made nursing a career and deliver so much of our health care system to the patient.

Having spent some time in a hospital last year with a hip replacement, I can attest first-hand to the fact that

nurses in our health care system in this province certainly deliver the kind of health care that I think we all want and we feel that Ontarians should deserve. It's delivered by the nurses. The doctor does the operation but the nurses make your stay in the hospital as comfortable as it can be and deliver the kind of care, the TLC, that is so important in people recovering their health.

This bill has a wonderful title: Excellent Care for All Act. It's hard to argue against a bill that has "Excellent Care for All Act" as its title. This bill has three major objectives: The first is to change the funding model for health care organizations. Changing the health care model for health care organizations is a laudable goal but one which brings a few concerns. I think the government would be wise to be aware of some of the pitfalls that something like that may have, one of which is that if you're going to change the funding model for health care organizations, these organizations have to reinvent themselves. And whenever organizations reinvent themselves, particularly government organizations, the first thing they do is a study as to what they look like now, what they should look like in the future and how that transition will take place. Of course, that study may be done internally, but more and more we see from this government, as we saw in the eHealth scandal—where \$1 billion were spent on advisers and consultants who delivered very little. I think the government should be very much aware that those abuses can occur when changes are made.

I'm sure that the Courtyard corporation is reading everything that comes out concerning this bill and are putting their minds to how they can serve—in their minds, I'm sure they're serving—this transition and how that might improve their bottom line. Let's face it; that's what they're most concerned about: their bottom line.

I would suggest to the government that when we are changing the funding model for health care organizations, we be very much aware that the number of dollars that are dedicated to health care in this province are finite, and that those dollars that go to consultants come out of front-line health care workers. And the more dollars that come out of health care workers, the more the title of this bill, Excellent Care for All, is going to be held in ridicule.

We should, if the funding model for health care organizations is to change, make sure that the change is done in as effective and as efficient a form as can possibly happen. I can tell you that your track record is not good in this area, so I think it requires some additional focus in making sure that those things come to pass.

The second goal of this act is an increased emphasis on continuous quality improvement as a means of reducing costs and improving patient outcomes. Just a small aside: I'd like to see those two reversed. I'd like to see patient outcomes highlighted as being the most important thing in health care, and that, secondly, we control or reduce costs. The increasing emphasis on continuous quality improvement, from what I've read in this bill—the concern that I would have in that area is that continuous improvement seems to focus on the organization that is

doing the delivery of care: a hospital; long-term-care beds; or a LHIN, a local health integration network. It does not seem to compare the costs of quality improvements between hospitals: Which hospital is doing this function in a more efficient manner, delivering better patient care and getting the patient out of the hospital quicker and in a healthier state? Which hospital is achieving that?

This point seems to focus on how this happens within a hospital, not how it happens between hospitals. I think the comparison between hospitals sets up the competitive nature of the human species, and I think that would drive patient care much better than the internal nature that seems to be the emphasis of this bill. I'm sure that, again, the devil is in the details. Let's see what the regulations say when it comes out. But I think that a comparison between hospitals would be a very important one to improving patient outcomes and patient results—leaving hospitals faster and healthier.

1000

Thirdly, this bill focuses on evidence-based guidelines and best practices that health care organizations should adopt. Again, it's a laudable goal, and one which I only wish this government might have taken up much earlier. This whole bill is based on recommendations made in a report by the Ontario Hospital Association that was submitted to the government in 2004. That's six years ago.

These kinds of things have been introduced in England, Australia, other countries in Europe and some parts of the United States. In every single case, they have improved quality and reduced costs to varying degrees, depending on how they've been implemented, how it's been run and how much money is available to accomplish those goals.

We could have been six years down the road on this, but this government sat on that report from 2004 until 2010, until we finally have it in the form of a bill. That's a lost opportunity, I think. This government should have been a little more focused on improving quality of care in Ontario.

Let me say, first of all, that the PC caucus, under the leadership of Tim Hudak, is in full support of the concept of full transparency and accountability in health care. Again, those are laudable goals that this government espouses to support: transparency and accountability.

I would have to point out that your track record doesn't lend itself to a great deal of faith in those areas. Transparency and accountability: If we look at the eHealth scandal, it was one billion front-line dollars that didn't go to patient care, did go to consultants and delivered precious little when it came to the end results. That was not transparent; it was certainly not accountable.

Recently, we've seen a large number of consultants being paid—that we've been able to identify, anyway—somewhere in the order of \$200 million, being financed through LHINs to consultants, to find out how to do things better, supposedly. Those are all laudable goals.

But again, those are health care dollars that are coming off the front lines and going to consultants.

Health care dollars are finite. They're limited. The budget for health care is only this much: about 50 billion bucks, which is a fair chunk of change, but it is limited. To spend those precious dollars on questionable consultancies I think needs a careful look, especially given this government's record in that area.

Before having the same expectations—this government would like to have expectations of our health care organizations of delivering transparency and accountability—it would be reassuring to the people who are going to carry out these laudable goals in the health care system if this government got their own house in order and started practising some of that transparency and accountability that they are expecting of others.

A number of times we have requested information from this government and been turned down, only to get it through freedom of information, and found our worst fears: that things are not as they should be. If a government was truly transparent and accountable, those things would be available not only to the opposition but also to the public so that Ontarians know where their money is being spent. With this government's record over the last seven years, there are serious questions about how Ontarians' hard-earned tax dollars are being spent by this government.

We also agree with the underlying principles of the bill but would ask for full committee hearings so that we can understand how those principles will be translated into action and how the health care providers of this province will be asked to deliver on the Excellent Care for All Act.

If we look at the bill's summary, the health care organizations in Ontario—most of the general public, I think, thinks about public hospitals, but the other organizations would be long-term-care organizations and facilities, along with doctors' offices, along with distribution of medicines, drugs. Each of these organizations, under this bill, must establish quality committees which will report to its responsible body. The responsibilities of the quality committee include reporting on the overall quality of service, recommendations to improve quality, ensuring that best-practice information supported by available scientific evidence is translated into the distribution and monitoring of materials used in the health care organization, preparation of annual quality improvement plans, and/or other responsibilities provided for in the regulations.

That's a lot of red tape, I would say, and I don't see very much in there. I see a lot in there that is going to take up a lot of time of organizations. I see a lot of money going into the organizations in the form of consultancies, in the form of overtime pay, perhaps, or additional time spent in developing and providing this information. I guess it depends.

I would suggest that the patient is missing or is certainly not front and centre in that whole paragraph on what this bill purports to do. The patient's recovery, the

quality of that recovery, and the speed of that recovery is what I would say would be paramount in this process. I would certainly like to see it emphasized more in the outline so that when it does come to fruition and take effect in our health care organizations, the patient is the one who is focused on.

One of the other tenets seems to be that they are going to collect information concerning the satisfaction of patients, caregivers, and employees with the services that they have been provided; again, a laudable term. I might suggest that not too much emphasis should be placed on that area. As I recovered from my hip operation, I was in the hospital for, I think, four days. I was well cared for. The nurses were all very nice. I was pleased to get out; I was pleased to walk out of the hospital. I was walking the morning after the operation. It was amazing how quickly they get you up. That's a statement, I think, on how talented the surgeons are. When they put you back together, you're in pretty good shape, and that's a talent that certainly has been emphasized and developed over the last 20 or 30 years.

But the patient's satisfaction is not necessarily a good measure. I think the patient's speed of recovery in comparison to other patients, his speed and quality of recovery in comparison to those within other organizations, other hospitals, and, if it's possible, to compare that speed of recovery and the quality of that recovery to other countries and other places where that same medical care is being provided, is the true measure of the quality of care that a patient receives.

I would have put my care down as "excellent" in almost every category, but I don't know whether the average patient in another hospital got out in three days, got out and was able to manoeuvre better than I could at the end of a week, or at the end of four days, when I did leave the hospital. I don't know that. I am not the best one to give a quantitative statement on how well I was performed on in that hospital. I was very satisfied, very happy. But that may not be the best way to measure a successful operation. So I would caution the government on going down that road too far.

It also says that, "Every health care organization"—hospital, doctor's office, perhaps, or long-term-care facility—must have a publicly available "patient relations process," so that a patient, if they feel something is wrong—and most times when something is going wrong in the hospital, the patient is one of the first people who knows about it, or the patient's family. So I do think this one is very important, in that a patient must have access, when they are feeling that their recovery is not going as they would have expected, when their family or caregivers feel that they are not responding the way they should. Sometimes, if they're being well monitored by their family, if they're cognizant of what's going on around them, in many cases they are the first ones to know, and there should be some way for that to be translated to the medical staff. So I like this tenet of the program, that every health care organization must have a publicly available patient relations process.

Also, "Every health care organization" must have, within 12 months, a "patient declaration of values" developed in consultation with the public. Courtyard, are you listening? Every health care organization must have, within 12 months—there's a time limit on it. Boy, we haven't got time to do that; let's hire a consultant to do that for us. That just reads, "Consultants, let's go. Here you go; here are some bucks." I see consultants all over this one, and I'm sure Courtyard is listening. There are 150 or so hospitals in Ontario; there are 14 to 16 LHINs; I don't know how many long-term-care facilities there are in Ontario. They all need to have, within 12 months, a declaration of values developed in consultation with the public. Boy, that's a lot of work. That's a lot of consultants' fees. I'm not sure why they have to have that within 12 months, and I'm not sure what a patient declaration of values is, but the consultants will know that and they'll develop just a wonderful report for you. I don't know why—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time has expired.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would just say that this House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have the distinct privilege of introducing, in the east members' gallery, Mr. Snehal Avashia of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India, a consultant to the Gujarat pharmaceutical sector, representing Eris LifeSciences; and my good friend Mukund Purohit of Scarborough, president of the Ontario-based Gujarati Business Association and my host recently during a wonderful eight days in India, mostly in the state of Gujarat. They're visiting from Ahmedabad, a city of about the same population as New York City in the vibrant Indian state of Gujarat.

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I'd like to introduce some guests, both on behalf of myself and the member from Ajax-Pickering, Joe Dickson: Shannon Corby and her son Andrew, of Ajax; Julie Gatley and her daughter Katherine, or Kate, from Claremont; Jillian Daffern and her daughter Katherine, or Katie, from Ajax; and my constituents from Pickering-Scarborough East, Claire van Dam and her daughter Alison, or Ali, both from Pickering.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to introduce the family of page Rhett Figliuzzi: Rhett's father, Rob Figliuzzi; his mother, Cheryl Figliuzzi; his brother, Quinton Figliuzzi; his sister, Haley Figliuzzi; and his grandparents Bruno and Diane Figliuzzi.

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: If I could, I just want to wish my dad a happy birthday. He's probably watching at home, and I just want to say: Happy birthday, Dad.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Visiting Queen's Park today from the riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery Dan and Ann Marie Thompson and Dan Thompson Jr. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery senior staff members of the public relations department of the Parliament of Ghana: Miss Kate Addo and Mr. Prince Adu, and they are accompanied by the Consul General of the Republic of Ghana at Toronto, Mr. Kodjo Mawutor. Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislature today.

WILMA KWINTER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask for the attention of the members. Last night, a good friend of all of us, Mrs. Wilma Kwinter, the wife of member Monte Kwinter, passed away. I'd like all members and our guests to please rise as we observe a moment of silence in memory of Wilma Kwinter.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

I would just say to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I'm very glad that everything worked out so well for your son and that it made for a great Mother's Day for your wife.

There being no further introductions, it is time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, why did you say that the HST would be revenue-neutral for Ontario families when you knew all along that families would be paying more? Don't you think you owe an apology to taxpayers in Ontario for saying that now for some nine months?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague knows full well that we've always talked about our package of tax reforms and how important it is to view this in a thoughtful, intelligent and comprehensive way. We're talking about a package of tax reforms.

More good news today: The Conference Board of Canada is reporting that the Ontario economy has emerged from the recession. It will sustain rapid, real GDP growth. We will lead Canadian provinces with growth this year of 3.8%, and next year 3.7%. They attribute a lot of the success to our tax reforms.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Member from Lanark. Member from Nepean.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Up until two weeks ago, the cornerstone of your pitch for your HST tax grab was "revenue-

neutral." You yourself, Premier, made that claim six times here in the House, and your cabinet ministers and caucus said it several times more. But you had a sudden change of heart and change of line last week when you finally admitted, and shocked your own caucus by admitting, that you knew all along that, "There will be an increase in taxation."

Premier, why did you do this for nine months? Why did you lead Ontario families down a certain path for nine months? Doesn't it say something about what has happened to the character of the Premier after six and a half years in office that you led people along on this untrue statement for nine months?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think my honourable colleague knows that what we have been saying—and once again, I simply want to acknowledge that moving ahead with this important public policy, moving ahead with this tax reform, would not have been possible without the support of the Conservative Party, and I want to thank them again. I want to thank Mr. Flaherty. I want to thank Ms. Ecker. I want to thank Mr. Baird. I want to thank Mr. Clement. I want to thank Mr. Harris. I want to thank Senator Runciman. I want to thank all those Conservatives who stand four-square behind this important policy initiative. They know what this means to Ontario families. More than anything else, it means jobs for them and jobs for their children in the future. That's why they stand behind it. Again, I thank the Conservative Party for standing in support of this initiative.

1040

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You have to wonder what has happened to Dalton McGuinty after six and a half years in office. For some nine months, this Premier stood in the assembly and out in the general public and said that his HST was going to be revenue-neutral. And then finally, when confronted with the facts that we've been bringing across the floor for some nine months, the Premier finally admitted that his HST was going to be a tax grab on the backs of Ontario families. But, Premier, you knew this for some nine months. You knew this all along, and yet you continued to say things that you yourself knew were not in keeping with the facts.

I ask the Premier: Why should Ontario families respect the word of the Premier when he has no respect for the facts himself?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: With so much vigour, vitality, enthusiasm, and bravado, you would think that the party opposite would be firmly committed to rescinding this provision should they form the government. But they're not going to. They're not going to because they understand that they have this kind of provision in place in 140 other countries. They understand that our export-based companies here are operating in a highly competitive global economy with one hand tied behind their back. They understand that we've got to free up our

businesses and make them more competitive. We've got to put them in a position so that they can create—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order on both sides.

TAXATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Before his moment of cleansing honesty, Dalton McGuinty was far from forthright when it came to his plans to increase taxes on Ontario families. Premier, I remind you that in 2003, you actually took an oath where you pledged, "I will not raise taxes or implement any new taxes without the explicit consent of Ontario voters." And we now see, some six years later, Dalton McGuinty back to his old tricks, where for nine months you said that the HST would be revenue-neutral and then finally admitted that it's a tax grab on Ontario families.

Sir, you don't care about Ontario seniors. You don't care about Ontario families. You don't even care about the Ontario Liberal caucus. All you care about is Dalton McGuinty himself. Why should we believe a word you say anymore?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think we're going to have to turn the heat back down again. It was a lot cooler and calmer in here.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've been reading some stories lately about—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Cambridge: I just sat down and you just opened up.

Mr. David Zimmer: Throw him out.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No. I can throw the member from Willowdale out, if he would like.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Perhaps it's understandable why members of the Conservative Party of Ontario are raising questions and expressing doubts: They are "confused," to quote them, about the position taken by their leader. They're wondering why, if they are so adamantly opposed to the HST—why are they not prepared to rescind that provision? I want to answer that question for them, and I want to answer it again. The fact of the matter is that this provision is supported by the Conservative Party. This would not have been possible without the support of Prime Minister Harper; Minister Flaherty; Minister Baird; Minister Clement; the former Minister of Finance, Janet Ecker; and the former leader of the party, Mike Harris. Together, we know that this is the right thing to do for our province. It's the right thing to do for our economy—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: This speaks to what has happened to your character after six and a half years in office and the tarnish that you have brought to the office of the Premier in this great province.

Dalton McGuinty promised he'd close down the coal plants by 2007. You did no such thing. You promised to stop housing development on the Oak Ridges moraine. You did no such thing. You even broke your promise to parents of autistic children in the province of Ontario, and shame on you, Premier, for doing that. You promised to freeze hydro rates, and now they're going up some \$350 this coming year alone. The health tax is \$900 a year, and now your HST tax grab will take a big bite out of the pockets of Ontario families.

Why is it, Premier, that Ontario families pay the price for each and every one of your broken promises?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague says that he's concerned about the impact of costs on our families. If that's true, why does he oppose our new tax cut for Ontarians that took effect on January 1? Why does he oppose our efforts to reduce drug costs for Ontario families? Somewhere between two million and three million Ontario families pay for their drugs out of pocket. We want to reduce those costs by up to 50%. He opposes that. Why does he oppose our new Ontario sales tax credit of \$260 every year for every member of the family? That's going to benefit three million Ontarians. Why does he oppose our Ontario property tax credit of \$250 for non-seniors and \$625 for seniors? Again, three million Ontarians will benefit. Why is it that every time we move to reduce costs for Ontario families, they stand in the way of those efforts?

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's your problem: Nobody believes you anymore. In 2003, you said you wouldn't raise taxes, and you raised them up to \$900 a year. In 2007, you tried to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Sorry. The members will please come to order.

Continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: In 2007, you tried that trick again. And you brought in your HST sales tax grab. You didn't have to pay severance to the HST tax collectors. You knew you didn't, but you went ahead anyway. He claimed the HST would be revenue-neutral when, for nine months, this Premier knew that that wasn't true.

I'll ask you, Premier: Why do you keep saying one thing and doing another? Is it because you're addicted to taxes, or you just can't help yourself anymore?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I want to, once again, just seize this opportunity to thank the Conservatives for the support for the HST—

Interjections.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I was saying, I want to, once again, thank the Conservative party for their continued support for this initiative.

I want to thank the leader of the official opposition, who said, “To be clear, I believe that there’s little sense in allowing two separate governments to apply two separate sets of taxes and policies and collect two separate groups of sales taxes.”

Also, I want to thank him for the following statement, where he said, “The problem with the PST is it cascades, so every step along the way there’s a tax on tax on tax, which raises the cost of goods and particularly punishes exporters. So we understand how [a harmonized sales tax] can help the economy.”

I want to thank him above all for his unwavering commitment to keep the HST in place. I want to thank him for that, not only on behalf of our businesses but on behalf of our families, who are counting on us, together, to do everything that we can to strengthen this economy and create 600,000 more jobs.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Over the past 10 days, New Democrats have detailed the true cost to Ontario families of the McGuinty government’s HST. The Premier has repeatedly questioned our numbers, but he refuses to release his government’s own numbers. I want to give the Premier another chance. Will he finally get up in this House and tell Ontario families how much his government expects the HST to cost them?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We have the benefit today of yet another independent source that has reviewed our economic policies. I’ve spoken to my colleague in the past about the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which labelled their study Not a Tax Grab After All.

Today the Conference Board of Canada reports the following: Ontario households will also “benefit from income tax cuts and from temporary sales tax transition benefits as the province moves to harmonize the provincial sales tax system with the federal goods and services tax (GST) in July 2010.”

