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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 24 February 2011

Jeudi 24 février 2011

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 24 February 2011

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 24 février 2011

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION
LABOUR DISPUTES RESOLUTION ACT,
2011

LOI DE 2011 SUR LE RÈGLEMENT
DES CONFLITS DE TRAVAIL
À LA COMMISSION DE TRANSPORT
DE TORONTO

Mr. Sousa moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 150, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission / Projet de loi 150, Loi prévoyant le règlement des conflits de travail à la Commission de transport de Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's a privilege to rise to speak to Bill 150, the Toronto Transit Commission Labour Disputes Resolution Act.

The legislation we are considering today follows a request by Toronto city council that the TTC be made an essential service. We said we would take this request seriously, and we did; we said we would consult with those affected, and we did; and we said we would act quickly, given the time constraints, and we have.

We have listened to representatives of the city, to the bargaining agents involved and to the Toronto Transit Commission. Most importantly, we have listened to the 1.5 million people who rely on the TTC every business day. That's 1.5 million reasons why we need to act. This proposed legislation is all about helping the people of Toronto, ensuring their needs are met and protecting their safety, their health and their well-being.

We have received written confirmation from the city of Toronto—from the elected representatives of the people of Toronto—that the city continues to stand behind its motion of December 16, 2010, requesting the province to ban TTC work stoppages. I would like to read part of that motion asking the government of On-

tario to acknowledge the truly unique impact that TTC work stoppages have on the city.

The motion adopted by the TTC board on December 15, 2010, stated in part: "Over one million Torontonians rely on the TTC to get to work, school and conduct their lives each day. The city of Toronto is simply not designed to function without an operating ... transit system...."

"TTC strikes are an economic, social and environmental disaster that grinds the entire GTA to a standstill. The cost of transit strikes in Toronto has been estimated to be \$50 million per day in lost economic activity. The environmental harm caused by the complete absence of transit and thousands of additional vehicles on the road is incalculable."

We have said that we would act quickly, given the fact that the agreements between the TTC and its bargaining agents expire on March 31, 2011. The TTC and its workers have a right to know what the rules of this bargaining round will be. And the people of Toronto, speaking through their elected representatives, have a right to ask the province that they be protected from the impact of TTC work stoppages now and in the future. We have the largest city in Canada saying, through their city council, that they need the largest transit system in Canada functioning reliably.

Across this country and over the course of decades, provinces have deemed certain workers essential. In these instances, the appropriate step to take is to have a fair and neutral system of binding arbitration. In Ontario and across Canada, police, firefighters and hospital workers have been considered to be essential to their communities. The city of Toronto has said to us that without their transit system, the city simply cannot function as it should.

Since 1974, members of this chamber have been called upon five times to enact back-to-work legislation for the TTC—five times. Clearly, this speaks to a unique situation in Toronto when it comes to public transit. Clearly, this unique situation has been acknowledged by this House, acknowledged by the people of Toronto and by the people of Ontario. The province's largest city requires its vital transit system.

There are those who have expressed concern that this bill could result in unionized transit workers receiving higher wages through binding arbitration. I'm sure that members of council are also aware of those concerns. Nevertheless, the city of Toronto made this request. It is important to remember that ultimately the city is responsible for the operation of the TTC and for negotiating with the TTC's bargaining units. Furthermore,

members of this House should know that city council defeated a motion calling on the province to finance any additional cost that the city may incur as a result of their request.

It is not our place to settle specific terms of those collective agreements. Rather, we are here protecting the people of Toronto at their request. Our government believes in the value of collective bargaining. Under this legislation, that important process will continue. The best settlements are those made at the bargaining table. We also know that in cases where society deems the services of certain workers essential to the safety, health and well-being of its people, issues not resolved at the bargaining table are best put before an independent and impartial arbitrator.

This bill, if passed, like all other statutes governing compulsory interest arbitration in the public sector, specifies criteria that arbitrators must consider. In particular, arbitrators would have to consider the employer's ability to pay and the economic situation in Ontario and Toronto. In general, under this bill, Ontario's Labour Relations Act would continue to apply to labour relations between the TTC and its union. The parties would still go behind closed doors and negotiate a new collective agreement. However, in cases where the parties reach an impasse in collective bargaining, outstanding issues would be resolved through the fair and neutral third party process of binding interest arbitration.

As I stated, compulsory interest arbitration is already in place for our police, firefighters and within the hospital sector. Those workers have a right to bargain, and they do bargain. From January 2000 to January 2011, there were more than 6,000 settlements involving parties who are subject to binding arbitration. Almost 80% of those settlements were successfully bargained without progressing to arbitration. I reiterate: The best collective agreements are those reached at the bargaining table. This bill does not take away the right to bargain. The TTC and its unions are still encouraged to negotiate collective agreements. As always, our provincial mediators are available to assist. Our goal and interest is public safety and health and the well-being of all concerned.