This is yet another independent third party—another independent source—passing judgment on our tax reforms and saying that we are about to lead the country in terms of economic growth because of the policies that we have in place. It would be nice to have the honourable member’s support for these kinds of initiatives that move Ontario to the front of the pack once again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday we revealed that the McGuinty government’s HST on gasoline will cost families with kids \$232 a year—that’s nearly \$900 million out of already stretched family budgets. Not long ago we released government documents showing that the HST on hydro and home heating will cost families \$225 a year. How big of a bite will the Premier’s new tax on utilities take out of Ontario family budgets?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, we were very careful, in terms of putting forward these tax reforms, to ensure that we provided additional supports to our families. So in addition to the personal tax cut that took effect on January 1 of this year, we also have a new Ontario sales tax credit of \$260 every year for every member of the family, which will benefit three million Ontarians. We also have an Ontario property tax credit of \$250 for our non-seniors and \$625 for seniors, benefiting three million Ontarians. We also have a senior homeowners’ property tax grant of \$500. We also have a new northern Ontario energy credit of \$200 per family. We have worked very hard to ensure that we take into account those needs and those concerns of our families in their homes.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Since the Premier continues to stubbornly refuse to give Ontario families the real story on the HST, New Democrats will do it. Using Statistics Canada’s economic model, we’ve run the numbers and have calculated the impact of the Premier’s new tax on utilities on family budgets. The total: \$877 million, plus another \$900 million of gasoline tax. When was the Premier actually planning to tell Ontario families that his new tax on gasoline, on home heating and electricity combined, altogether is going to cost them almost \$1.8 billion a year?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I’ll ask the honourable member to forgive me, but I just bring a healthy dose of skepticism to the numbers that they choose to concoct here on a daily basis now. But I do have continuing confidence in independent third party sources. I have confidence in the University of Calgary and its assessment that our tax reforms will create 600,000 more jobs, and confidence in the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, which said this is not a tax grab. I have confidence in today’s Conference Board of Canada report that says our tax reforms will move us to the front of the pack when it comes to economic growth.

I would counsel my colleague to take a long, hard look at independent sources when it comes to understanding the impact of our policies on Ontario families.

PENSION REFORM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. This week marks an important milestone in the historic debate over the future of retirement incomes for the people of this province. Later today, this Legislature is going to debate an NDP motion calling for the creation of a public defined benefit pension plan that would provide workplace pensions to any Ontario worker who wants one. When the vote on our motion takes place this afternoon, will the government members be voting aye or nay?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: First of all, I want to acknowledge the positive, constructive efforts being

made by the New Democratic Party here in Ontario when it comes to this particular issue.

As I said before, this is a matter for debate, and members will vote as they see fit.

I do bring a slightly different perspective to this particular issue. I think it's important that we keep our minds open not only to public solutions for this national challenge, but also to private sector solutions. Beyond that, I think we need to be open to a national response, which is why we continue to find ways to work with the federal government and other Premiers from around the country.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Later in the week, there's going to be another test of the McGuinty government's position on the future of retirement income for Ontarians. On Thursday, the insurance industry gets their say in the form of a private member's bill sponsored by the Liberal MPP from Peterborough. Some \$8.4 billion worth of fees are already being taken from the retirement savings of Canadians and put into the coffers of banks and insurance companies. The bill sponsored by the member from Peterborough would enable these same banks and insurance companies to pocket billions and billions more of retirees' money.

When the vote is recorded on Thursday on this blatant cash grab, how will the members of the McGuinty government be voting?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I also want to take the opportunity to thank the member from Peterborough for his positive contribution to important public policy debate.

I think it's unfair and simplistic to make the assumption that somehow the solution is going to be found exclusively within either the public realm or the private realm. I just don't think we enjoy the luxury of dividing up the world into black and white in that way. I think we've got to keep an open mind on these things, and I think what we're going to witness is an important debate here and, perhaps in some sense, a collision of ideas. But I think the ultimate beneficiaries will be the people of Ontario.

We look forward to both of these debates. We're going to keep an open mind, and we'll bring everything that we've learned to the national forum, where we think we can, working with the federal government, find a national solution.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Exactly: In a few weeks Canada's finance ministers will be gathering to decide upon the future of retirement savings in this country, and despite repeated attempts by New Democrats to get an answer, no one knows where the McGuinty government stands. With our Ontario retirement plan proposal that we put forward, we're on the side of public defined benefit pension plans. That's where New Democrats stand.

I'm going to ask the Premier one more time: With decision day looming, with this upcoming ministers'

conference, which side is he going to be on—on the side of banks and insurance companies, or on the side of Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Public is not always best. I would gently remind my honourable colleague that they decided in government that public auto insurance was not the best approach, and they backed away from that.

To restate what I said a moment ago, there's an important debate that can, should and must take place, and we're going to witness some of that here in this Legislature. I think that's a good thing. We'll benefit from that, and that will better inform the representations we make on the national level, when we're working with the federal government and our counterparts from across the country.

There is surely one thing on which we can all agree: The status quo is not acceptable. There are going to be too many seniors in their retirement years who will have inadequate levels of support. Our shared responsibility is to find a solution, and we look forward to doing that.

1100

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, in leading off debate on the HST in November of last year, you denied that this was a tax grab, before adding, "The effect is revenue-neutral." But then Premier McGuinty admitted that the HST will be a major tax increase for Ontario families when it comes into force in just 51 days.

Did the Premier's about-face surprise you as much as his flip-flop on sex education caught Minister Pupatello off guard?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The government's position has been clear and unequivocal that not only is this not revenue-neutral—in fact, even in the original documents we printed, when you look at the total tax relief package, the total tax relief package, including the proposed measures announced today, would reduce Ontario revenue by \$3.4 billion over the first four years, net of federal assistance of \$4.3 billion.

We put together a tax package that, again, the conference board today reaffirms will help drive job growth, will help drive increasing incomes and will help drive capital investment. It's the right policy for Ontario. We're delighted to have the support of the federal Conservative government on this.

It's time to move to a bigger and stronger economy. This policy will help us do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: The minister has already increased taxes on the corporate tax, small business tax and income tax, and now he's lowering them a little bit.

The Premier has a bad habit of hanging his ministers and caucus out to dry while they are defending a policy position that he has abandoned. He did it to Minister Pupatello and now he's doing it to you. He used to say that the HST is revenue-neutral. Now Premier McGuinty

admits that the HST will be a big tax increase for Ontarians. While you maintain the HST is revenue-neutral, the Premier admits that it will have a cost to Ontarians. He said that Ontarians should see tough economic measures like the HST as a kind of sacrifice.

Minister, did you know that the Premier was planning on contradicting you? Or were you just as surprised as the Minister of Economic Development and Trade?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Premier of Ontario has taken the tough decisions to create jobs, to create investment and to create growth in the Ontario economy. The only member who is inconsistent in this whole debate—and by the way, our corporate tax cuts will make us the most competitive tax jurisdiction in North America, according to their witness.

Let's talk about consistency. Why did that member say, on February 25, that you're in favour of those reductions for small business and corporate tax rates? You know they're the right steps to take. You know they will create jobs, just like Mr. Flaherty, just like Mr. Baird, just like Mr. Clement, just like Mr. Harper, just like Mr. Tory, just like the experts. This is about a stronger economy with more jobs for all Ontarians.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Peter Kormos: To the Premier: Why is Julian Fantino still the commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police even after the Attorney General's own lawyers say that Mr. Fantino is breaching section 113 of the Police Services Act?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: First of all, let's correct what the member said. The Ontario government has not taken a position. The Ontario government would not take a position when a matter is before the courts.

Julian Fantino is still the commissioner because we have all the faith in the world in his ability to make operational decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: This is a very serious matter. It's about public confidence in our police. Four lawyers from the Ministry of the Attorney General, one of them very senior, say that Mr. Fantino has violated section 113 of the Police Services Act. This is tantamount to an obstruction of justice. If Mr. Fantino doesn't have the decency to resign, why doesn't this government have the guts to just fire him?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence will withdraw the comment, please.

Mr. Mike Colle: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: To the Attorney General.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Hamilton East and the member from Eglinton–Lawrence: If you have a disagreement, take it

outside this chamber. I don't need it interrupting the proceedings.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Attorney General?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The SIU is an independent agency. It acts independently of the government. It makes independent decisions. The lawyers advocating on its behalf, though employed by the government, are representing that independent agency. They take their instructions from them; they do not take their instructions from the government. I made that quite clear yesterday publicly. The member should know that.

When a matter is before the court, with the greatest of respect, some of the comments that he made are just not appropriate before our judicial system, which is the foundation of everything we do in here, reaches any conclusion whatsoever.

NURSES

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Yesterday was the start of Nursing Week here in Ontario, and my Willowdale constituents, indeed everyone in Ontario, are real fans and supporters of nurses. They really see them as the front line of health care here in Ontario.

Last year was a tough year with H1N1, and Ontario's nurses were there again on the front lines to help with vaccines and the various care that we needed for those flu symptoms.

We've invested a lot in nurses over the years in various programs to help graduates get the new jobs they deserve here in Ontario. Minister, what continuing investments are you making for the nursing profession here in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Willowdale.

I'm very proud to be taking part in many nursing-related events this week—Nursing Week, internationally. Nurses are the backbone of our health care system, and that's why we have created over 10,700 new nursing positions since we took office; even this past year, 1,200 more nursing positions. We've invested over \$900 million in nursing initiatives since we were elected in 2003. We've also made Ontario one of the few jurisdictions in the world to guarantee a full-time job opportunity for new nursing graduates. More than 8,000 new nursing graduates have taken advantage of this program.

This morning I was at Sunnybrook, where we announced—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, you talked about the expanding role of nurses here in Ontario. Many of us, and many of my constituents, want to find out more about this new nurse practitioners' program.

I know that the nurse practitioner-led clinics are part of the government's family-health-care-for-all strategy,

which will improve access, and I understand that the nurse practitioner-led clinics will improve the quality of health care here in Ontario. But, Minister, can you give me a detailed progress report on the plan to expand nurse practitioner-led clinics in Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, I'd be happy to do that, but first let me tell you what we did at Sunnybrook this morning. At Sunnybrook, we announced permanent funding for 34 registered nurse-surgical first assist positions. This is great news for nurses in Ontario.

Yesterday, we announced that the next wave of nurse practitioner-led clinics would be rolled out. We're accepting proposals until June 25. These nurse practitioner-led clinics—it will bring us to 25 in total—are providing excellent care. It's a very important innovation that our government has made to ensure that more Ontarians get access to primary health care.

Not only will the NP-led clinics increase access, but they will focus on chronic disease management, prevention, community-based health promotion activities—

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

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Premier. Premier, there are just 51 days left until the HST grab of 8% more out of each family budget. The fact that the Premier wasn't straight about knowing that families will be paying more with the HST—it'll start on gas, home heating fuel, power—wasn't lost on Louis Desjardins of Belleville. Mr. Desjardins wonders what else you know but aren't telling, like that the HST really won't create more jobs. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings won't answer Louis Desjardins' questions so I will. When is the last time McGuinty was right about anything?

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank Bev Oda and Daryl Kramp, Conservative members in the federal House who voted for our tax reform package. I want to thank them and let them know how important that is. They agree with this side of the House that for a strong Canada, one must have a strong Ontario, an Ontario with plenty of jobs. Our tax reform package is all about modernizing our tax system. Now, I know there are people across the way who believe that there should be two governments taxing every transaction twice when once will do, but on this side of the House we know that to attract \$47 billion worth of 21st-century investment in our province, resulting in 591,000 21st-century jobs in our province, we have to reform our tax system. I want to thank Bev Oda and I want to thank Daryl Kramp—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: If the Premier won't answer Mr. Desjardins' questions, how about Larry Maudsley of

Peterborough, who just recently retired and is living on a fixed income? He doesn't value the Premier's word any more than the Premier himself does. He says: "Any tax relief will not offset what people have to pay in additional taxes." Mr. Maudsley knows he will be paying more for heat, gas, power, Internet and a range of other things that you aren't telling us. The member from Peterborough won't speak up for Larry Maudsley, when the Premier knew for months that the HST would cut into the budgets of seniors and families in Ontario. Why did you only admit now that the HST is going to seriously attack seniors?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank Dean Del Mastro—Dean is the federal Conservative MP for Peterborough—for voting for this reform package at the federal House.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Member from Oxford. Member from Nepean. Member from Leeds.

Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: We're at a crossroads here. Now we can listen to the opposition and think that the status quo is acceptable, even though the world economy has changed, or we can take difficult but necessary decisions, because what people tell me and our government everywhere we go, and I think in your ridings as well, is, "We need more people working. We need people back to work." The Conference Board of Canada says that we're on the right track—those results are here—and though the prophets of doom and gloom over there are praying for some kind of a recession—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will please come to order. Member from Hamilton East, member from Lanark.

New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. It is now clear that Toronto's transit vision will be dealt a devastating blow by the McGuinty government's cut of \$4 billion in Toronto's Transit City budget. The Metrolinx report to be released on May 19 will recommend that funded lines be dramatically shortened and completion dates be pushed back five to 10 years. Speaker, through you to the minister: What exactly does this government hope to accomplish by wilfully destroying Toronto's transit vision?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What we're attempting to accomplish is the development of a regional transit plan. We're attempting to put in place the vision for transit that was developed by Metrolinx, that was developed in conjunction with municipalities around the city of Toronto and with the co-operation of the city of Toronto. The city of Toronto and the mayor were part of the discussions leading up to the budget. Understanding that some of the plans needed to be scoped, they were part of that

conversation. Now we've had to delay the funding, as I've said many times in here, but Metrolinx is convinced we'll be able to, rather than completing the projects in eight years, complete them in 10 years. I think that's an absolutely reasonable change, and the people of Toronto want to see the projects go forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The NDP is the only party in this Legislature that supports the full completion of the funded Transit City lines according to its originally announced timetable. The NDP is the only party in this Legislature that stands with the residents of the Eglinton corridor, who have been waiting 20 years for a dedicated transit line. The NDP is the only party in this Legislature that stands with the residents of Jane-Finch and Rexdale in demanding that the Finch LRT be built according to the original timetable, so that commute times of two hours or more become a thing of the past. My question then for the transportation minister is this one: What does the government have against the residents of the Eglinton corridor, Jane-Finch and Rexdale communities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The NDP is the only party in this House that has consistently opposed the building of transit in this city. The NDP is the only party in this House that has a member who has delayed and opposed one of the most important transit projects in this city, the Union-Pearson line. The member from Parkdale-High Park has consistently delayed, opposed and stirred up opposition to that line at every turn. We are committed to building transit in the GTHA; we are committed to getting these projects on line. It is unconscionable that this party that is supposed to be progressive and that is and supposed to be forward-thinking would not be supporting the building of transit in this city.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

Mr. Bob Chiarelli: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, while experts predict the recession is turning around, I'm deeply concerned for students in this province who have trouble finding work during the summer break, which, as we know, helps them to pay for schooling and living expenses—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I've already reminded the member from Eglinton-Lawrence and the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek. Take it outside, both of you.

Please continue.

Mr. Bob Chiarelli: Minister, according to Statistics Canada, the unemployment rate of full-time Canadian students between the ages of 15 and 24 years was reported in 2009 to be over 18%. Minister, what are you doing to help students find employment this summer?

Hon. John Milloy: I appreciate the question. It comes at a timely moment. As students are leaving college and university for the summer break, they're looking for an opportunity to find summer employment that's going to

be relevant to developing their skills, create a source of income to support them this fall and also provide employees for many employers across the province. I'm very pleased that our government, recognizing that these are particularly challenging times for students, has stepped forward with over \$90 million to help summer students in the province of Ontario look for and acquire work. We're anticipating that about 107,000 students will benefit from a series of programs offered by the government. These include things like the summer jobs service. It's the largest component of the strategy, and it offers \$2 per hour for employers as an incentive to help them find students. We're also offering opportunities for those students who—

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

Mr. Bob Chiarelli: Minister, employment experts note that the transition between students graduating and landing a full-time job in their field is getting longer. In our post-recession world, it seems that recent graduates are finding that it takes longer to make the leap into their careers. Minister, what can we do for those students who are looking for a job opportunity that will help with their ongoing expenses and also with their professional development?

Hon. John Milloy: We certainly recognize that in this new economy it's important that students leave their education having a varied background of skills and experiences, some not directly related to their study. That's why we offer a wide range of supports to students. As I mentioned in my previous answer, we support students who are looking to start their own business. The government itself also offers opportunities where we hire students as part of the public service for the summer. We have programs like the Ontario Ranger program that's run by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Last year, the ministry provided close to \$1 million to fund 529 Ontario positions in the Ontario Ranger program. For the civil service proper, we have Ontario public service summer employment opportunities as well as the summer experience program—just a few of the ways that we're helping students in Ontario during these tough economic times—

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

1120

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of the Environment: As we now know, your waste electronics and electrical equipment scheme has people paying full fees for a program only achieving one third of its diversion promise; two thirds of e-waste is going overseas to the highest bidder or to landfills. Is that what people are paying these taxes for? It's your program. Are you now prepared to accept responsibility for this abysmal failure, or will you continue pointing the finger at staff, pointing the finger at industry?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know the program has had some challenges, but it also has had some successes:

17,000 tonnes of electronic waste is currently being diverted from landfill sites, and it is being properly recycled.

It's absolutely important that the electronic waste be kept out of landfill sites so that the sites aren't going to be contaminated and cause all sorts of problems for future generations. We're working with the WDO. We're working with the Ontario Electronic Stewardship council. We're going to solve this problem. We're going to be the most and best of anywhere in the country when it comes to recycling material in general.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, Minister, we know you're working on it; you've planned some meetings in the future. Very simply, too-little-too-late planned landfill bans don't cut it. Consumers have been paying this tax of between \$2 and \$26 an item to fund this program, and it's a failure. How much are we paying for all the other waste diversion programs?

Your government promised 60% diversion by 2008. It's now 2010, and we're only at 22%. Why would anyone believe you, as you seem to wrap yourself in the green flag and plan for the future, when you have such an abysmal past, an abysmal record, with respect to waste diversion?

Hon. John Gerretsen: You know, it's interesting: It's that party that brought in the Waste Diversion Act and it's that party that set up the funding system that is currently in place. We are making substantive changes to that to make the industries more responsible for the recycling. We are basically rewriting the—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Oxford.

Minister.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It is your legislation that basically provided how these funds are to be collected. We know there's a problem with that, as has been shown over the last couple of days. That's why we're rewriting the act to make producers responsible for the waste that they in effect create.

We are going to get it right. That act didn't do it. The new act will be getting it right so that we can divert electronic waste, as well as other waste, from our landfill sites.

NURSES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. It's National Nursing Week, yet in communities like London, Hamilton, Sault Ste. Marie, Windsor, Toronto, Thunder Bay, Ottawa and elsewhere across Ontario a total of 2,045 nursing jobs have been cut. Front-line health care services have suffered as a result.

With the health of Ontarians at stake, will the Minister of Health commit to ensuring that not a single additional nursing position will be cut in the next year?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the opportunity to talk about National Nursing Week. It truly is a time to celebrate the extraordinary work that nurses do in our province.

I would recommend that the member opposite actually look a little bit deeper at the numbers that she's using. The College of Nurses is just one source of information; they will tell you that there are over 10,000 more nurses working today than there were when we took office. We have created, even in the past year, 1,200 new nursing positions across this province. We've invested \$900 million more since we were elected so that we can hire more nurses and we can also expand the scope of practice for nurses. This morning—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sault Ste. Marie has been hit particularly hard, with nearly two dozen nursing positions eliminated. Patients are forced to go without thousands and thousands of hours of direct care. The Sault Area Hospital has to make reductions in oncology, critical care, primary care, coronary care, surgery and the intensive care unit.

Patients and nurses in Sault Ste. Marie want a guarantee from the McGuinty government that the senseless cuts to their local health care will come to an end once and for all. Will the minister use this opportunity of National Nursing Week to deliver this guarantee to the good people of Sault Ste. Marie?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell the people of Sault Ste. Marie and right across this province is that we're working very hard to improve the quality of health care and to improve access to health care.

Nurses are the backbone of our health care system. We rely on them very heavily to provide that patient-centred care that we are determined to provide across this province.

In Sault Ste. Marie, I'm sure the member opposite would be interested to know, there are 29 nursing positions posted at the Sault Area Hospital right now. Across the province, there are almost 400 nursing positions that are being advertised.

Nursing is a wonderful career for people, and it is just getting better in the province of Ontario.

TAXATION

Mr. Glen R. Murray: To the Minister of Revenue: As Ontario leads Canada out of the global recession with 3.8% GDP growth, understandably job creation for those able to work is a major focus of our government. Laying the conditions for the creation of good jobs is one of the most important things our government can do.

Not everybody will be able to get back to work overnight. Those still waiting for work have real concerns surrounding the effects of the HST on a limited income.

My constituents want to know if the HST will place an additional burden on low-income Ontarians, forcing them to pay more when they can least afford it.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank the member for the question, because it goes to the heart of tax reform.

We are changing our sales tax in this province on July 1, but we're also reforming our income tax system. Part of that has already started. We now have the lowest personal income tax rate of any province in Canada when it comes to the first \$37,000 worth of income.

On July 1, we're taking other measures. The first one has to do with what we refer to as the HST rebate. People of modest means receive today the GST rebate from the federal government, some \$240 for adults and \$140 for children. That will be maintained by the federal government. We are adding a new HST rebate of some \$260 for every adult and child in the family. That's very important for people to understand. It's also why we're expanding the property tax credit, both for people who own a home and also for people who rent.

I know that in your riding it is so important—

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

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Helping getting people back to work is the number one thing we can do to help low-income Ontarians who are able to work. Income tax exemption, tax credits and traditional cheques will help struggling families as we move forward with a new form of taxation. Exemptions include children's clothing and footwear, all infant and child car seats, diapers, books, meals under \$4, newspapers and feminine hygiene products.

Minister, because of their importance to families, many social advocates have endorsed these exemptions. What reaction are you getting from these groups to the HST and our government tax reforms?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I think it's important, in this somewhat partisan forum that we have here, to talk to people who are independent of this place. And what are they saying?

"In terms of the net impact of the sales tax harmonization, we think that overall it will actually improve the incomes of low-income Ontarians for the most part." That's Michael Oliphant, the director of research and communications for the Daily Bread Food Bank.

Another quote: "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." That's Pat Capponi of the 25 in 5 Network for Poverty Reduction.

Another quote: "When you start to think about an extra \$42 per month per child and start to look at the one-time money coming back and the permanency of the tax credit, the harmonization tax credit, this will make some tangible difference—an extra \$100 in these folks' pockets is the difference between going to food banks and not going to food banks." That's Gail Nyberg—

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

1130

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Last week, 11 children's aid societies took an unprecedented step: filing for a judicial review of your section 14 process. They feel that the section 14 process was flawed and the outcome was predetermined.

I know you will not comment on the specifics of this case, but will the minister tell the House the last time that a funding partner had to ask for a judicial review just because they didn't believe the process was fair?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to speak in this House about the judicial review, which is a procedural tool available to any CAS in the province. It's an arm's-length review that will follow a section 14 application.

Although I cannot speak to the specifics of what's transpiring, I can say that in the context of the section 14 review that was undertaken by my ministry, some \$850,000 flowed to children's aid societies across the province. That's on top of the \$26.9 million in additional dollars that was put into the sector this past spring.

We're in the midst of a large-scale conversation about the future of children's aid societies and that delivery model. At the same time, we continue to meet our commitment never to put Ontario's children at risk.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Here's what's actually happening out there. Last year, Durham Children's Aid Society investigated 4,180 reports of abuse. It served 5,397 families and facilitated 6,787 visits in the family access centre. They've eliminated 31 positions and still have a funding shortfall of \$3.8 million.

Minister, you have to admit that something here doesn't really add up. Will you admit that the section 14 process undertaken by your ministry, just like your consultation process with the pharmacies, was a fait accompli?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm so pleased to have a chance to talk about Durham region and let this Legislature know how much better the kids are in Durham region today than they were in the past.

Funding has increased for children's aid in Durham by 31% since 2003, and over the last decade, funding is up over 250%. Section 14 money that was provided to Durham is \$142,000, and stabilization funding is \$543,000. At the same time, we've increased funding to child care in Durham by 71% since 2003. We've put \$63.5 million into child care, and that's saving 300 subsidized spaces in your community. Twenty Durham schools will have all-day JK for four- and five-year-olds, servicing—

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

PUBLIC SAFETY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels. On Friday night, a chimney collapsed at the Vale Inco smelter complex in Copper Cliff. The chimney fell and damaged a pressurized line that came from the oxygen plant. People in Copper Cliff are scared. They know the oxygen plant is a highly technical and dangerous industrial operation. We were all lucky last Friday that the oxygen line had just been turned off.

It is the minister's responsibility to ensure public safety. What are you doing to ensure the safety of the residents of Copper Cliff in Sudbury?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I want to thank the member for the question. I do understand that this incident did take place. There were no injuries, and there was no potential harm to any workers.

Two Ministry of Labour inspectors have been on the site. These inspectors have expertise both in mining and in construction. They're currently conducting an investigation into the incident, and they're making sure that the worksite is safe going forward.

That being said, our government is committed to ensuring that all workers are protected from hazards on the job site. That's what our inspectors are doing every single day out there in all workplaces across Ontario.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Last December, I wrote to the minister and I explained to him that the people are concerned for their safety because Vale Inco has resumed operations with replacement workers.

The minister may not know, but in 1995 there was a sulphur trioxide leak from the acid plant that led to the evacuation of hundreds of people who had to be treated in our hospital. It overwhelmed our system. If the minister didn't know, the people in Copper Cliff know.

Replacement workers tear at the social fabric of our community. In an industrial site, they also bring a level of insecurity to the residents of the neighbourhood. When will the government act and ban replacement workers?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member did write to me, and I personally spoke with the member to address her concerns around the safety of the workers. Again, our government is committed to ensuring that all workers are protected from injuries and major health hazards on the job.

What I can say is that the Ministry of Labour has met with officials from the company and the union to discuss the company's plans as they operate. The ministry officials explained the company's responsibility, under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, to ensure that all workers—all workers—there who are doing any work are adequately trained and qualified. We continue to enforce our Occupational Health and Safety Act by conducting proactive inspections at Vale and other mine locations.

We're also front and centre when responding to complaints from any party, I say to the member. But I continue to address her concerns and speak personally with her.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Minister, I know that there are aboriginal people trying to build vibrant and stable communities throughout this province. There are some disparities in the quality of life between aboriginal people and non-aboriginal people in this country, let alone this province. Aboriginal people living on- and off-territory can face a number of unique issues that may influence their lives in Ontario and, indeed, across Canada.

Can the minister please tell the House what initiatives his ministry is taking to best improve the lives of aboriginal people here in Ontario and across Canada?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member for Brant has been very involved in these issues. What we're trying to do is provide economic incentives and opportunities so that those on First Nations territories can have the opportunities that many of us take for granted.

Not long ago, the member from Brant, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, and I attended a signing ceremony between Samsung and Six Nations. This signing ceremony, made possible by the Green Energy Act, will provide not only green energy development on Six Nations territories but, most importantly, it will provide jobs for Six Nations residents. It's one of the many signings that have taken place under this world-leading green energy accord.

Now you say, "Who's going to take the jobs?" Well, we've been working with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to make sure that we have the appropriate training and related support so that Six Nations and other aboriginal residents can take advantage of these job opportunities—

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

Mr. Dave Levac: Minister, thank you for leading that into the next question I have, which is on education and contrary to what some people believe to be the truth. Some aboriginal students face a number of unique cultural, social and economic challenges in their lives throughout the educational field. The combination of these is sometimes very overwhelming, especially when pursuing post-secondary education. Contrary to the misinformation out there, aboriginal students may not always have the financial assistance or unique community support when pursuing post-secondary education.

Can the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs tell us what this government is doing to help create the climate for success for aboriginal students not only to succeed and to thrive in their post-secondary education, but also to help build their communities as they've always wanted to do from time immemorial?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Once again, the member from Brant has been a leading advocate for opportunities for people throughout his riding and in First Nations communities.

In the last budget, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities has been given the opportunity to offer

20,000 more post-secondary spaces to students throughout the province of Ontario. That's the start, particularly for the educational institutes in my colleague's riding: Nipissing, Laurier and Mohawk.

But we've done more than that. I attended a ceremony with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities about a \$26.4-million fund that will particularly assist aboriginal students to obtain the educational supports they require and the related cultural and educational assists on campus. And of course, we have the best student assistance program anywhere in Canada so that those who need financial assistance—aboriginal students and others—will get the financial assistance they require to attend the place and get the post-secondary education they require in the province of Ontario.

1140

PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS

Mr. Peter Kormos: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: This is pursuant to standing order 39 and with respect to a petition presented to this chamber yesterday by the member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

First, if I may refer to our friends Bosc and O'Brien, page 1159: "While the right of the citizens to petition Parliament for redress of grievances is frequently referred to as a fundamental, or as a fundamental constitutional principle, the written constitution is in fact silent on the matter. The recognition of this right is, however, well entrenched, based as it is on centuries-old tradition and established precedent." Why I make reference to that is because it's the right of the citizen. It's not the right of any MPP to petition; it's the right of the citizen to petition.

I then go to page 1170, Bosc and O'Brien again, which discusses the role of the MPP. While no MPP is obliged to present a petition and doesn't necessarily have to agree with the petition to present it, most MPPs or MPs consider it their duty.

I know that it's unparliamentary to misrepresent something to this House, and similarly unparliamentary to allege that a member made a misrepresentation, but the petition that was presented yesterday, the prayer in the petition, read, "We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the building of the Eglinton rapid transit line as soon as possible, and to say no to gridlock on Eglinton." End of prayer. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence—and I have the Hansard for you, sir, if a page would like to come here and deliver it to the table. Speaker, you'll see that the presenter of the petition, when presenting the petition, inserted an addendum to the prayer in the petition. The addendum is clearly designed to generate some political spin. It may well have been a careless quip on the part of the member for Eglinton–Lawrence. However, the addition of that addendum completely distorts the prayer in the petition, which calls upon the Legislative Assembly to get on with its public transit construction, and indeed constitutes an attack on the mayor of the city of Toronto, who's not referred to at all by the petitioners.

Standing order 39 prescribes the process for presenting petitions. Look, I know there are all sorts of things people do in the House from time to time, witticisms that are injected, but this is a citizens' right, and we're doing a disservice to the citizens who expect us to present their petitions when we alter them, when we add to them or when we belittle that prayer in the petition by turning into a joke or turning it into a partisan political comment.

I don't intend and have no interest in bringing a motion for censure or a motion for contempt, but I do—

Mr. Mike Colle: Give me a break.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order.

Mr. Peter Kormos:—but I do understand that those motions are appropriate because they're the only motions in which one can refer to a member as having committed an unparliamentary deed. I have no interest in doing that, but I am asking the Speaker to use his authority to (1) address the concern that I've raised and (2) to assist us in ensuring that we perform this very important duty to the citizens of Ontario. That's one of our duties. Bosc and O'Brien talk about the MPP's duty to read the petition and the citizens' right to make the petition. I'd ask the Speaker to rule on that, please.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Under standing order 39(b), "A member may present a petition in the House during the routine proceeding 'Petitions.' The member may make a brief statement summarizing the contents of the petition and indicating the number of signatures"—

Interjection.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Perhaps the member would like to let me finish my statement. If in fact the member for Eglinton–Lawrence made a statement that was inappropriate in his summarizing of the petition, then I'm sure the member will be apologizing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We should get on with our business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I do agree with the issues raised in the point of order by my colleague from the third party. For the member to imply in his reading—the Hansard would imply that his statement was part of the petition, which in fact it is not. I believe that the standing orders do not allow for—the petition must be read as presented to the House, and I do believe that the member for Welland and my colleague from the third party has raised a substantive and genuine bona fide point of order on this issue, and we would ask you to rule on that as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the member from Welland, and the government House leader and the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for their comments on the point of order raised by the honourable member. I thank the honourable member for his point of order.

As all members know, the Speaker has been struggling with the issue of petitions on a number of fronts because

I do not have a copy of the petitions physically in front of me when they are presented to the House; they are approved by the table.

I want to just clarify some remarks, because it's important for the members to know that there are actually two options that are available to them when they are presenting petitions. They can stand up and read the petition as it's presented or, pursuant to standing order 39(b), they can make a brief statement summarizing the contents. I've said before, and I'm going to say again, that politicizing the petitions is not helpful to the procedures of this House, and again would remind all members and ask of them to refrain from doing so. I say that to members on both sides of the House. The honourable member is correct that the members are to present petitions on behalf of those citizens who submit them.

To address the issue that the government House leader raised, the point in the standing orders regarding debate is during the time of petitions, and during the time of petitions it's not to be used as an opportunity to engage in debate or put forward a member's own opinion.

I thank the honourable member for raising it and would remind all members to either read the petition as it is presented or present a brief summary, or they can table the petition as well.

DEFERRED VOTES

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'ENSEIGNEMENT POSTSECONDAIRE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 43, An Act to amend the Post-secondary Education Choice and Excellence Act, 2000, the Private Career Colleges Act, 2005 and the Ontario College of Art & Design Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 favorisant le choix et l'excellence au niveau postsecondaire, la Loi de 2005 sur les collèges privés d'enseignement professionnel et la Loi de 2002 sur l'École d'art et de design de l'Ontario.

The division bells rang from 1148 to 1153.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Duncan, Dwight	Milloy, John
Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Mitchell, Carol
Arthurs, Wayne	Fonseca, Peter	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Bentley, Christopher	Gravelle, Michael	Oraziotti, David
Best, Margaret	Hampton, Howard	Pendergast, Leeanna
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Phillips, Gerry
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Broten, Laurel C.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq

Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Ramal, Khalil
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Ramsay, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kormos, Peter	Rinaldi, Lou
Caplan, David	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Carroll, Aileen	Leal, Jeff	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Levac, Dave	Smith, Monique
Chiarelli, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Crozier, Bruce	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted	Wilkinson, John
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Murdoch, Bill
Barrett, Toby	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Steve	Martiniuk, Gerry	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia	Yakubuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 69; the nays are 18.

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

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): So ordered.

There being no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1157 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: On behalf of the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and myself, I'd like to welcome to the visitors' gallery Mr. Bert Werry. He's a member of the Werry family, an outstanding agricultural business family in the riding of Durham and perhaps in other parts than just my riding. They're one of the best cattle-dealing families that I've had the occasion to listen to and work with, a highly ethical and disciplined family. I congratulate them and welcome them today.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY FUNDRAISING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to congratulate McDonald's restaurants on their McHappy Day fundraiser held on May 5, last week. This is the day when a dollar from every breakfast McMuffin sandwich, Big Mac and Happy Meal is donated to Toronto's new Ronald McDonald House. It was my privilege to join my

community leaders alongside the McDonald's crew in Port Perry in this tradition last week.

Many thanks to my constituents Ginger and Sandy Jackson as well as their sons Stephen, James, Jeff and Tim, who own the McDonald's restaurants in Uxbridge and in Port Perry. Ginger Jackson is a member of the Mayor's Honour Roll for the community service she provides and is a highly regarded person in the community.

I appreciate the hospitality of the Jacksons and their staff. Best of all, the event raised over \$5,000 for Ronald McDonald House. Thanks to everyone who participated and for their support for a very worthy cause—Ronald McDonald House in Toronto.

DAKOTA BRANT

Mr. Dave Levac: I'm honoured to announce to the members and all Ontarians that Dakota Brant, a member of the Mohawk Turtle Clan from Six Nations of the Grand River Territory in the riding of Brant, recently won the 2010 Miss Indian World competition. The pageant was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and took place this year on April 24.

The contest is part of the annual Gathering of Nations powwow, North America's largest powwow. Twenty-six Native American and indigenous women representing their different tribes and traditions competed in the Miss Indian World competition in the areas of tribal knowledge, dancing ability and personality assets. By winning this major competition, Dakota will represent all native and indigenous people as a cultural goodwill ambassador worldwide.

Dakota will be graduating this year on the president's honour roll of Trent University, where she majored in indigenous environmental studies, and she aims one day to pursue a Ph.D. in this field. Dakota is an active leader in her community and one of the youngest teachers of the Mohawk language.

I'm so proud to say that not only is she the first Mohawk woman to be crowned Miss Indian World, she is also a great role model for her community, the children in it and the world at large. Congratulations, Dakota. We're proud of you. Nya:weh.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Bill Murdoch: After years of lobbying the provincial government, I'm pleased the minister has finally listened and agreed to give the 70-kilometre-long stretch of Highway 6 between Mar and Tobermory its overdue facelift. The Highway 6 rehabilitation will include a half-metre partial paved shoulder and provide a smoother ride for drivers.

But the minister has not been clear on why she abandoned the proposal to add bike lanes to this \$20-million project. The people of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound have been told that the Ministry of Transportation is committed to encouraging active forms of transportation

like cycling, but no such commitment was delivered on March 31.

As you know, the Bruce Peninsula is a major eco-tourism destination, thanks to the well-developed Bruce Trail and the national and provincial parks. Canoes, hiking boots and bicycles are a must for visitors to the peninsula.

We're talking about lost tourist dollars. We're also talking about dangerous traffic conditions, as there is a variety of users of this road. We are seeing more touring bicycles sharing the road with cars and large trailers. There are identified safety and operational concerns.

For this reason, I would like to remind the minister that bike lanes can add to the durability and lifetime of rural and northern roads and, more importantly, they can add to your life expectancy.

So I'd like to ask the minister to reconsider her objectives for Highway 6. It has taken many years of lobbying to get the construction season going on the Bruce Peninsula. I hope it doesn't take as long to receive cycling lanes. Bruce Peninsula is waiting.

SCIENCE FAIR

Mrs. Liz Sandals: It's my pleasure to recognize a special group of high school students from across Ontario who will represent Canada at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair, the world's largest pre-college science fair, next week in California. Intel ISEF brings together 1,500 students from more than 50 countries to compete for approximately \$4 million in scholarships and prizes.

I would especially like to mention Brian Krug, who is a student at John F. Ross CVI in my riding of Guelph. Brian's award-winning research examined a possible treatment for ovarian cancer that prevents the growth of blood vessels in tumours using, of all things, a chemical that is found in green tea.

As a technology leader, Intel is directly involved in education programs and technology access to enable tomorrow's innovations. For 13 years, it has also supported Youth Science Canada, which plays a vital role in nurturing scientific interest among our youth. I'd like to take this opportunity to congratulate Intel and Youth Science Canada for their commitment to youth and science.

The McGuinty government knows we need a highly educated workforce to compete globally. That's why, since 2005, the Ministry of Research and Innovation has invested more than \$5 million in science outreach projects, sparking the scientific curiosity of more than 156,000 youths. Congratulations and good luck—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you.

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF ONTARIO

Mr. Randy Hillier: The easiest job in government must be at the correspondence unit of the Attorney

General. Everything he is ever asked about is either “before the courts” or “beyond the scope of his office,” and he can never address anything specific. I have to ask: What exactly are the taxpayers of Ontario paying for with this Attorney General?

I have on many occasions requested the Attorney General to investigate complaints and allegations made by the people I represent against officials acting on the authority of the crown. Albert Werry, who’s here with us today, comes to mind. He has been pursuing justice in this elusive maze of legalities we’ve built for more than a decade, and there are many, many others. All I ever get from this Attorney General is one of his stock replies: “I won’t,” “I can’t,” “It’s not my job,” or “It’s before the courts.”

Clearly, the Attorney General refuses to take responsibility for his jurisdiction, so let me ask this House: If not the Attorney General, then who?

1510

BREASTFEEDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Tomorrow is Canada Health Day, and on that day, I will be launching a report detailing important recommendations for a provincial breastfeeding strategy.

Canada Health Day is dedicated to recognizing developments and successes in the public health and health care fields and to demonstrating our appreciation for the people who deliver health services. Perhaps most importantly, however, it is a day to reflect on the health needs of our society and commit ourselves to achieving more in the coming year.

Breastfeeding is a building block of lifelong health for our youngest Ontarians. Yet sadly, adequate support for breastfeeding is inconsistent and often sorely lacking in way too many parts of Ontario.