As the provincial government, we have a responsibility to acknowledge the request made by us, by a mature partner government, to consider the impact acting on this request will have on the parties involved, and above all else to ensure that the public interest is met. The bill we are proposing today is the result of these considerations. It is a fair bill, a bill that is neutral, a bill that has the best interests of the people of Toronto in mind.

0910

Binding interest arbitration is a fair and impartial way to resolve collective bargaining issues when they cannot be resolved at the bargaining table. As mentioned, the introduction of this legislation comes after consultations with the city, the TTC and all of the bargaining agents involved. The request from the city and the input provided during consultations was seriously and thoughtfully considered. A request of this nature deserves no less. This is

a serious matter. The ability of the 1.5 million people who rely on the TTC every business day to get to work, school, medical appointments and home safely is of paramount importance.

Let's be clear: This proposed legislation has been introduced to address Toronto's specific needs and concerns as they relate to its transit system, public health and safety and the economy. We are addressing a truly unique situation. The TTC is North America's third-largest public transit system. Only those in New York City and Mexico City are larger.

When we speak of the 1.5 million people who ride and rely on the TTC every business day, we should remind ourselves who we are actually speaking about. It is not simply those who choose to take public transit to get to work or travel from one part of the city to another. For many, there is no alternative. There are many without cars. There are those more vulnerable and poor who cannot afford taxis or parking, let alone a car. There are seniors. There are children. There are students. There are many for whom the TTC is not only their primary means of transportation; it is their only means of transportation.

Their destinations are also something we considered. There are health care workers who ride the system to get to their job at hospitals, nursing homes and clinics. With 40 hospitals, 84 long-term-care homes and 21 community care centres across the greater Toronto area, the city of Toronto itself has the largest concentration of hospitals, nursing homes and health care facilities in the entire province and, in fact, in Canada. Many of those who staff these facilities get to work every day by public transit. Without the TTC, many of the people who staff Toronto's hospitals would have no way to get to work. We considered the operating rooms and the emergency rooms and the long-term-care facilities and the retirement homes. And what about the many home care health workers who need to get to their patients and clients and rely on the TTC?

The primary job of any government should be the safety, health and well-being of its people, and I believe Toronto's and Ontario's record of legislating the TTC back to work shows that the health of Ontarians has been and is a priority for this province. A vital element of our health system is a vital transportation link that health care workers depend on to get to their jobs. To deny that the people of Toronto need the TTC is to deny the reality that the city faces today and the needs of some of the most vulnerable people in our society. A serious and responsible review of the situation leads fair-minded people to the same conclusion: For the city of Toronto, the disruption and loss of its transit system is far, far more than an inconvenience.

There are other health and safety concerns to take into consideration as well. There are the children and teachers who take the TTC to school. There are the parents struggling to manage their time, who rely on the TTC to get to work to provide for their families. There are the single parents rushing to take their children to daycare. There are those, including many of our most vulnerable, who

don't have cars and need to take the TTC to medical appointments. An important role played by public transit is to make sure that all members of society have access to transportation, not just those with a driver's licence or those with a car.

This government has been consistent and steadfast in its commitment to our province's most vulnerable citizens, and in ensuring that we keep Toronto's transit system running we are standing by them. We have all seen and experienced the packed, congested roads and the major disruptions that accompany them in Toronto when the city has been brought to a near standstill by TTC work stoppages.

These disruptions are not only bad for the economy, they are bad for the environment as well. We know that the fewer cars there are on our roads, the better it is for our environment and our air quality. If we really want to encourage people to go green, to go carless, we can't at the same time tell them not to count on the largest transit system in our province's largest city. That just doesn't work. The TTC helps keep cars off the road and reduces the air pollution that our children, our seniors and those with frail health breathe.

The Toronto Transit Commission estimates that a subway train replaces over 900 cars at peak times on most system routes. The TTC also estimates that, on average, one bus replaces 50 cars, and a four-car Scarborough rapid transit system train at rush hour takes 200 cars off the road. It is obvious that public transit is a key element in our efforts to move to a more green, a more healthy society.

Automobile emissions have a significant impact on the environment, and TTC work stoppages have a major impact on automobile use. A 2008 report prepared for the Amalgamated Transit Union, Local 113, estimated that without TTC services there would be over 178,000 additional cars on the road in Toronto and about 350,000 new car trips on any given business day. That is truly a lot of added pollution in our air. That is compelling, and truly an impact that the people of Toronto can understandably ask to be protected from. The matter before us includes the environmental as well as the financial impact on our citizens, and the city has expressed concerns to us about these very issues.