The report I am launching, entitled Recommendations for a Provincial Breastfeeding Strategy for Ontario, outlines the necessary steps we need to take in order to support breastfeeding mothers and their babies, from pregnancy, to birth and beyond.

This report was created by a coalition of important stakeholders, including the Ontario Breastfeeding Committee, the Registered Nurses’ Association, the Newman Breastfeeding Clinic, Toronto Public Health, midwives, hospitals, pediatricians—the list goes on. This report offers a sound and well-researched plan for improving breastfeeding support and rates in Ontario.

I urge all members of this House to read this report and work with me in ensuring that babies in Ontario have the best opportunities for life. Breast is best, and health promotion starts with your first meal.

THE BRIGADOONS

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to recognize one of Glengarry county’s local bands, the Brigadoons, a Celtic band that has been honoured for its

commitment to Scottish culture. The band was recently nominated for the Scottish music award by the Quebec Thistle Council. The award was presented during a ceremony at the Black Watch armoury in Montreal last month.

Formed in 1971 by Rob Taylor, the band members of the Brigadoons have, through all these years, promoted Celtic music in Glengarry county and well beyond the county borders. Over the years, the band has had many members who epitomize the vast talent present in the county. Adding their talent to the band were Bob Burnie, Gaye Leroux, Jamie Wood, Brian MacDonell, Rick Link, Gerry Lefave, David Wright, Paddy Kelly, Shelley Downing and Bonita Leblanc. The Brigadoons now consist of Rob Taylor, Denis Carr, Jackie Smith and Luane Doyle.

To this day, they perform annually on Caribbean cruises, and they have had the pleasure of working with such stars as the Alexander Brothers, Natalie MacMaster, the Barra MacNeils, the Rankin Family, the Tannahill Weavers and the Battlefield Band. One of the highlights for this group is their performances each year at the Friday night tattoo at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville.

I would like to offer my congratulations to the Brigadoons on winning this award. They are strong contributors to local music and culture in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, and I look forward to watching them perform at the next Glengarry Highland Games on July 30 and 31 this year in Maxville.

ROYAL OTTAWA MENTAL HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is my great pleasure to rise today to credit an institution that has been a cornerstone of care in Ottawa. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre, which is located in my riding of Ottawa Centre.

It opened in 1910 as a sanatorium for tuberculosis, and a century later has become a leading mental health centre serving all of eastern Ontario. The new 400,000-square-foot facility features a state-of-the-art psychiatric teaching hospital with 188 beds, and houses the University of Ottawa Institute of Mental Health Research.

The redevelopment of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre in 2006 was part of a province-wide effort to bring mental health care out of the shadows and provide a leading-edge hospital with a healing, therapeutic environment.

This past Saturday, the community got together to celebrate the centennial of the Royal Ottawa Hospital. Despite the cold weather, a lot of members of the community were present, including Minister Madeleine Meilleur, MPP Bob Chiarelli, Ottawa Mayor Larry O’Brien, and Daniel Alfredsson, who is the captain of the Ottawa Senators and is involved with the Royal Ottawa Hospital.

Mental health issues affect many Ontario families. That is why the good work of the health care profes-

sionals, researchers, staff and volunteers at the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre must be recognized.

I extend my congratulations to CEO George Weber, Chair Janet Cosier and Vice-Chair Rob Notman.

LEADING WOMEN AND LEADING GIRLS, BUILDING COMMUNITIES AWARDS

Mr. Phil McNeely: My riding is home to 15 recipients of this year's Leading Women and Leading Girls, Building Communities Awards.

Last Friday in Orléans, five leading girls were honoured. They were Clare Knutson, Dorothy Krolak, Karine Landry, Myriam Venasse and Rosemary Ly. There were also 10 Leading Women, Building Community Awards, and they were given to Dr. Nathalie Beauchamp, Catherine Smith-Evanik, Kathy O'Neil, Marion Moritz, Nathalie Ménard, Kathi Langston, Elizabeth Allard, Amy Porteous, Renée Ladouceur-Beauchamp and Rosemary Swan.

I was delighted to honour them on Friday morning, when they were presented with their honours by the minister responsible for women's issues, Laurel Broten. I want to sincerely thank the minister for being there on such an important occasion for our community, and I want to thank the women and girls who received the awards. Their hard work and selfless dedication improve people's lives throughout Ottawa-Orléans, and they are fantastic role models for women of any age. We are grateful for the good work they do, as so many other women and girls have done across the whole history of this province, without which Ontario would not be this great place we are proud to call home.

I'm pleased that our government has decided to recognize the vital contributions made by the award recipients this year.

ANNUAL REPORT, INFORMATION AND PRIVACY COMMISSIONER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2009 annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the report on intended appointments dated May 11, 2010, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

STUDENTS AGAINST IMPAIRED AND DISTRACTED DRIVING DAY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LE JOUR DES ÉTUDIANTS CONTRE LA CONDUITE INATTENTIVE ET L'IVRESSE AU VOLANT

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to proclaim Students Against Impaired and Distracted Driving Day / Projet de loi 61, Loi visant à proclamer le Jour des étudiants contre la conduite inattentive et l'ivresse au volant.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Dave Levac: Very short. According to the explanatory note, the bill proclaims the third Tuesday in October in each year as Students Against Impaired and Distracted Driving Day.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AMENDMENT ACT (INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT (INSTALLATIONS INDUSTRIELLES)

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 62, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to regulate industrial facilities that use, store or treat hazardous materials / Projet de loi 62, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour réglementer les installations industrielles où sont utilisés, entreposés ou traités des matériaux dangereux.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Dave Levac: Yes, Speaker. From the explanatory note: The bill amends the Environmental Protection Act by requiring that industrial facilities that regularly use, store or treat significant amounts of hazardous materials prepare and submit an environmental report on their property every five years. The report will be available to the public.

1520

A facility that is ceasing operations is required to submit a final environmental report. Owners of industrial facilities are responsible for any environmental damage that occurs on their land while under their care.

BUILDING CODE AMENDMENT ACT
(STORM WATER HARVESTING), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LE CODE DU BÂTIMENT
(RÉCUPÉRATION DES EAUX PLUVIALES)

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 63, An Act to amend the Building Code Act, 1992 with respect to storm water harvesting / Projet de loi 63, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur le code du bâtiment en ce qui a trait à la récupération des eaux pluviales.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Dave Levac: From the explanatory note: The bill amends the Building Code Act, 1992, to prohibit the chief building official from issuing a permit to construct a building if the proposed building includes or is served by a storage garage and does not include a storm water harvesting system. The prohibition applies to permit applications after or on January 1, 2012.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
AMENDMENT ACT (SCENTED
PRODUCTS), 2010

LOI DE 2010 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SANTÉ ET LA SÉCURITÉ
AU TRAVAIL (PRODUITS PARFUMÉS)

Mr. Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act with respect to scented products in the workplace / Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail à l'égard des produits parfumés sur le lieu de travail.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Would you like to make a short statement?

Mr. Dave Levac: Yes, I would. From the explanatory note: The bill amends the Occupational Health And Safety Act to require employers to prepare and review annually, in consultation with workers, written policies on the use of scented products in the workplace. Employers are also required to develop and maintain programs to implement such policies.

PETITIONS

GREENBELT

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here regarding the protection of contaminated lands within the greenbelt.

I have quite a stack of them and I'd like to read the petition. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, economically affecting all ownership of properties in Ontario; and

"Whereas municipal property assessment caused financial changes to these properties; and

"Whereas the Ontario Legislature did not study the economic impact of the Greenbelt Act; and

"Whereas the effect of protecting environmentally contaminated land as a greenbelt area was not addressed financially;

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

"The ordering of an economic impact study on the greenbelt area that will further the protection of the 'green' lands."

I will sign my name to it and give it to page Luke.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this huge petition from First Nations from all over Ontario. There are over 580 names on it. It reads:

"Whereas Ontario has lost 171,000 jobs since October and over 300,000 manufacturing and resource sector jobs since 2004; and

"Whereas many families are facing the threat of layoffs or reduced hours; and

"Whereas, rather than introducing a plan to sustain jobs and put Ontario's economy back on track, Dalton McGuinty and his government chose to slap an 8% tax on everyday purchases while giving profitable corporations a \$2-billion income tax cut;

"Be it resolved that the undersigned call on the Legislature to cancel the scheduled implementation of sales tax harmonization."

I agree with the petition and will affix my name to it. I really like it when they're that big; it's easy to read. I send it to the table with Joshua.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have a petition from the residents of the village of Embrun.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Government Services intends to close or move to another location in the township of Russell the Embrun licence bureau, presently located at 717 Notre Dame Street in the village of Embrun in the township of Russell;

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

"Say no to the closure or move of the Embrun licence bureau and say yes to the establishment of an expanded office of ServiceOntario at 717 Notre Dame Street in the village of Embrun in the township of Russell."

GREENBELT

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Greenbelt Act was passed by the Ontario Legislature in 2005, economically affecting all ownerships of properties in Ontario; and

“Whereas municipal property assessment caused financial changes on these properties; and

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature did not study the economic impact of the Greenbelt Act; and

“Whereas the effect of protecting environmentally contaminated land as a greenbelt area was not addressed financially;

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

“The ordering of an economic impact study on the greenbelt area that will further the protection of the ‘green’ lands.”

I agree with this and have signed it and will give it to Rhett.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Peter Kormos: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education’s accommodation review process, used by school boards to accommodate students, and which includes closing schools, is flawed, lacks transparency and accountability;

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

“Immediately stop the closure of Crowland Central Public School and any disputed closures. Develop policies where school boards are more accountable and the ministry, school boards, municipalities and community members work together openly and transparently to deal with funding, schools and declining enrolment.”

This is endorsed by me, signed by hundreds and certified by the Clerk.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and I would like to thank Glenn Voakes of Lisgar for having signed this one. It reads as follows:

“Whereas early childhood learning is a fundamental program in the development and education of Ontario’s youth;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“To continue to expand full-day learning across the province;

“To continue to make our children a priority for this government;

“To continue investments in the infrastructure of our education system;

“To continue to support Ontario’s families through these initiatives; and

“To never go back to the days of forgotten children and mismanagement of schools we saw in the 1990s. We applaud the new investments in full-day learning and look forward to their continued growth across the province.”

I’m pleased to sign this petition and to ask page Lars to carry it for me.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have some petitions to do with front-line health care.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

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—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I support this petition.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that prays that Premier Dalton McGuinty and Finance Minister Dwight Duncan:

“(1) Ensure the province provides sufficient funding to maintain existing levels of child care service, and recognize cost-of-living and other legitimate increases in operating costs.

“(2) Provide all necessary tools to support the transition to an early learning program, including base funding for child care programs to support operations and wages comparable to the full-day learning program, in order to ensure that the child care system remains stable and sustainable.”

I agree with this petition, sign it and send it to the table by way of page Mary.

TAXATION

Mr. Pat Hoy: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

“Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on businesses by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

“Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

“Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single tax system; and

“Whereas the recent RBC Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario businesses by lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

“Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

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

“That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario’s plan to implement the HST and other ... reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers.”

I hand this petition to Katina.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition from the wonderful people in Delta, and I want to make special mention of the Delta Community Pharmacy.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

“—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

“—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

“—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I sign the petition and send it to the table.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients under” certain conditions; and

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

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

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

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

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the worldwide demand for water is expected to be 40% greater than the current supply in the next 20 years; and

“Whereas Ontario has developed many new clean water technologies and practices since the Walkerton water contamination, which resulted from the poor water regulation practices of the former Conservative government; and

“Whereas Ontario has now implemented many new, improved practices for clean water regulation, developed better policies and fostered new clean water technologies; and

“Whereas the Ontario government’s Open Ontario plan includes strategies to increase our province’s ability to develop and sell clean water expertise and products to the rest of the world;

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

“That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government’s plan to introduce a new Water Opportunities Act to take advantage of the province’s expertise in clean water technology, create jobs and new economic opportunities for our province and help communities around the world access clean water.”

I agree with this and give it to our page. Yidu.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: I have a petition here with thousands of names of people from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington who are exceptionally upset about the McGuinty government’s policy on pharmacies. Their petition reads as follows:

“Whereas the people of Ontario depend on the accessible advice and services they currently get from their pharmacists; and

“Whereas pharmacies will not be able to continue to provide current service levels under the conditions proposed by the McGuinty government;

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

“That the current proposed changes to the Ontario drug benefit program not be adopted.”

I agree with this, and I will sign it and hand it over to Tristen for the table.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

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

“Whereas a company’s resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

“Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and send it to the Clerk with Joshua.

TAXATION

Mr. Dave Levac: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas a duplicated tax system puts our businesses at a disadvantage by increasing the costs of doing business; and

“Whereas a single, unified tax system reduces the burden on businesses by removing the provincial sales tax on goods and reducing administrative costs; and

“Whereas both Conservative and Liberal members of the provincial and federal Legislatures have voiced their support of a single sales tax; and

“Whereas local chambers of commerce, economists and experts are also supporting the move to a single tax system; and

“Whereas the recent RBC Economics report found that the HST is improving the competitiveness of Ontario businesses by lowering the cost of doing business in Ontario; and

“Whereas a harmonized sales tax is expected to create jobs for Ontario;

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

“That all parties of the provincial Legislature support the government of Ontario’s plan to implement the HST and other tax reforms to benefit Ontario businesses and consumers” to create jobs.

I sign this petition and hand it over to Sarah.

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition that seems to be totally different than the one we just heard. It’s signed by thousands of people. It’s to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the residents of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day”—now, that was a good word, “raise”—“and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone”—everyone—“to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the blended sales tax grab”—a tax grab is what it is—“will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians” and Liberals;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers.”

I’ve signed this and give it to Ana.

1540

OPPOSITION DAY

PENSION REFORM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move that, in the opinion of this House, at the finance ministers’ meeting on pensions in June, the Ontario government should advocate for the strengthening and expansion of the Canada pension plan.

At home, the Ontario government can ensure that the 65% of Ontarians who currently lack a workplace pension have access to a decent retirement income by implementing an Ontario retirement plan that would:

—ensure that all Ontario workers who want a workplace pension plan have a workplace pension plan;

—ensure that workers who believe they have a better way of saving for their retirement are able to opt out;

—ensure that all employers match their participating employees’ minimum contribution rate; and

—phase in contribution rates in a prudent and responsible manner for all employees and employers, with particular attention paid to the unique circumstances of small business employers and their employees.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Further debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I’m really looking forward to this afternoon’s debate because, as members of this chamber will know, for some time now—certainly since January, when we tabled our own pension plan, but for

many, many years prior to that—New Democrats have, in this place, been advocating for reform to Ontario's pension system.

The bottom line is that people in this province who work all of their lives should be able to leave that working time to go into their years of retirement without any worries. They should be able to stop working at a reasonable age, end their working lives, but yet continue to actually have a life that allows and affords them dignity and security in terms of the ability to pay their bills and buy their groceries—basically affords them an opportunity to go through their most senior years with a decent quality of life. After working hard every single year of their working lives, the very least that Ontarians should be able to expect is that when they retire from their jobs, they are able to maintain a decent standard of living. It is not rocket science; it is a fundamental value that New Democrats hold, that people should be able to retire with dignity, respect, a decent quality of life and an income level that affords them that opportunity.

But the sad reality in the province of Ontario today is that two thirds of Ontarians simply do not have a pension plan that they can retire on. Two thirds of the people of this province do not have a workplace-based pension plan. It's unbelievable that we're butting up against a huge demographic issue in this province and in this country, where the baby boomer generation is about to retire and yet this basic issue of pension availability for people retiring has not been addressed. It has not been addressed at the federal level and it has not been addressed at the provincial level. It is absolutely unacceptable.

There's a whole other issue about all those people—and we know we've seen hundreds and thousands of them in my communities and in the communities of most of the members of this chamber—who do have a pension plan, but those pension plans, for some reason, weren't available for them when they did retire. I'm talking about those companies that weren't funding the plans appropriately, those companies that pulled up stakes and walked away and left their workers high and dry. That's a whole other issue that obviously needs attention in this Legislature and the federal Legislature, but it is something that this particular debate is not necessarily about.

We're more focused on the other two thirds of the people of this province who don't have that workplace-based plan. That's not to say that the one third who do don't need some reforms, because they absolutely do. In fact, we've brought reforms to those issues as well into this Legislature. My colleague Paul Miller, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, tabled a bill that spoke to the need to reform our system in Ontario to make sure that those savings that people have set aside through negotiations in their pensions are actually available for them when they retire.

I know that my New Democratic federal colleagues have tabled legislation. Chris Charlton from Hamilton Mountain tabled legislation talking about putting workers first when there's a Companies' Creditors Arrangements

Act situation, where there's a bankruptcy and people are in a situation where workers end up at the bottom of the pile, where all the other creditors are getting what's left of these companies, and workers are left—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: With scraps.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —with the scraps, with a pittance, with really nothing. That needs to be addressed.

I commend my colleague from Hamilton Mountain on the federal scene for bringing forward legislation in that regard. Currently, there's a bill on the federal table as well that the member for Thunder Bay—Rainy River has put forward. The member has put forward a bill that speaks to similar issues around changing the federal pension system so that pensioners are able to ensure that they get what's coming to them, in terms of their pensions due, when there has been a bankruptcy.

All of that aside, we know there needs to be some reform there, but today what we want to talk about is the issue of retirement savings for those two thirds of Ontarians who simply do not have a workplace-based plan. I can tell you that it is something that we can do. It is absolutely possible to do that. We have to look at it from a couple of different perspectives.

Certainly, the New Democrats at the federal level, in support of the work that was done by the Canadian Labour Congress, have brought forward a plan that, hopefully, finance ministers will be able to discuss when they meet in June in PEI, just a couple of weeks away. This is a national issue. We support the activities of the CLC that are being voiced by the federal NDP in terms of shoring up or in fact increasing the amount of support that the CPP provides for the people of this country. New Democrats at the provincial level think that's absolutely necessary and important, and we support those reforms. We know that they are also talking about things like GIS reforms, guaranteed income supplement reforms, and we think that absolutely needs to be addressed.

We encourage our Premier, Premier McGuinty, or our finance minister, Minister Duncan, to go to that table in June, take a leadership role and really speak, as the largest province, for all Canadians and make sure that the idea of increasing the Canada pension plan for all the people of this country is front and centre in those discussions, in those negotiations on, I believe, June 13 in PEI.

I don't think that absolves this chamber, this Legislature and the people around this room from a responsibility to look after the workers of this province in terms of their retirement security. So when I say that it can be done, it can be done. We have actually taken some time over the last year, certainly, but the last year or so specifically, to put together something that we think is a very viable solution to the pension crisis that now faces Ontarians. And make no mistake: It is absolutely a crisis. It is a crisis when people are leaving their working lives and finding that they cannot pay the mortgage on their home anymore, or they cannot even pay the taxes and the utilities on their home anymore, because they don't have a pension and they cannot make ends meet on the current CPP and GIS.

There is absolutely a crisis, and the crisis is about to balloon, as I said earlier, with the demographic trends that we're butting up against right now. There is no doubt that there is an urgency around the issue of expansion of pension coverage for the people of this province.

I have to say I was quite taken aback this morning during question period when, in response to one of my questions to the Premier about the extent to which he was prepared to take on this leadership role and to really seriously consider the implementation of an Ontario retirement plan here in this province, he, in a very flip way, I believe, indicated that—his words were similar to this, and perhaps this is not a direct quote: “The public way is not the only solution,” or, “The public solution is not the only way,” or might not be the right way.

New Democrats fundamentally disagree with the Premier in that regard. When you look at what makes us Canadians, when you look at the things that Canadians are proud of, the things that we're proud of are things like a health care system that takes care of everybody. Right? Canadians are proud of that. Canadians are proud of an unemployment insurance system that takes care of everybody—at least it used to take care of everybody until the federal Liberals and Conservatives got a hold of it, but that's another story altogether.

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This is a fundamental value that Canadians have: We believe there is a public good that we need to look after. Whether that public good is making sure that people who are unable to work, for whatever reason, are able to collect some unemployment insurance to get them through until they find their next job, whether it's the belief that people should have access to the health care they need or whether it's the belief that every child should have access to an education system that provides them with opportunities, these are fundamental values that Canadians hold and that Ontarians hold.

I would submit to the Premier of this province that one of the other values that the people of Canada and the people of Ontario hold is the value that if people work hard all their lives, when they retire they should be able to do that with dignity, with security and with a quality of life that enables them to live decently. That's a fundamental value.

I would say to the Premier that the best way to ensure the realization of that value in this province is to support the NDP motion that is before this House today. The reason I say that is because we have actually taken the time to work with experts to put together a pension plan, a retirement plan, for the province of Ontario that would really have a positive impact on people who are retiring in the future.

It's a plan that has been vetted by industry experts and that has been supported by many people in the pension industry and many retirement organizations. It is a plan that is practical, workable and implementable in a very easy way. It is modern. It's very flexible. It is a plan that we would only hope the government would take some serious time to look at and support.

Unlike some of the other plans that are floating around in this discussion—I guess “floating around” is really understating the vigour of the debate currently occurring about the pension issue. We have seen scores of articles in various newspapers and journals about the crisis in our pension system, and there are fundamentally two sides of the issue. I know that the Premier pretends there aren't, but it's pretty basic.

On one side, there is a plan like our plan, which says very clearly and specifically that we do not believe the way to provide the maximum opportunity for people's retirement in this province is to allow insurance companies and banks to skim off scads of administrative dollars and whittle away the savings of people so that they can make all kinds of profits into the future. We don't think that's the right thing to do. In fact, we think that those billions of dollars that they want to skim off the top actually belong to the people who are saving the money. We don't believe in this private scheme where the banks and insurance companies will be able to reap all kinds of benefits off the sweat and hard work of workers in this province and people in this province.

We believe in the other model that says that you're putting away your retirement money in a retirement plan, and that money is going to be managed by a professional administrative group with fees that are reasonable, in the best interests of the people who contribute to that plan. The plan would be a defined benefit plan where, after years of putting your contributions in, you know, within a range, exactly how much you are going to receive as your pension benefit when you retire.

We've even done the numbers to give us exactly what that figure is going to be. In 2010 dollars, our plan would provide people with between \$650 and \$700 of retirement income monthly. That's over and above the Canada pension plan. This is a supplementary plan. It's a plan that works, a plan that provides financial security and a plan that we believe this province needs and that is long overdue.

There are a couple of other features to the plan that I want to briefly touch on and then my pension critic, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, will be spending some time going through more specific details about exactly what it is that we are talking about with the plan.

Fundamentally, we are talking about a plan that is contribution-based; in other words, workers and employers are expected to contribute to the plan. But the plan is not an RSP. It is not a plan that is a group RSP model in any way; it is not a defined contribution plan. In other words, the contributions are put into the pool, if you will. That pool invests, and the risks are shared across all of the contributors, all of the plan members. When you retire, you will be able to receive a defined benefit based on what your earnings were in your working life. So it's not based on how much you put in as an individual and what the whims of the market as it goes up and down will give you at the end of the day when you retire. It's not the kind of system that so many people unfortunately were burned by in the last economic

downturn. And this is exactly the reason why it is time to look at a public model like the one we are talking about, because being at the whim of the market does not mean economic security for people who retire.

The RRSP model simply does not work, and I think there is no time better than right now to reflect on that, acknowledge it, and move on from that system. That system has failed. And so for the Premier and the government to talk about how somehow we have to have a mixed model—the reality is, we already have that piece of mix; it's already there, and there are already all kinds of people making all kinds of money off of it. What we now need is the half of the model that isn't there, and that's our part. That's the part the New Democrats are putting before this Legislature. It is the piece that says that there needs to be a secure public place where people can put their money so that when they retire they know it's there for them for sure, absolutely.

When I said it was a flexible and modern plan, I want to explain what that means a little bit. When we put this together, we acknowledged that there might be people who really do not believe that they need to do this. They may already have a very secure income stream put away somewhere that they truly believe is going to be there for them when they retire. And if that is the case, then that's fine. There is an opportunity to opt out of this plan. We acknowledge that people want to have those kinds of options these days, and we respect that. There is an opt-out option available for folks. But make no mistake: The plan that we're putting forward is automatically enrolled—you're automatically enrolled in the plan. If you choose to opt out, you can. If you're opting out, of course, your employer is able to not contribute as well. If you're not contributing, your employer doesn't need to contribute. Employers, however, cannot opt out on their own. This is something that needs to be very, very clear: If the employee is in, the employer is in.

But we also recognize that it's not easy to transition into this extra amount of contribution—for neither employers nor employees—so we've also put together a plan that speaks to this reality by allowing a phase-in that allows people to gradually build up to the maximum contribution rate. And it allows employers to do the same. In fact, our plan even speaks to the issues of small business, acknowledging and recognizing, particularly coming out of this difficult economic time that we are, that there might need to be some extra consideration given for small business, particularly, people with 20 or fewer employees who need to have an even longer phase-in time frame so that they can absorb this kind of contribution obligation.

No matter which way you slice it, New Democrats have put forward something that meets the retirement needs of the people of this province, that is a practical, flexible, modern plan, a plan that can easily be implemented, a plan that provides the kind of security that we know the people of this province need and want. It's a plan that we don't think there needs to be all kinds of hesitation on. It's been endorsed by a number of different

parties. It's been discussed in a number of different forums. We continue to hear positive feedback and positive encouragement from the people of this province in regard to this plan.

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The issue becomes: What's going to happen now? Will the Premier of this province actually take the opportunity that is before him? I have to say, I think the Premier of this province has a significant opportunity before him to take a real leadership role when it comes to the pension issue, both on the national scene and on the provincial scene. I only hope that he's up to the job. I only hope that he actually gets the very unique opportunity that he has in terms of creating a new system of income security for the people of Ontario and, hopefully, when he goes to have that conversation in June or when his finance minister does, for the people of Canada. That's the leadership that Premiers of this province of Ontario have taken up in the past. Hopefully our Premier will be up to the job this time around; I certainly hope so. I know that it doesn't need to be a heck of a lot of work for him because, in fact, we've written the blueprint. It's something that he can very, very easily simply pick up and run with.

I'm going to leave, as I said, more of the details as to what exactly it is that we have in our plans as well as what the other side looks like. Let's face it: The Premier has a choice here; the government has a choice here. They either come down on the side that we would like them to come down on, a public plan, a plan that's taking care of the people of this province in a very cost-effective situation where the risk is spread amongst everyone and not an individualized plan, which we know isn't working—we have that side of the equation. Then we have the other side, the side that is expensive, the side that skims off huge amounts of administrative fees and other fees to insurance companies and banks, the side that in fact the member for Peterborough has decided to side with, the side that says it's okay to make profits off of people's retirement income. We don't believe that, but maybe the government does. This is the debate that's before us: We have a public plan that puts people first or we have a private, industry-driven plan that puts profits of banks and insurance companies first. It's either an NDP plan or it's a member-from-Peterborough plan, and the government needs to make a decision. The Premier needs to make a decision.

Quite interestingly, on Thursday in this chamber there will be a debate brought forward with the second reading of the member from Peterborough's private member's bill in terms of his idea around pension savings in the province of Ontario. I would hope that the members of this chamber really take a hard look at what the options are before us, because my belief is that it is time to make a shift in terms of how we think about people's retirement and how we think of our role as legislators and how the government thinks of its role as the government to make retirement income for people secure, reliable and, most importantly, robust enough for them to be able to

have a decent quality of life. It's time for the Premier of this province to take on that role and to show that leadership.

What I would ask is for the members of this chamber to think about this motion very seriously and consider what it is that we want to achieve here when it comes to the pension system in Ontario, what we want to achieve for those six out of 10 people who currently do not have a workplace-based pension plan. I would hope that the members of this chamber would see it in their interests, not only in their interests but actually in the interests of their constituents and of the people of this province, to support the motion that is before us today. It really is, I think, an opportunity for all of us to speak with a united voice about how important this issue is for us and also for the people that we represent. It is an opportunity to come together to say, "We absolutely support the idea of a pension plan for everyone, a pension plan for all that is secure, that is virtually risk-free, that is publicly operated and that is a public option as an alternative to the private options that already exist to an enormous degree in the province of Ontario and have actually failed miserably."

The reality is—and I think fundamentally everybody would agree that people deserve to retire with a decent amount of income; people deserve to retire with a certain amount of financial security; people deserve to have a quality of life where they're not worried about whether they can keep a roof over their head or whether they can keep food in their fridge. I think everybody would agree on those fundamental principles. It's a small step to acknowledge and recognize that the very best way to provide that kind of security is with the NDP's Ontario retirement plan. I look forward to the support of all of the members of this chamber on our motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I want to begin by thanking the leader of the third party, certainly not only for her thoughtful suggestion, but also for acknowledging the Premier's leadership role in taking the very serious issue of the adequacy of pensions in Canada—not just in Ontario—and bringing that out of the actuarial bear pits and into the public consciousness.

It's an important debate. I stand here as a member of the baby boom generation, and for us that debate takes on some real seriousness next year when the first baby boomer turns 65. We have a long way to go, not merely in Ontario but across Canada, before we settle on a best choice. I would just have to say that the leader's proposal is a very valuable contribution to that debate here today. It should be noted that we're not going to be adopting either this plan or any other plan today, but then again neither are we going to discard this option or its merits or its suggestions.

I and my colleagues are going to offer some criticism of this proposal. That said, we're going to offer the criticism in the spirit that I think the leader of the third party has advanced the proposal, which is that it's a serious proposal. To her great credit, by and large she has

kept the rhetorical tone moderate and focused on the people that we're all trying to benefit, who are Mr. and Mrs. Ontario and Mr. and Mrs. Baby Boomer, who, like me, are wondering: What is there going to be available for me at the time I choose to quit working, hopefully a choice on my terms, and I look to my savings, my equity, my pension plan and those other benefits available to me?

As those of us who are in this Legislature grew up, when people retired at that time, their life expectancy was somewhere around five or 10 years. That was then. Many of the pension choices that we live with right now reflect that actuarial statistic as it existed back then. But today, people are living 20 to 30 years after retirement. Indeed, it's not at all uncommon that people are living healthy, active, productive lives through their 80s, into their 90s, and it's not at all uncommon now to see centenarians, and good on them. Next year, my beloved mayor and constituent, Hazel McCallion, who is active, productive and a wonderful mayor, will turn 90, and I'll be right in there wishing her a happy birthday.

This proposal, while it has some merits, does have a little bit of a not-invented-here component of the thinking, so in my criticism I'd like to bring it back to some of the things that the province is still trying to do and see if we can find some common ground.

Before this party was talking about pensions, your government had already acted and, in fact, in the fall of 2006 appointed Harry Arthurs to lead the Expert Commission on Pensions, which is an extensive review of pensions and which provided more than 140 policy recommendations for review by the government. The report was received in the winter of 2008, and the province introduced legislation less than a year later to deal with a significant portion of those recommendations. The next round of legislation is expected in the fall of this year, 2010.

1610

One of the concerns I have—and remember, this is a constructive criticism about the plan put forth here—is that it seems to require businesses, particularly small businesses, to contribute to the plan should their employees opt in. We have to get through an analysis on this, as some businesses are going to see this as an additional payroll tax that could have an impact on their ability to create jobs and to grow.

All that said, our position as a government has always been very clear. We favour a pan-Canadian approach that would allow for improved portability, which is very important for today's very mobile workforce. Many of us here were born somewhere else. Many of us may not necessarily retire in Ontario. The approach put forth here would set up an Ontario-only plan, potentially preempting the opportunity for a pan-Canadian set of reforms.

Is it portable or is it not? It will stand the test of a thorough and rigorous analysis of the type to which that party subjects proposals from this side of the House. So let's just reserve our conclusion on that and say that this

is one of the legitimate concerns the government has about this particular proposal.

I would also ask—because I didn't really hear it: Do you qualify for the pension plan being proposed here if you've moved here from another province or another country? Again, it's not defined, and it should be viewed as a question, a query and a legitimate critique. Do you, in fact, continue to get the plan proposed here if you move away to another province or another country?

It leaves unresolved a number of key questions about this plan. For example, it doesn't define who would manage the money in such a plan. How would it be managed? It's a very important and not an altogether trivial concern. Also, how would you reconcile this if you were a franchisee and most of your expenses are compensation expenses? That would have a major impact on whether you'd think that would be sustainable.

Just before I give up my rotation here, I'd like to mention that Bill 236, the Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2010, the most significant pension reform package introduced in Ontario in more than 20 years, was introduced right here in this House in December 2009. It's covered right here in the government's budget. I would also bring to the attention of the members of the third party chapter 3 of the government's budget, which deals with tax and pension systems for Ontario's future.

The proposal here is one that is very much on the government's radar, very much a part of the government's budget. We thank the party for bringing it forth, and I'm sure, as my colleagues analyze it, they'll bring forth a number of our critiques.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I want to thank the third party for bringing up this very important issue. The leader asked us to take this seriously, and I hope that during the comments on the issues that I bring forward they will understand that I am taking it very seriously.

The leader and I were on a similar committee back in the spring of 2008, when the pension issue came up very predominantly, and we discussed some aspects of that. It's good to see that she has moved the issue on.

Once upon a time, Ontario used to have a competitive advantage in the province. When it first started out, whether it was workers' compensation or OHIP, Ontario had a business advantage that attracted individuals. The member who previously spoke mentioned that it was a tax. When you look at how workers' compensation came forward and how it was initiated, with that being considered a tax at that time—and the competitive advantage that gave the province of Ontario.

I've also been working on a provincial pension plan, and I have met with various groups and organizations, including members of the CAW and the labour council, and discussed, from their perspective, how to move forward. Their belief, actually, was that, as opposed to moving forward with a provincial plan, you need to move forward with enhancing the federal Canada pension plan; that that was the best move forward, as opposed to

establishing something. I mentioned that Ontario needs a competitive advantage and we need to see how we can move forward. Hopefully, this dialogue will give us potential opportunities for that.

I'm more concerned, actually, with the implementation and how the plan would work. You see, the pension plan, which I've done some research on in trying to get dialogue—there are a number of serious questions that need to be answered.

For example, contributions: Who's eligible to contribute? It sounds great at first: anybody working in Ontario. If a company is based in Quebec, and the workers are in Ontario, do they contribute to that plan? What about self-employed individuals? Are they required to have the option of another plan which is voluntary? Quite frankly, I find it difficult as to how you would bring forward a plan to be established province-wide without a large enough pool from which to draw the funds and to manage the funds properly to make it an effective plan. What do you do with self-employed individuals or workers who do not otherwise have a pension plan so that those individuals would have the option? What about a person who may work for an Ontario employer but not in the province of Ontario? Those individuals who live along the borders of Ontario: A lot of times they will work in the States or in other provinces and live in Ontario. What do you do with those particular individuals?

To continue on: What is the amount of the contributions? Is there a minimum? Is there a maximum? What are the tax implications, if there are any, in making the contributions? Specifically, is there a deduction from taxable income for the amount of the employee's contribution, if there is one?

Another aspect: It certainly sounded like the plan was voluntary. I'm not quite sure how you would be able to bring in a plan that's going to be that effective, when you're comparing it with the Canada pension plan, as a voluntary plan.

If an employee decides to contribute, must the employee continue to contribute so long as the employee stays employed with any employer? See, one of the aspects is that we're now looking at individuals in today's society supposedly working only five years and having a number of careers throughout their life. Is that plan going to be portable with the direct individual, as they go from here to here to here to here? How do you manage all those aspects?

If an employee can stop contributing, are the contributions vested or locked in at that time, or is there a provision for early payout before any retirement?

If an employee wants to contribute, is the person's employer also bound to contribute? I believe I heard that the answer was yes. Does the employer have an independent choice to contribute as well? Is there a matching contribution by the employer, as there is, for example, with the Canada pension plan?

If employers are not required to contribute, if the plan also allows for an employee or self-employed person to contribute whatever the person wants, and if the benefits

can be withdrawn at any time, that makes for a plan like an RRSP. Under an RRSP, a contributor gets a deduction from taxable income for allowable contributions to a registered retirement savings plan. Ontario cannot amend the deduction since it is part of an RRSP set up under the Income Tax Act of Canada. But an Ontario bill could provide an Ontario tax credit for contributions to RRSPs that exceed the present allowable contribution. These are all questions that need to be answered.

What is the mechanism for collection, enforcement and investment of contributions? Who essentially manages that process? Who is going to be the body that's going to be able to collect these, to manage these, to determine the many factors that come into play? These are some of the things that need to move forward.

Quite frankly, this is a very in-depth thing, and if it's done correctly, this could possibly give the province of Ontario a competitive advantage once again when other businesses are locating and deciding where they're going to locate.

Regarding the benefits: When are benefits payable? Upon retirement? Anybody attaining a certain age? What about a contributor who dies before receiving any benefits? What happens to the benefits in that particular case? What about a contributor who becomes partially or fully disabled? When can you stop contributing? Is there a time limit when you stop contributing although you're still employed in the province of Ontario? How does that all play out? Hopefully we'll hear some of these things.

These are some of the aspects that I found when I was doing the research for an Ontario pension plan that needed to be answered, quite frankly, from all perspectives, whether it was business, labour or self-employed individuals. They didn't really have a set answer, but these are things that should come before the floor so that we can discuss these things.

How is the amount of the benefits calculated? I believe it's a defined benefit plan, but the leader did mention that there was a range of opportunities. Does that give the individual the freedom to determine which range they want to be in? How can you decide, if you have 10 years of contributions left, what range you're going to be in?

I imagine these things will all be calculated out, as I know the able member from the third party will certainly disclose this, as the leader had mentioned.

1620

Would Ontario pension plan benefits be fully integrated with, say, the public service pension benefits, as is the case with the Canada pension plan? You've got a number of plans based in Ontario. Would these be separate or would these be included in part of that entire plan when they're doing the calculations? One of the key things is to ensure that we have a large pool to draw from to make sure that it's stable.

There are other questions as well. What is the mechanism or body that would calculate eligibility and the amount of benefits and arrange for their payment? Also, when you're talking about the mechanism for the

body and the payment, as well as the mechanism for collection, enforcement and investment contributions, who manages the process? Is there a commission or other body to manage the program? Is that a provincially based one? How do you establish the membership within that? Is it contributors? Which aspect? These are some of the things that need to be discussed. What is the governance structure of that, and what relationship, if any, does it have with the government of Ontario?

If the body is to be controlled by the government of Ontario, its funds—here's one of the key things—could be viewed as property or part of the public money of Ontario. So when they're doing calculations based on the amount of funds that the province has, if you have this Ontario pension plan, is it part of the calculations when you're reporting the amount of funds that the province essentially has?

What are the permissible investments for the fund? Very clearly, you need to decide: Is it something based in Ontario, its investments? How do you determine where your investment is going to be, and who would be the deciding body?

I know that the leader from the third party had mentioned that there was a body that would be reviewing and looking at these aspects, but we need to find out exactly what are the boundaries for investments, how secure—long-term/short-term investments, GICs—and how they would play out.

What provisions do you want, for example, in audit or financial control mechanisms? Who's going to govern it just to watch and sure that things are moving along, and how often do these reviews take place to ensure that the payout funds are there to be able to contribute back to the province of Ontario and the individuals who are in receipt of them?

What appeal rights would there be for individuals, if any? To whom, and for what body? Is that on behalf of the individual contributor, or is it on behalf of the employer, who is also contributing? Where do you take that from? Who does it go to and where does the appeal take place?

There are a number of other acts that would need to be amended—the Pension Benefits Act and probably a number of others. But these are some of the key aspects that I felt were necessary that needed to be brought up.

Certainly Ontario, as I said before, had a competitive advantage when we first started off with workers' compensation. It was viewed particularly at that time possibly as a payroll tax, but it was also viewed later on as a competitive advantage to a lot of businesses who were looking to invest and locate in Ontario; it attracted individuals based on that. Is this one of those possibilities, that the province of Ontario could establish a potential Ontario pension plan that would remove a lot of the onus by a lot of the businesses on their own personal pension plans in how it would unfold?

I think there are a lot of questions that need to be answered, and, quite frankly, a lot of these issues start with a vision and how it unfolds.

At that, I certainly hope that there are a lot of answers that will be able to come forward so that we can hear exactly how it may play out in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm proud to stand up today and bring forth the plan for an Ontario pension that the NDP are bringing today.

Everyone deserves to retire with dignity and security. I don't think there's a member in this House who would disagree with that statement. The return for a lifetime of work in a wealthy province like Ontario should be the assurance that someday you'll be able to afford to retire, knowing that you'll be able to pay your bills and maintain a decent standard of living. You should be able to age not with worry but with security, stability and comfort.

Unfortunately, for the majority of the people in this province working today, there is no assurance of a decent retirement. In fact, unlike those of us in the chamber, fully two thirds of Ontarians don't have a pension at work. I worry that there are some of us in this House who may have sometimes forgotten where we came from. In my view, we have the responsibility as members of this assembly to ensure that hard-working Ontarians are paid back for their years of service, making our province and our communities stronger. The security of a comfortable retirement for all shouldn't be too much to ask.

New Democrats believe that we in this House must do better for the majority of Ontarians who have no pension, given the continued uncertainty in the financial markets and given the plight of many Ontarians who have watched pensions they thought were secure suddenly thrown into jeopardy. Those events should convince every one of us that the delivery of the insurance of secure retirement for all is simply the right thing to do. I remind all members in this chamber that not only is it the right thing to do, but it is well within our reach—better yet, a plan is already on the table.

The federal government could and should significantly increase the benefit levels of the Canada pension plan. This would draw on existing economies of scale, risk-sharing and the administrative efficiencies of that plan. The Ontario NDP joins with the federal NDP and the Canadian Labour Congress in the campaign for an expanded national, universal pension plan in the form of an enhanced CPP. We strongly urge the McGuinty government to take the message to PEI for the very important meetings coming up next month. We also support those parties' call for an increase in the GIS and reform to Canada's bankruptcy laws so that the pension plan members are ranked above other creditors in bankruptcy proceedings in this country.

That said, the issue of expanding pension coverage is an urgent one and deserves action now. We in the Ontario NDP do not believe that the Harper government is going to significantly expand coverage under the CPP. I suspect most members here today know that's true, and it's for that reason that we need to have a commitment to action here in this province.

The Ontario retirement plan: The NDP believes that Ontario should move ahead with other provinces and develop a supplemental employment-based pension plan for all working Ontarians who presently lack occupational coverage. In other words, we think a pension plan should be available to any Ontarian with a job who wants one, which is what the NDP Ontario retirement plan is really all about.

As both advocates for retired persons and industry insiders have concluded, the NDP plan is practical and workable. It's modern, flexible, accessible and would keep costly private administrative costs at bay, while offering the protections of a publicly administered plan. The Ontario retirement plan is the right plan at the right time.

Before I get into the specifics of how such a plan would work, I'd like to talk a bit about the benefits of such a plan. Firstly, and most obviously, the Ontario retirement plan would provide a modest retirement benefit to the roughly 65% of Ontarians who presently have no workplace-based pension coverage.

Secondly, in an Ontario retirement plan, the band of income that the contribution rate would be assessed against would be different from that of the current CPP. A broader band of income that the contribution would be based on would allow for a higher benefit for plan members earning over \$47,200, the current CPP upper limit. We believe that an upper limit in the range of \$65,000 to \$70,000 makes sense. This responds exactly to the kind of middle-income replacement rate issues that the pension expert Bob Baldwin identified in his report to the Minister of Finance that was tabled in Whitehorse in December.

Thirdly, an Ontario retirement plan could be used to further the consolidation of a fragmented workplace-based pension system. For example, Ontario has over 6,500 workplace plans, many of them very small. Many might elect to integrate into the large Ontario plan, which has as its base two thirds of the workforce of this province.

Fourthly, an Ontario retirement plan could allow for the transfers of RRSPs, which could be used to purchase past service credits for the basic benefit. This would allow older workers who would not ordinarily be able to earn the full benefit to receive more than they otherwise would.

Here is how it'll work: An Ontario retirement plan would be a publicly run, targeted, defined-benefit plan, much like the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, the hospitals of Ontario pension plan and the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Pension Plan. In order to maximize participation, every employee not enrolled in a workplace pension plan would be automatically enrolled in the Ontario plan, but the plan is not mandatory. If you have a better way to plan for your retirement, you don't have to take part in the Ontario retirement plan. And if, after opting out, you decide that the Ontario retirement plan turns out to be something you should have done and could get used to, you can opt back in. Employees and

employers would be expected to contribute equally to the new plan, and a minimum contribution rate would be established.

1630

Contribution rates for employees and employers should be phased in over a five-year period, and depending upon economic circumstances, a somewhat longer phase-in might be considered for small business employers. Unlike a defined contribution plan or a group RRSP, the assets of the plan would be invested for the plan as a whole, not on an individual basis. That results in far more security for the plan members and the plan as a whole. The maximum benefit of the plan would likely be between \$650 to \$700 a month in 2010 dollars. And because many current members of the workforce would not have sufficient years in the plan to receive the maximum benefit, plan members would be able to increase their normal benefit through a retroactive purchase of past service credits.

We believe that the Ontario retirement plan would be an extraordinarily cost-efficient vehicle for retirement savings. This is why we would keep all investment management activities in the public sector, either by farming these activities out to an existing large-scale public plan or by putting together a consortium of such plans.

As I said, we think the Ontario retirement plan is the most effective, practical plan out there. We haven't seen anything that can beat it. But clearly, the Ontario retirement plan proposal is only one proposal amongst many. There are tens of billions of dollars annually in new retirement savings that would be triggered by a new, comprehensive retirement savings regime, and the banks and insurance companies don't want to lose out on those management fees. Therefore, they are becoming increasingly aggressive in pushing their preferred options.

I would like to talk a bit now about why these options should be rejected. Using the 2007 Statistics Canada estimates for accumulated retirement savings, it's estimated that Canadians are spending almost \$15.6 billion per year, or 0.9% of their retirement savings, to have their retirement savings managed. The bulk of this is spent for retail management fees of various sorts levied by banks, insurance companies and their wholly owned mutual funds. What if the millions of Ontarians saving for their retirement could pay wholesale rates, essentially the rates provided by the public pension funds? If contributors were paying the wholesale administration costs offered by these large public pension funds, their fees would decline by \$8.4 billion a year, or equivalently, their retirement savings would grow by an additional \$8.4 billion a year. Stated still differently, the resulting 1.2 percentage point reduction in annual cost is equivalent to a 24% boost in the ultimate pension retirement savings that can be purchased.

This raises the important question of why all retirement savers should not have the opportunity to pay wholesale fees. Addressing it requires recognizing the private financial services industry as the beneficiary of

the annual \$11.2 billion in administration fees, which would fall by \$8.4 billion to \$2.8 billion with the wholesale pricing that public pension plans could provide.

The financial services industry argues that surveys show that their clients are satisfied with the current arrangements and that the additional \$8.4 billion per year represents unavoidable costs. More importantly, they say that the money buys their clients valuable advice and almost unlimited choice. Interesting statement; I'm still waiting for advice on what they do on our pension plan here, and I haven't had any. I've asked five times for it. In response, we need an NDP question: Why do long-term retirement savers have to pay for services they do not need? For example, the valuable-advice argument would be more persuasive if there was evidence that this advice actually produced higher risk-adjustment returns for their clients. It doesn't. In fact, the evidence points the other way. Studies in Canada, the United States and Australia all confirm what theory predicts: the higher the average cost of investing, the lower the average returns.

Finally, behavioural studies confirm what common sense tells us: Ordinary savers have far too much choice. In fact, most do not want to choose at all. So the question becomes: How can we best help millions of Ontario retirement savers who want adequate pensions at an affordable savings rate but don't want to get mired in the complexities of investing? We in the NDP say that the answer is obvious: Reject the proposals being pushed by the banks and insurance companies, and that, of course, means voting against the member from Peterborough's private member's bill that will be debated on Thursday. With due respect to the member, who, I am sure, is well intentioned, the member's bill is simply a thinly disguised version of a proposal being pushed by the insurance industry. The answer is clear: no. If we want a practical solution to today's retirement savings crisis, we need to look at large, public, multi-employer defined pension benefit plans like the CPP and our proposed Ontario pension retirement plan.

It is my sincere hope that all members will support the motion we've put forward. Voting in favour of this motion is a vote in favour of beginning the work to expand a decent pension option to the six in 10 Ontarians would don't have one at all. It would be a remarkable show of support for the thousands of Ontarians who don't have the security of a workplace pension that all members in this chamber said yes to this motion and yes to opening the door to a decent retirement for all of us.

I hope all members present will agree that speaking with a united voice on today's motion would send a strong message to hard-working Ontarians that reminds the citizens who make our communities work that we, in this chamber, are doing our best to look out for them. Everyone deserves the dignity of a decent pension, and the two thirds of Ontarians without one are far too many, in my eyes. I ask all members to join me in voicing support for hard-working Ontarians by voting in favour of this motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It is a privilege and honour to stand in my place and speak on this very important topic. Of course, I listened to the leader of the third party, who brings to this House a very important issue to be debated this afternoon, I listened to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek speaking about the details of the plan, and I have some questions and concerns.

No doubt about it: After what happened to our province and to many different companies like Nortel and GM that almost went into bankruptcy and that have suffered for the last couple of years, pensions came as a big question for all of us in this place, especially the number of pensioners who live in the province of Ontario. We, as a government, thought that we were obligated to give them the support they need. That's why this issue and this debate this afternoon are very important.

I listened to the member from Stoney Creek and the leader of the third party speak about the plan. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek mentioned that a person has a right to opt in or out whenever they want, but I don't understand what the obligation of the company is if the person opts out. Do they still give them the support they need to invest in a different area, whether in an insurance company, buying RRSPs or choosing for themselves a better area to invest their money? I ask this question of the third party, and I hope they answer it soon or in the future, or that it is answered by the next person who is going to speak on this issue.

Also, who is going to manage this money? As you and many mentioned in this place, this is going to be big money. Who is going to manage it? The third question would be about work mobility between provinces. What is going to happen to a pension plan that is established in the province of Ontario when the person moves to Alberta, British Columbia or any different province? We have to come up with a lot of answers to many different questions.

There's no doubt about it: A pension plan for all Ontarians is very important, especially when we talk about 65% to 70% of the total population of this province who have no pension, and 30% who have their pensions divided between government, companies and individual insurance companies. That's why a unification of pensions will be very important for all the people across the province of Ontario.

Also, the Premier pays a lot of attention to this issue. That's why we, as a government, hired Harry Arthurs to conduct a report in 2006 to see how we can implement a national pension across the whole nation, because it's important for all of us. That's why we called on the federal government to come to the table with us as a province to put forward a strategy for all of us in the province of Ontario, because it's important.

When a person anywhere in the province of Ontario goes to work, whether they work at Tim Hortons or a big factory or as a CEO of a company or work here, all of us,

I guess, are concerned about pensions. Therefore, I believe it is very important for all of us to put forward a national strategy for a pension for all the people in the province of Ontario.

All these details remain to be answered by the third party.

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That's why my position, in general, is that I'm in support of pensions. I support every person in this province having a pension, but how do we implement it? And which way do we have to take? These questions have to be answered. We have to put down a strategy, as the collective elected officials in this place, to find a common place and direction we can take that will be accepted by the business community, by the government as a collector of taxes, and also by the people who are going to benefit from those pensions.

I know that my colleague is about to launch an idea this coming Thursday on how he sees we have to have pensions in this province. We cannot rule it out, because we believe in discussions, whether through insurance companies, a company, the federal government or whatever. We have to have that discussion, because it's very important for all of us. We shouldn't rule out any potential ideas or any issues or any directions, because we have a vast interest in finding a way for the future generations who want to work and live in the province of Ontario.

We have to remember that if we don't come up with a solution, those people with no pensions, when they get sick, will have no place to live. As a government, as tax collectors, we are obligated to support them in many different ways, whether through Ontario Works or through the hospital system. All these elements collectively will cost us more if we don't come up with a plan to have a good pension for all the people of Ontario. It's our obligation to support the people. We cannot leave them in the street. We cannot let them live without food. All these obligations are asking us and forcing us to find a solution to create a safety mechanism for the people who live in the province of Ontario.

I'm here in the House today to listen to the discussion and the debate—because it's an important debate—and, more importantly, to find the logical solutions and financial solutions to all these questions in a professional manner.

I think it's an important debate, and I'm looking forward to hearing more about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: First off, before I speak to this motion, everybody in the House will be pleased to hear that David Cameron has won and is now the Prime Minister of the UK. After 13 long years of a liberal, socialist government, the people have had enough and they now have a Conservative government in the UK. I'm sure we're all pleased to hear that today.

I have a lot of regard for my colleagues in the NDP. We have some distinct differences in philosophy, but I do

appreciate their honest convictions and principles. Unlike those on the other side of the House, I do know that they are honest and have conviction, although I disagree with the outcomes of their discussions.

I think it is important to recognize in this opposition day motion that where we see the commonality between the Liberal Party and the NDP is in this innate belief that we can create perfection, we can create utopia, if we just create one more law; that if we just take away freedom a little bit more, things will be that much better. Of course, we know they're well-intended and have honest convictions, but we also know that intentions paved roads to some places that we don't like to be.

I want to speak first, now, to this idea that under the NDP plan, we can mandate, remove people's freedoms and put in place that everybody must have a pension. Of course, there's a cost involved with that. Somebody who owns a corner store and would like to have an employee has to pay a minimum wage now. Often, they can't even afford to pay that minimum wage—the margins are not high enough; the business volumes are not high enough—but now they would also have to pay and contribute to a pension plan. What is going to happen to those people? Are they going to remain having a job, or is the small business owner going to end up laying that person off because he just can't afford that employee anymore? Again, this is where the unintended consequences have to be thought of. We have to put some focus on and have some foresight over what will be the actual consequences of a particular piece of legislation or motion.

We can see what has happened around the world. I was reading the other day that in Spain it's mandated that the government will provide everybody who is retired with a week's holiday, all paid for—a week's holiday in Spain at a resort, with food and wine included. That sounds really nice, that the state provides a week's holiday. Well, we know what predicament that places countries such as Greece and Italy in. What are the countries? They're called the PIIGS of Europe: Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece and Spain. They cannot afford those utopian policies; they'd go bankrupt. That's not what we want to do with our legislation. That's not what I want to do. I know it's not what the NDP wants to do. They don't want to put people into bankruptcy. They don't want to limit employment opportunities. But that's what happens when we bring forth legislation that is not well thought out and the consequences are not looked at in detail.

An additional item here: When the leader of the third party was up speaking to this motion at the initial stage, she mentioned that these are values of Canada, values of the people of Ontario, that we are proud of our education, proud of public education, proud of public unemployment insurance, proud of public health care. I was thinking, as she was saying that, that I have a little bit of a different take. I would be proud of employment more than unemployment insurance. If all people were employed, that would really be something for us to be proud of, instead of being proud of a system that says, "There is

unemployment, and we will assist people who are unemployed." Would we not all be prouder, have more pride, if we did not need unemployment insurance?

The same with health care: She said we're proud of public health care. Well, I would be really proud of our public health care if there were no wait times, if none of our people had to go to the United States to get medical care. Those would be things to be proud of.

The same with education: Proud of our public education. I say this: Once again, I would be much prouder of our education if it was of a higher calibre and higher quality. This is one of the differences between Conservatives and socialists, or liberal socialists. It's not just a case of being proud of the process; we ought to be proud of the objective. What did we achieve? What did we get out of this? It's not just to be proud of the process. That in itself is not enough to be proud of. What is the end? Did we achieve the end? Did we achieve what we set out for?

As well, what we don't see in this motion, what is not clearly seen in it, is the removal of the freedom. If I want to set up a business—maybe I'll put it this way: Right now people have a choice. When they go out seeking employment, they can seek employment in places that have pensions; they can seek employment in places that don't have pensions. They have a choice where they choose to work, and I want to see that freedom of choice remain. Of course, what I'd love to see are higher rates so that people can contribute more to their personal savings through RRSPs. Now, that would be a worthy goal if we changed the rates so that people could contribute more to their RRSPs, because it's not just a pension plan. Really, what is the greatest pension plan is our own personal responsibility to save money. That is the greatest pension of all: personal savings that are done with their free will and their ability to find good employment and an ability to save money.

1650

So let's look at ways that we can do that. How can we assist the people of Ontario to save more and have more in their retirement years without removing people's freedoms and without putting a burden on businesses that may and will reduce employment levels? We don't want to see that reduction in employment levels.

Once again, the NDP motion—well-intended; I agree with the broad concept that people should have more money in their pockets and in their bank accounts when they retire. I'd love to see it happen. Will this motion do it? Unfortunately not. I can't support things that will have a negative consequence.

I would like the NDP to sit down and think this one through a little bit more about what happens to those small employers with this added cost. What's going to happen to them? I know they do not want to see employees laid off and a loss of jobs.

But going back, the NDP thinks that everything that is public is good. We know what happens when the public is the one who does things, when the collective are the ones who do things, instead of individuals saving,

individuals working—we get a far, far more responsible society and a far more free society and one that has built this country, built this province.

This province and this country weren't built just with public expenditures and public policies. It was built by individuals who worked hard, who saved hard and contributed to their community, not because of another law but because of their inherent goodwill to others. That is the nature of Canadians. It's the nature of the people of Ontario. Our legislation and laws should reflect that, should abide by it, should promote that, not this idea that we'll just create another law, remove a little bit more freedom and utopia is just around the corner—but with every law, utopia becomes farther and farther away.

So I want to congratulate the NDP for putting that forward, that people ought to have the ability to save more, to have more, to be able to retire, but it is not going to come to fruition with this motion. Thank you very much, and we will hope that the NDP takes some of those into consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, I want to thank the leader of the third party for this motion. It certainly is substantive. It's well-thought-out from a policy point of view. I want to also take this opportunity to compliment the third party on their commitment to workers' rights, social justice and pensions. And although I agree with their sense of urgency and crisis with respect to pensions in Canada, more so across the country, as well as in Ontario, this motion should better be dealt with being deferred and dealt with at a subsequent time rather than being voted on today. My sense is that it will be defeated today. There's a lot of substance in here that's worthwhile being continued in the debate on pensions as we move forward. This motion, in my opinion, is premature.

Yesterday, the leader of the third party asked the Premier whether he would vote yes or no for this particular motion, and the Premier said no. Today, again the leader of the third party asked the Premier whether he would vote yes or no for this particular motion, and the Premier said no. He provided the answer, and he said that this is a pan-Canadian issue, this is an issue to be dealt with across the country by all the provinces, and I agree with him. One of the main reasons for my agreeing with him is that both the federal and provincial governments at the present time are in the middle of consultations, Canada-wide. They're getting ready for a conference on pensions in the very near future.

There is no question that all organizations of any size with pensions in Canada, be they government or private—and every employee, with or without a pension—have received a wake-up call from corporate failures such as Nortel and Abitibi; a realization, particularly among pensioners and indeed many pension managers, that there is no protection under bankruptcy laws for pensioners, that they get in line just like all the other creditors. Pension managers are very concerned.

There has been a proliferation of pension funds in Canada with deficits.

Yes, there is need for urgent action, but there is a process under way. I was very pleased last Thursday to participate in a round table with the Minister of Finance of Ontario and a number of pension leaders from across Canada. The dialogue was very useful; the concern was very common. There was certainly a consensus in the room that we had to reach a consensus in terms of all of Canada, including the provinces. Just for the information of the members and the public, the people who were in that room consulting with the Minister of Finance were the following: Association of Canadian Pension Management, Mr. Scott Perkin, president; Caledon Institute of Social Policy, Ms. Sherri Torjman, vice-president; Canadian Federation of Independent Business, Mr. Ian Dawkins, policy analyst; Canadian Institute of Actuaries, Mr. Marc-André Vinson; Canadian Labour Congress, Mr. Hassan Yussuff, secretary treasurer; Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada, represented by Dave Coles, president; an independent consultant, Mr. Bob Baldwin; International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers, Mr. Louis Erlichman, Canadian research director; Investment Funds Institute of Canada, Mr. Jon Cockerline, director of policies and dealer issues; the Nortel retirees protection committee, Mr. Don Sproule, president; and the Public Service Alliance of Canada, Mr. Steve Jelly, executive assistant.

That consultation is necessary in this crisis. To bring forward now a motion to be voted on today, in my opinion, as I say, is premature. It pre-empts that necessary consultation in order to help build a Canadian consensus for a Canadian solution. In one way or another, they all said we need a Canada-wide coordinated action, and there was also considerable discussion about portability, which is very important for the economy, and it's very, very important for the social structure of Canada for people to be able to move across this country and feel economically secure.

After 19 years of elected office as an MPP, elected regional chair and mayor of the city of Ottawa, I came to one major conclusion, and that is that there's a major problem with efficiency and productivity in this country that comes from lack of alignment from federal, provincial and municipal policies. Pension is a very, very good example.

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If you want to take another good example, it's the HST. You have the federal Minister of Finance saying, "We need the provinces with PSTs to harmonize in order to create jobs, create efficiencies and save money for small business." The same can be said about pensions. Pensions are just a hodgepodge of regulation and legislation across Canada. We need to organize them; we need to get together and work as a country.

I will vote against this motion. I appreciate the substance and credibility of the motion and the thought that's gone into it, but it needs to be dealt with after the

consultation, as a result of the consultation, and it needs to be a Canada-wide solution.

Those are my remarks. I will vote against the motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Pensions are a pretty topical thing these days.

Mr. John O'Toole: Especially if you don't have one.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yes, especially if you don't have one, and I think I speak for most of us in this chamber when I say that we don't have one.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yes, I know how it disappeared, and I thank the member from Peterborough for reminding me.

The point is, pensions have been an extremely discussed topic over the course of the past two years because so much of people's pensions—or, at the very least, people's retirement savings—have evaporated. Sure, we're in recovery, but a lot of that is not coming back. The people who were hurt the most were the people who, during the period of time when those pensions and savings were evaporating, needed the money, needed the income. They had to raid the capital that they had, they depleted it, and while the rest of the world may be looking towards a recovery, albeit in fits and starts, those people are not going to recover. So you've got people 75 years old who are actually looking for some kind of work and, in some cases, thank goodness, getting it.

In any event, the events that began in the latter part of 2008 brought to this Legislature and to many other venues monster names like General Motors and Nortel. We got into discussion about the people who were lucky enough to have private pension plans, and what was going to happen when those defined benefit plans that were operated by gigantic corporations dried up, as these seemed to be doing at the time. One did; one was bailed out. The point at the time was whether or not we could expend public funds, I suppose, on a go-forward basis, to bail out these funds as they dried out. The answer was then and is now that we can't, but it underscored the whole issue of pensions and how they affect us as citizens. Citizens cannot bail out every plan, but, moreover, citizens have to have a means to live as they age.

I can remember very well a time in 1966. I had a number of temporary jobs when I was in high school and in university, but then in 1966, I got my first real job. There are people in this Legislature who would remember that experience, and probably, to some extent, around the same time. In those days, when you signed that first card they gave you on day one of work, it was very typical that it had a place where you acknowledged that you were going to be part of a registered pension plan; not an RRSP—they didn't exist yet—but a registered pension plan. You were going to join a defined benefit plan that your company ran on your behalf, and it was usually organized by one of the large financial organizations in the country. I signed up. The concept would be that I would pay something and the employer would

pay something. That was an accepted norm, and it was something that could be done and was done at the time. There was no opt-out. It was basically a guarantee of some defined benefit.

The question that is asked by the New Democratic Party in its motion today, in a very real sense, is: Who really has that now? It's my question, their question, everybody's question, and the answer is: about 35%, 38% of people. And who are they? They are, for the most part, people who either work for the remnants of these gigantic corporations that have offered defined benefit plans since time immemorial, but more often they are public sector employees who have become the de facto new elite within our society. They're the lucky people who know that, at a given point in time, the pension plan that is there on their behalf by the government that they work for—be it the Ontario government, the federal government or the municipal government—is going to be there for them when they retire. And the rest of us? We have a problem.

I'm very happy to stand here today and be talking about pensions, albeit I can say that the PC caucus generally can't support a motion of the type that the New Democratic Party is bringing. I want to congratulate the New Democratic Party for confronting it, because whether it's a plan that I can stand and support or not, it is at least an attempt to shine a spotlight on something that is terribly deficient in society, because what's happening is, we're creating a new generational gap in society. It's becoming visible now, but it's going to be screamingly visible over the course of the next number of years as baby boomers, of whom I'm on the leading edge, become the elderly, the seniors in our society, and we see so many of them who will not be able to live—forget about in the style to which they've become accustomed, but who will not be able to live, period.

So the question becomes, do you want to address this now?—not that you can help anybody who's going to retire in the next two, three, five or 10 years. But on a go-forward basis, do you want to look 10 years and 20 years ahead and make sure that you don't institutionalize or systematize this kind of a deficiency in our society, and you make sure that the next generation to come along doesn't have to look at that? Because I've got to tell you, our generation may not have done a very good job. We spent our money instead of saved our money, at least many of us did, so the generation has a lot of problems.

Who's going to wind up having to support them? Folks are going to be forced to spend their money through higher taxes to fund people who are on welfare because they can't afford to live any other way. That's what we're facing and that's why we have what is a growing crisis—a pension crisis.

This is not to say, when I talk about not supporting the motion, that I don't understand the motion. It's not to say that I don't accept certain points within the motion. "Ensure that all Ontario workers who want a workplace pension plan have a workplace pension plan"—it seems reasonable to me. That's one of the points the NDP has

put into the motion. “Ensure that workers who believe they have a better way of saving for their retirement are able to opt out.” These are points I can accept, regardless of where they come from.

It's the overall tenor of what the NDP is talking about that I don't accept, because what I've heard very particularly from my friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek is a chapter-and-verse approach to how we're going to do this, and very particularly a plan that applies to people who live in Ontario. You can talk about portability all you want. We need something that's ultimately portable; we need a national approach to this.

I am not prepared to, at this point, present myself as an expert. I will be quoting some experts as I go on in my talk today, but I'm not an expert on pension plans. I can simply agree with the concept of needing something that serves us better than what exists now, which is a notional contribution made under a registered retirement savings plan that I have access to, that I have some limit placed on me based on my tax bracket and to which I may or may not and, most often in this country, will not contribute to.

In speaking recently to Bill 236, which was the first pension bill, as we understand it, of two pension bills that the government is bringing forward, I said that it was nonsensical to spend so much time on a bill that did nothing for the two thirds of Ontarians who don't have a pension plan.

I think it's fair to say that if that were the substance of what we're talking about today in isolation, everybody here could agree. We're talking about who ultimately pays: Who pays for this generational issue? Who funds the people who are going to need the money going forward? I respect that the motion proposes a solution for those Ontarians who don't have a private pension, but I'll say for the last time that I can't agree with the idea.

I myself happen to be on CPP now because you have the opportunity, as some people know, to take your pension without any clawback at age 60, which I reached two and a half years ago, and so on it goes. So I collect the phenomenal sum of \$600 and a bit per month. Had I waited until 65, I would have collected \$800 a month. I'm not trying to say that \$600 and change is anything to sneeze at, but it's not something to live on, that's the issue, and neither is \$800. These days you've got that and you've got what your spouse or partner gets, and then when you get to 65, you get the old age supplement. Maybe you get a second old age supplement, and if you're lucky, you've cobbled together about \$2,500. That's what you're going to live on unless you have some investments that you've made, unless you're in the one third of the population who has a defined benefit plan. That's pretty tenuous, and that's the problem that we're talking about.

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We in the PC caucus understand the plight that many, indeed the majority of Ontarians, find themselves in. They are people, we are people, who have worked hard all of our lives. We have raised families and probably in

most cases have done something to assist the kids in putting them through school. We might even have helped our kids put something down on their first home, because most kids can't save the kind of money that's required for a down payment, and that's notwithstanding the low mortgage rates. Look at the price of houses these days. But most importantly, this is a generation that paid its taxes, and it paid its taxes, in large degree, sometimes to the detriment of the ability to save. While doing all of this, some of us, but not enough of us, managed to save for retirement more than others. That's why we need to level the playing field.

What happened, however, to the people who were successful at saving is what I mentioned at the outset of my talk this afternoon, and that is that they had those savings decimated over the course of the last year and a half, and many of them find themselves in dire straits, so they're working. I know people who are answering the telephone at home in a virtual call centre environment. They're doing it for \$10 or \$11 an hour. We're talking about 75-year-olds. Is that really what we want? Is that what we want for our golden agers? Is that what we want to see ourselves doing in our golden years? This is not a complaint, but an observation. People in this Legislature don't have a defined benefit pension plan. We have an RRSP. You'd have to be an MPP for a very, very long time to look to that RRSP to do very much for you in terms of keeping you in the style to which you have become accustomed.

For many, their savings and stock holdings may not have come back to the original levels at this point in time. On top of that, thanks to the Liberal government, they are seeing their energy bills soar. It's shameful, and I might make this observation, that we're even discussing that at this point, putting this kind of an extra burden on people who have gone through what they've gone through over the course of their lives, serving their country, serving their province, bringing up their families, having savings depleted and now being on a fixed income that's not at the level that they expected and having an additional 8% added as well. According to some estimates, if you take a look at the energy bills, that interest would be maybe 25% by the end of this year. My sources say that it's even more. Do you know what? That's not euthanasia; that's death by 1,000 cuts. There are a lot of things besetting our elderly.

If that wasn't bad enough, on July 1, almost every good and service that these people, and the rest of us, purchase is going to cost them another 8%.

Mr. Bruce Crozier: No, it's not.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yes, it is. Every service is going to cost another—as a matter of fact, I might single out, for my friend from Essex, the fact that the additional services will include the fees that they pay to administer the investments that they have. Go think about that. Worse yet, as they try to manage their retirement savings to maximize their returns, the assistance that they rely on, it charges them. If you've got a mutual fund with a 2% management fee on it on which you pay GST, now you

get to pay 13% on that, and an exemption was not even considered on that.

If we wanted to help out those millions of Ontarians who do not have a pension, the McGuinty Liberals could at least have started—or still start; it's not too late—by cutting them a break on the HST on mutual fund transactions. But I know that that suggestion, and you can see it by the reaction on the other side, is falling on deaf and unsympathetic ears.

I'd like to read into the record at this point some material that comes from the ACPM. The ACPM is the Association of Canadian Pension Managers. I said I wasn't an expert. I know for a fact that there are precious few of you in this chamber who are experts on pensions. These guys are the experts, so let's hear what they have to say.

"ACPM believes that several large plans operating multi-jurisdictionally would provide the flexibility and choice of savings options that employers and individuals need"—that's the word they used—"while encouraging diversification of capital, economies of scale and competition benefits.

"Another government-mandated payroll tax is not what the economy needs, especially when, for many, there are better ways to prepare for retirement.

"ACPM is agnostic on publicly run versus privately run plans, as long as it is not only public plans; [the] same rules should apply."

They're not in favour, and this is very important in the context of the motion, "of CPP involvement in supplemental plans, if there is risk of creating one large megafund."

They talked about diversification—these are the people who know. They say, "Private sector creativity and expertise is the best way to develop choices and educate Canadians."

I've got to say, aside from the fact that I trust experts, that that makes perfect sense to me. As a matter of fact, the topic of what to do about those Ontarians without private pensions came up at a round table discussion I personally led last month with some people at the Investment Funds Institute of Canada.

What do these people do? They manage mutual funds. What are mutual funds, if not really an avenue to retirement? I own some, I'm sure that many people who are watching us on television own mutual funds, and I think there are people in this House who own mutual funds. You watch the ebbs and flows, but essentially what you're talking about are funds that are diversified in a way that is pleasing to the buyer and that at the end of the day are supposed to grow and provide you with greater output than the input your original investment represented.

They were very interested in talking about the discussions currently ongoing between the provinces and the federal government. So I'd like to say now what I said then. In our view as a party, creating yet another level of government bureaucracy to deal with pensions or retirement savings is not the answer. That is what this

motion seeks to do. I have a to-do list when it comes to pensions. The first thing I would want to do is revisit RRSPs. RRSPs are now a decades-old solution. Yes, this have been modifications in how RRSPs work in terms of maximum contributions and in terms of the contribution being indexed to cost-of-living as well as to income levels, but it's really time for a rethink.

We have to look at widening the scope of RRSPs. We have to look at harmonizing the treatment of funds that go into and come out of RRSPs. For example, in my registered retirement savings plan, I designate some of the investment to be investment that realizes dividends or makes capital gains, but when, in six and a half or seven years, I have to purchase a registered retirement income fund with those funds, when the money comes out, it won't be treated the same way, and I'll be taxed at the maximum to whatever level of income I'm pulling out of it. That has to be revisited. That is national in scope. It's not something we can handle at the provincial level.

We have to look at leverage with regard to incentive to go beyond. In other words, we have to give people a reason to want to contribute and, I dare say in some respects, have to contribute to the go-forward position that envisions their ultimate retirement. We all get old. We're all going to retire. And it seems that regardless of financial conditions, not enough people have made those contributions, so we have to put in levers to ensure that they do. We have to make sure that we use the people I've been talking about, the professionals who understand how to manage money.

We have good ones in Canada. IFIC, the organization I mentioned, represents a number of people. I have no particular drum to beat for them, but they're looking for something to do. As far as I'm concerned, investing in mutual funds that are particularly Canadian-based is a good idea. Trusting folks like that to do the job would be a better way than entrusting this to yet another level of bureaucracy that we could, and our friends in the NDP would, create.

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In concluding, let me just say that much like the local health integration networks—the LHINs—have absolutely nothing to do with improving health care delivery, so too the bureaucracy required to implement and run an Ontario retirement plan is not what we need for the solution. We don't need more bureaucracy. We don't need more, dare I say, pensioned public sector workers. It simply adds another layer of government that will cost taxpayers money and will seek to shield the government from accountability. So, on principle, if for no other reason, we in the Progressive Conservative caucus cannot support that.

Focusing on an Ontario-only plan is not the answer, because we know today that Canadians are incredibly mobile. Not only do they move all around this country; they will move all around the world during their working lives, more and more so. Any solution to the pension problem—which we absolutely agree with our friends from the third party is a problem—must be national in

scope, must be confronted by the government of the day, must be confronted now. It's already getting too late. It has to provide mobility. Its standards must be national in scope.

Finally, I would argue that the private investment sector is absolutely the best place to play a role in whatever solution is finally agreed upon. The other part of the NDP motion calls on the government to advocate for the strengthening and expansion of the Canada pension plan. The bureaucratic nightmare of one mega-fund is something that we don't want to face now.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Leal: It truly is a privilege to participate in this debate this afternoon. I happen to think there's no greater issue that's around today, in terms of providing people with pensions. The question becomes: How do we get there and what combination of models do we use to get to the position where we want to make sure that we provide Ontarians and indeed Canadians a reasonable flow of retirement income to sustain a lifestyle they have become accustomed to?

I would certainly confess that I'm not an expert in this area, but over the last number of years I've taken the time to become much more educated in this area. I had a former private member's bill, Bill 96, which was the first of my pension reform bills. Bill 96 was an act respecting protection of retirement savings plans in the event of a bankruptcy. It has been reported back to the House. This bill simply, of course, in the event of a bankruptcy, will allow those savings that were put into RSPs to not become part of the bankruptcy proceeding; indeed, to guarantee those funds so that that individual or company that found themselves in a bankruptcy position would have the opportunity to retain those RSPs intact to provide a future retirement income.

Members of the third party, particularly my good friend from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, indicated that we'll have a discussion during private members' time this Thursday to deal with Bill 54, my second private member's pension bill, which will look at another model in order to provide a retirement income for Ontarians.

I happen to believe that at the end of the day, we'll have a combination of both a private sector model and indeed some new initiatives that will be brought forward by the private sector in this particular area.

It's interesting to look at the history of the Canada pension plan. Back in 1963, the then newly minted Prime Minister, Mr. Pearson, launched a series of white papers on a nationwide pension plan. This first white paper was released in 1963. It was circulated to all provinces. Then, in April 1965 royal assent was given to Bill C-136, which created the Canada pension plan and indeed the Quebec pension plan, because when the Canada pension plan was opted out, all provinces had the opportunity to either opt in or opt out. Because of the Lesage government in the province of Quebec, they decided to opt out. They created the Quebec pension plan, which in fact mirrored the provisions of the Canada pension plan, which was enacted in nine other provinces.

While there is great talk about reforming the CPP, I want to remind people in this House that any major amendments to the Canada pension plan must be approved by Parliament, and at least two thirds of the provincial governments, representing no less than two thirds of the Canadian population, would have to be put in place to bring about any amendments to the Canada pension plan.

Of course, we have the history; we all know the basic provisions of the current Canada pension plan. Every person in Canada between the ages of 18 and 70 who has a salary in excess of \$3,500 must pay into the Canada pension plan. Both the employee and employer contribute to the CPP equally, at a 4.95% rate. Self-employed workers pay the full amount of 9.9%. None of these costs associated with CPP are funded through general tax revenues.

The first big change in terms of the administration of the CPP happened in 1997. In 1997, the CPP Investment Board, CPPIB, was created to invest the assets of CPP. As of December 31, 2009, the Canada pension fund was worth \$123.9 billion.

The CPPIB invests in more than 2,900 public companies around the world, including 600 Canadian companies. This is important to know, because when you look at the profile of those 2,900 public companies around the world, and indeed the 600 Canadian companies, many of these companies are Canadian banks, Canadian financial institutions, the kind of bedrock companies that are making up the basis of the CPP. So it's interesting, as we have had this discussion, that all the major public pension plans—CPP, OMERS, and I'm very familiar with the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, because my wife, Karan, is part of that plan. When you read the profiles of what OMERS invests the money in for the security of future benefit streams, and indeed the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, they are all invested in private sector entities, to look at the returns. So you can't really divide—when you talk about a purely public pension plan, the basis of the foundation of that pension plan is indeed the investments that are made in a wide variety of private sector companies. We all know, and it's a common joke with the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan, that they own a majority share of the Maple Leaf or Air Canada entertainment centre that covers the Toronto Maple Leafs, the Raptors and several other organizations, and they have used those dollars through the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan to invest not only in entities here in Canada and North America, but indeed throughout the world. When you look at the profile of OMERS or CPP that I just talked about, that certainly indicates where they make their investments, where they're getting their returns, and those pension plans are effectively managed by individuals who have demonstrated profound expertise in this field.

So at the end of the day, I think this motion that's been put forward today is very important in the evolution of the debate that we are having in this country and indeed in this province. From that perspective, this is a debate, I

believe, that needs to be held, a debate that should be held in all of the constituencies across this province. I know that many members have certainly taken the time to have round tables in their communities to bring forward people who have knowledge in the pension field to look at ways that we can really guarantee, on a go-forward basis, providing income streams for individuals who are working hard each and every day to make Ontario the place it is, which is a great place to live, work and play.

1730

The fundamental question becomes: How do we get there? What components will make up this pension? We have this motion in front of us today that sees a total reliance, I believe, on a public sector solution. I happen to think there's another solution, more of a hybrid solution, that will take the form of a pan-Canadian agreement. The expansion of the CPP, I think, has some merit, but we may look at some other models that we can take together. For example, there are ways that you can amalgamate a number of small employers into a pension plan and substantially reduce the administrative costs, which would be handled through a larger critical mass of people coming together.

I think there are real opportunities as we move down the road. I certainly commend the third party for initiating this debate. It's a debate that all members of this House should be thoroughly engaged in, because it's about the future.

I heard a member talk about being part of the early part of the baby boom generation. I'm at the other end of the baby boom generation. We need to start a discussion throughout this province about the notion to increase savings. It's something that I take the time to talk to my children about—they are 11 and 12. As a society, we must put more emphasis on creating more savings. As time goes by, we'll eventually hit those retirement years, and there is a fundamental need to start the planning early for those retirement days.

With those comments, I know my colleague from Pickering–Scarborough East, an expert on pensions, will want to say a few words on this motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: If I were to be watching the clock, I believe that the third party has some time left. I can appreciate, since it's their opposition day motion, that they would want the opportunity to try to wrap up the debate, so I appreciate the opportunity to continue the debate, following the member from Peterborough, in spite of the fact that we sit on the same side of the House, on the government side.

I think this is an opportunity for us. We dealt with a pension bill recently, and as we left that, some of us who were engaged in that process were saying that pension bills aren't necessarily the most exciting things to be talking about. But this motion gives us an opportunity in this place yet again to talk about retirement and income security. It gives us a chance to talk about pensions

generally, about strategies to ensure that people have opportunities, whether it be through their own savings, through government systems or through workplace initiatives, to be able to plan for or to at least have some element of security when they leave the workforce. I think it has been an opportunity for each of us, those all around this place today, to speak to those matters in a more generalized fashion than we would if we were speaking specifically to a bill.

I want to pick up, in part, where the member from Ottawa West–Nepean left off when he made some comments on this opposition day motion, by speaking to the questions that have been asked of the Premier of late and the Premier's generalized response to those.

I want to start by saying that I heard the Premier, when questions were asked, first complimenting the third party and its leader for taking a substantive interest in matters of pension, in matters of strategy to provide for retirement income security. He complimented them on the work they have done and the thought they have put into the processes they've been involved with. We also heard him saying, as the member from Ottawa West–Nepean was saying, that he would not be supporting this particular opposition day motion—one has to recognize it from this side of the House as an opposition day motion—and set some reasons out in the limited amount of time that he had to do that.

I would like to say what I've heard him saying of late as the Premier and as the leader of our party about the need to have this dialogue continue, not only in this place but across this nation, led by the federal government, obviously in that context, but participated in by the Council of the Federation, the Premiers and the finance ministers or those ministers who may have responsibilities for pensions who may not be finance ministers in this country, because there are some other jurisdictions where I understand it's not their finance ministers who have that particular portfolio, the point being that the dialogue or the discussion has to be one on a scope and scale that go beyond an individual province.

We've talked a lot about pensions and retirement income security, or retirement income adequacy, as another descriptor. Our finance minister, the Honourable Dwight Duncan, spoke to this matter numerous times. I had the opportunity, as recently or as far back, depending on how one looks at this discussion, to attend a meeting last summer in Calgary with Ted Menzies, the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance federally, Jim Flaherty, who was leading a process at that time engaging some of the provinces—because not everybody at that stage was yet at the table—to begin to have or continue some preliminary discussion around retirement income adequacy. As part of that, there were strategies set out to acquire information, to have some research papers done. Jack Mintz from the University of Calgary was kind of leading that process from the standpoint of bringing together some papers and discussion which the finance ministers had a chance to have submitted and review. That dialogue is continuing.

I have personally had the opportunity to participate recently in a couple of venues, one of which involved the Ontario Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress here in Toronto, a one-day workshop that they were hosting. Mr. Tabuns from the riding of Toronto–Danforth was present and participating, I believe, during the day in that particular forum. There was an opportunity for us to talk about retirement income adequacy, about pension strategies. A lot of the focus that day, I would think, was on the issue of the CPP and some of the initiatives in that regard, or those who have positions on the CPP, about it being enhanced or even doubled to provide for up to 50% of what might be the standardized income one would see today in the industrial income levels. That's one position that's out there. That was an interesting forum.

What it led me to see was that there are a lot of folks—and additionally those in this place—who are taking a very active interest in organizing venues for the opportunity for various sectors to put on the table matters of interest and concern to them about retirement income adequacy.

There are a number of options that exist. As we speak about this particular motion, it really narrows the focus down to an Ontario pension plan in the workplace, not unlike, to some extent, the CPP, but with lots of nuances. But there are other elements of the broader retirement income adequacy issue that we need to continue to put on the table during the debates that we're having.

There are the basic foundations—and I believe the member from Peterborough was talking about this earlier on in his comments—of old age security: that as a resident and as a citizen of this country, we have some entitlement, at the age of 65, to be provided some very, very modest income security through the old age system. In addition to that, there's the guaranteed income supplement for those in the lowest economic echelon of our seniors' community to supplement that old age security system if they have no other income availability.

Frankly, what that has done over the years is that it has taken out of the numbers of those in poverty large numbers of seniors, particularly senior women. People don't recognize that. Over the last number of years, that has changed, where decades ago, a couple of generations ago, probably the largest number or a large number of those in poverty were senior women who didn't have any income, who didn't have old age security, when there was no guaranteed income supplement, when their spouses may not have had any type of workplace pension, and if they did, it probably ended with their passing, and many of those women would have lived longer than their husbands.

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So the pure public system, the old age security system and the guaranteed income system, has provided a basic level of income that has assisted in shifting that poverty line or assisted those in poverty to move out of that or at least to the very margins of it.

In addition to that, the Canada pension plan, which really is a workplace pension, has added an element on a national level that has supported and supplemented the old age security system, which provides those who are in the workplace, over time, the opportunity on retirement—the member from Thornhill spoke to the fact that he has chosen at this time to collect that pension at an earlier stage than the normal kind of 65, which is sort of the threshold, and he's done that recognizing that he's taking it at a reduced amount. It's a recognition that he'll collect it, as others do, at an earlier age than 65, but they'll take a lesser amount to do that at that point in time because they make choices, many of those because they have moved into retirement at an earlier age than 65 and they find the CPP helps to supplement what might otherwise be a fairly modest pension, or they may not even be eligible yet for a workplace pension, if they have one.

I know that my wife, who retired some two or three years ago, will probably take her CPP at 60 or 61, in the next year or so, at a reduced amount as well, because it will make sense for her to do that to supplement the pension she has at that point in time.

There are options with things like workplace pensions that are supported by employers and supported obviously by the employee over periods of time at a national scale. So there's good reason to have a discussion about the Canada pension plan and what that might offer and whether or not an enhancement to that is a good idea and whether that enhancement should be a mandatory enhancement or whether there's some mechanism to make it a more voluntary structure and system. Those are among the kinds of discussions we need to continue having.

We have lots of discussions in this place about whether or not the defined benefit plans are the answer in the employment system or whether defined contribution plans also play a part. Here in this place, those of us who are elected to this place no longer have defined benefit plans. Those were abandoned some 10 or 12 years ago now. It's almost 15 years ago now: 1995-96. Now, at this stage, we have defined contribution plans—modest as they are, but nonetheless, those of us in this place do have a fairly modest pension plan under defined contribution strategies. So there are workplace plans that differ—they differ even in this place over time, but certainly differ in differing workplaces, and also differ as to how the contributions are made to those, whether the employee is a direct contributor, whether it's an employer-only contributed plan—and we know some of the challenges that exist in those structures. We saw that in the automotive sector, as an example, where the great liabilities that General Motors were facing when they were near going under—and without government support, they may very well have—had a lot to do with the fact that they were providing the full funding, for all practical purposes, for the pension systems that existed there.

So there's lots of discussion that is yet necessary for us to have in this province—and, I would suggest, in this country—before we land on solutions.

I haven't even had the opportunity to talk about the role of private savings, and those private savings can consist of anything, such as our RRSPs, that provide for tax deferral. They're not tax avoidance, but they allow you, at a time with maybe higher income in your working career, to set some money aside in savings and get some tax benefit for that and, ideally, draw that money down in your retirement years when your income is less and you're not paying as much tax on it. So you get a little bit of a benefit by saving it now. That's the idea of having RRSPs. We've seen the threshold, the amounts of those, increase over the years to the point where one can now put in a more substantive amount, if they have those monies available to them.

In addition to that, we have, as I think members opposite talked about, the additional personal responsibilities, the very private responsibilities, and that's independent savings without tax deferrals, without being in a pension plan, without being part of an old age security system: the very personal savings and assets that one might build up in their lifetime that they can draw on.

So retirement income adequacy and retirement income security are important matters for us to be discussing here. This opposition day motion, I think, is well thought out and presented. The Premier said early on, when he was asked about this, that he appreciates the time they've taken, the energy they have put into this process, but he won't be supporting it, nor will I be supporting this motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'aimerais ajouter quelques commentaires face au débat qui a eu lieu cet après-midi.

Dans un premier temps, je veux que les gens comprennent bien que le plan que les néo-démocrates mettent de l'avant, c'est un plan qui permet aux deux tiers des travailleurs et des travailleuses de l'Ontario de finalement avoir un petit peu de sécurité financière lorsqu'ils prennent leur retraite pour leur permettre de vivre avec dignité et respect. Il n'y a personne qui va se mettre riche avec ça, mais on ajoute une sécurité—une sécurité qui permet que si tu planifies bien tes finances, tu vas pouvoir vivre avec dignité et respect chez toi.

Ce qu'on veut, c'est un plan public. C'est un plan public qui va permettre à tous les travailleurs de contribuer, et leurs employeurs vont contribuer une partie identique. Tout ça sera mis ensemble pour qu'une fois que la personne prend sa retraite et commence à retirer, pour un travailleur ou une travailleuse qui se trouve au maximum, on parle d'entre 650 \$ et 700 \$ de plus par mois : un montant fixe sur lequel tu peux budgéter, un montant fixe auquel tu peux te fier.

Quand j'entends les gens dire que le régime enregistré d'épargne-retraite est la façon de le faire, saviez-vous que si vous voulez, disons, 25 000 \$ par année de revenus lorsque vous serez à votre retraite, vous devez avoir un demi-million en banque—un demi-million en banque, quand la plupart des gens ont environ 60 000 \$ dans leur RÉER ?

My colleague is asking: Did you know that, through an RRSP, if you want to retire with about \$25,000 a year, you need to have 20 times that amount? You need to have half a million dollars in your RRSP to be able to retire with a \$25,000-a-year income. This is not realistic. The average Ontarian manages to save \$60,000 in their RRSP. There is a big gap between half a million dollars and \$60,000, so when I hear the opposition say that this is the way to go, I say that this is the way to go to poverty.

Quand on parle de choix, il faut que ça soit un choix éclairé. Le choix de vivre dans la pauvreté n'est pas un choix. Le choix de continuer à donner 11,2 milliards de dollars à ceux qui gèrent les fonds de pension individuels n'est pas un choix non plus. C'est du vol. Avoir un plan de pension public nous permet, dans un premier temps, de récupérer 8,4 milliards de dollars qui sont dépensés en ce moment pour les frais administratifs des RÉER. Ça permet également d'avoir un plan sur lequel tu n'es pas à la merci des marchés. Tu sais exactement combien tu vas recevoir à tous les mois.

Est-ce que ça serait bien d'avoir quelque chose du côté fédéral à la grandeur du Canada? Certainement. On appuie ce qui se fait avec le Congrès du travail du Canada, mais ça n'empêche que l'Ontario a un rôle à jouer. Il y a trop de travailleurs, deux travailleurs sur trois—66 % des travailleurs et travailleuses en Ontario n'ont pas de plan de pension, n'auront pas de sécurité financière pendant leurs années de retraite.

Ce n'est pas acceptable, et c'est à nous aujourd'hui de changer ça. Comme les gens qui sont venus avant nous, qui ont mis sur pied medicare, qui ont mis sur pied le plan de pension fédéral, qui ont mis sur pied les programmes sociaux dont on est tellement fiers, on a la chance ici aujourd'hui en Ontario de faire la même chose : de mettre un nouveau plan de pension ontarien qui deviendra une maille de notre système social dont nous pourrions tous être fiers et, en même temps, de permettre à tous les travailleurs et travailleuses de l'Ontario de se préparer pour une retraite avec une sécurité financière.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that 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.

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

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Horwath, Andrea	Miller, Paul
Gélinas, France	Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael
Hampton, Howard	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Mitchell, Carol
Arthurs, Wayne	Gerretsen, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Gravelle, Michael	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoy, Pat	Pendergast, Leeanna
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Pupatello, Sandra
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramal, Khalil
Carroll, Aileen	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ramsay, David
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Rinaldi, Lou
Chiarelli, Bob	Levac, Dave	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Sandals, Liz
Craiton, Kim	McMeekin, Ted	Shurman, Peter
Crozier, Bruce	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Delaney, Bob	Meilleur, Madeleine	Sorbara, Greg
Dhillon, Vic	Miller, Norm	Van Bommel, Maria
Dombrowsky, Leona	Milloy, John	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 9; the nays are 51.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE**INJURED WORKERS**

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given by the Minister of Labour. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: Last week, I asked the Minister of Labour a straightforward question, one designed to get to the bottom of a very troubling situation for injured workers in the labour market re-entry program. It's hard enough being an injured worker, which is often a life-altering experience, but it's something with which the WSIB should be helping the injured worker, not causing roadblocks and pitfalls. Sadly, we know that when an injured worker is ready to re-enter the workforce and needs to be retrained, the worst days could just be starting.

Last week, I asked the minister a simple question: "How does the WSIB determine which career colleges an injured worker will be sent to? The minister decided to completely ignore the question and embark on an election-style rant, with statistics aimed for quick sound bites. He also fell into what has become the SOP, the standard operating procedure, for responding to questions and attack the actions of the previous government, none of which had any relationship to the simple question I asked.

I tried again to get an answer to a very serious situation for injured workers. I asked the question:

"We have many emails from injured workers who have been duped by the system into taking training that leads nowhere. They're injured workers who have been sent to private career colleges by the WSIB, who attend in good faith only to discover, upon completing their course, that that private career college is not accredited, cannot issue a diploma and has been a complete and utter waste of their time and public money. Then, imagine, despite being told about the unaccredited private career college rip-off, the WSIB cuts off the injured workers, claiming that they have been retrained and must now find new work."

I asked the minister: "What on earth is going on here? How can such a monumental mistake keep happening over and over again?"

Rather than expressing shock, the outrage that one should expect upon being made aware of such a situation, the minister went into his typical dodge, weave and redirecting of responsibility that we so often witness during question period. I expected to hear that the minister was shocked, appalled and would ensure an immediate investigation into such a complete waste of public money; and if not, an apology to injured workers who have fallen victim to this scandal. It was all so telling that the minister had not called for a complete stop to the practice while the new president of the WSIB is looking at this very closely.

The positive outcomes that injured workers should expect is employment in a fulfilling career, at or as near to the salary level as their pre-injury career as possible, not at an entry-level job which pays significantly less than the injured worker previously earned.

Based on the minister's response to my question, it appears that he knew there was a problem, a significant problem, but had not called for a halt to the practice while the system was being looked at by the new president. That is completely unacceptable.

This issue is not going away, and I intend to grill the minister until I'm convinced that this practice has ceased completely. I will pursue this minister and this government on the issues that so significantly affect Ontarians. Not only will we ask hard questions, but we will demand proper answers.

I don't care if I have to call for a late show every time I deal with the Ministry of Labour and I don't get an answer. I will. If I don't get actual answers to my questions, I'll have a date with my critic portfolio ministers every Tuesday and Wednesday at 6 p.m. I'll be seeing them, because it's time—in the two and a half years that I've stood up in this House and asked the labour minister and the former labour minister questions, I've gotten the runaround. I don't get direct answers. I don't even get a response outside of the House afterwards. I don't even get a call to my office with the answer. They dismiss it. They don't seem to acknowledge our questions. They don't want to respond. So we have to force them into these types of late night sittings to get them to answer simple questions that the workers of this province deserve.

The workers of this province deserve to know where the ministry stands on injured workers, experience rating and deeming. For three years, I've been after them to do something about this. The minister stands up in this House week after week and talks about safety and health rather than talk about the questions. He also admitted that the experience rating program is problematic, the deeming program is problematic, and the treatment of injured workers is problematic. Has he done anything? No. He just keeps referring to something else, diverting, avoiding it.

We stand down here on University Avenue every year and ask the same questions and get no answers. It's about time we did.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant, the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has expressed dissatisfaction with the Minister of Labour's response to his question during last Wednesday's question period. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I welcome this opportunity to speak to this issue. It allows me to reiterate the minister's response that the Ministry of Labour and the WSIB are working hard to assist our injured workers.

Everyone agrees that it is vital that injured workers get back to work as soon as they safely can. This is because a job is more than just a paycheque; it's a source of personal pride and dignity. That's why the WSIB has its labour market re-entry program, which helps injured workers receive training for a new job that is right for them after recovering from a workplace injury.

For over a decade, the WSIB has provided vocational retraining services to workers in situations where they're having trouble being re-employed by their employer because of the nature of their injury, or their employer is not able to arrange for work that is consistent with the worker's functional abilities and that restores the worker's pre-injury earnings.

Over the years, there have been many successes with our LMR program. One of the program's graduates, Estelle Caines, is a newly appointed member of the WSIB's board of directors. Ms. Caines worked as a hoist operator for 17 years before a workplace injury prevented her from continuing. Through the WSIB's LMR program, she returned to school and obtained a bachelor of arts in psychology and conflict resolution studies, along with an applied counselling certificate. Since graduating in 2002, Ms. Caines has been working as the director of access services for Integrated Services Northwest, a program run by the Lake of the Woods Child Development Centre. As an injured worker who has been through

the WSIB system, she brings a unique perspective to the board and the WSIB as an organization, understanding first-hand the needs and concerns of injured workers.

There are countless other success stories which highlight how this program has been critical to the lives of injured workers. That said, the WSIB is striving to improve the program. That is why the WSIB has been working hard to make the LMR program more accountable, efficient and relevant to the needs of injured workers in Ontario. In fact, the board just recently concluded a value-for-money audit of this program. The results and recommendations made in the audit, which are available on the WSIB website, offer excellent direction for the WSIB moving forward. The board has already started planning implementation of these recommendations, and will be consulting with stakeholders throughout the process.

In regard to the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek's question about non-registered private career colleges, as he is well aware, this is an issue that the WSIB has looked at closely. This issue was also addressed in the 2009 value-for-money audit. As a result of the audit's recommendations, the WSIB will only use private career colleges that are registered under the Private Career Colleges Act and that are in good standing with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

The Minister of Labour is pleased that the WSIB has taken concrete steps in addressing this issue, and he is confident about the changes and the direction in which the board is heading.

I understand that the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has been in contact with the WSIB on this and other issues. On behalf of the minister, I encourage him to contact the WSIB again if he has any more questions or suggestions. They will be more than willing to speak with him about his questions or concerns.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate that we all are conscious of the fact that injured workers face significant systemic barriers in their efforts to return to work and achieve their full earning potential. That is why we are all working together to significantly improve work re-integration outcomes.

I want to assure everyone in this House, on behalf of the minister, that the Ministry of Labour and the WSIB remain committed to supporting Ontario injured workers in every way they can.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1814.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

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Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
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Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture
Chiarelli, Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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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

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Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
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Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
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
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
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 Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	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 Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
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Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

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Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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Murray, Glen R (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
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
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
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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
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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