Mr. Speaker, 1.5 million people is a big number. Think of it this way: On the average business day, the TTC moves almost twice the number of people who live in the city of Ottawa. The Toronto Transit Commission is indeed unique among Ontario's urban transit systems. The TTC operates three subway lines and one rapid transit line, with a total of 69 stations, as well as about 150 bus and streetcar surface routes. Together, they move over 470 million passengers a year.

We know from past experience that work disruptions at the TTC severely affect the city's economy, and we are acutely aware of the importance Toronto has to the province's economy. Work stoppages at the TTC, according to a city of Toronto staff report issued in 2008, have an estimated economic impact of \$50 million every working

day. The impact of TTC service disruptions can send economic and environmental shockwaves across this province—that's at the macro level. On the street level, there are the pharmacy workers who need to get to work to serve customers who depend on their services. There are the low-income earners who need to get to the job and don't have cars. There are factories, offices, retail outlets and food stores across our largest city that rely on workers who depend on public transit.

I've told the members of this House that Toronto city council made a request, through a resolution, asking that the province designate public transit in Toronto as an essential service. That request, and this proposed legislation, originated with a public need expressed by the city to our government. Our government respects the right of the people of Toronto to address their needs through their elected representatives. Our response to the city of Toronto's request has taken into consideration the city's concern regarding the genuinely unique circumstances of Toronto and its transit system. As I've explained, these circumstances include the critical role the TTC plays in the lives of Torontonians and, indeed, in ensuring their health and safety.

Members of this House know that this proposed legislation addresses a unique and serious public need that has been addressed in this chamber before. I've spoken about the need to pass back-to-work legislation five times since 1974. We have to consider that while we were preparing and passing that legislation, the people of Toronto were left stranded. It's obvious for anyone to see that this is the reason Torontonians have come to us, through their city council, and asked for help.

0920

Our government firmly believes in the right of collective bargaining. We believe that the best collective agreements are those reached at the bargaining table. This proposed legislation would not take away or limit the right to bargain collectively. As I've already stated, when bargaining reaches difficult stages, our professional provincial mediators at the Ministry of Labour are available to assist the parties in reaching an agreement. This legislation would only prohibit strikes and lockouts. Nothing in this bill would prevent the parties from engaging in bargaining to resolve their collective agreements. Our bill would provide a fair and neutral means to resolve bargaining impasses: binding arbitration—the very same basic means of resolving impasses used by our police, our firefighters and our hospital workers.

The people of the city of Toronto are in the best position to determine how vital the TTC is to their lives. We have carefully considered the request of Toronto city council and consulted with the city, the TTC and its bargaining agents. After carefully and seriously reviewing the request, the reasons for it and the reality of the circumstances, we have responded in a way that is fair and measured.

I've already said that this is not about taking sides; it is about acting in response and in a responsible way to the people of Toronto and their council's request. It is

about looking out for the people of Toronto. That includes first and foremost looking out for their safety, their health and their well-being. It's about listening to the people of Toronto and their concern about the ability of their city to function effectively without the loss of their vital public transit system.

We have also had to consider that the contract between the TTC and its unionized workers will expire on March 31 of this year. With our proposed legislation, the parties would have a stable means of settling unresolved collective bargaining issues. More importantly, the public would have the benefit of uninterrupted access to vital TTC services.

Our government is proud of our record on labour issues. That's because our government has restored fairness and balance to labour relations. This Legislature would no longer have to resort to last-minute, ad hoc back-to-work legislation in order to resolve TTC labour disputes while the people of Ontario's largest city are left stranded.

Most recently, on a Sunday in 2008, all parties of this Legislature joined together to get the TTC up and running again. The PCs and the NDP have joined with our government to end strikes in the past, to ensure that the people of Toronto would have the transit system they rely on restored without further delay. Clearly, at the time the best decision was to legislate binding-interest arbitration, and it has been the best decision on four other occasions. All parties in this House have previously agreed that TTC work stoppages are unacceptable. Now that the Toronto city council has made the request to permanently avoid disruptions, it is time for action. This bill would foster stable labour relations and uninterrupted provisions of service by the TTC.

The city of Toronto motion requesting this legislation has also asked that a mandatory review of the legislation take place after five years. We listened, and so our bill calls for such a review to take place within one year of the fifth anniversary of its coming into force.

We have carefully and seriously considered the request from the city of Toronto to prohibit work stoppages on the TTC. We have consulted with the city, the TTC and its unions. We have considered the prior actions by all parties of this Legislature. We have listened to the people of Toronto, the province's largest city, say they need the largest transit system in Ontario to function without interruption so that the people can get through their day safely in a healthy environment and get to work. We have listened; we have acted responsibly in introducing this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I respect the Minister of Labour in his new role. Mr. Sousa is a very excellent speaker and, clearly, reading the speech as accurately as possible in terms of this government's position on the right to strike and the rights of unions at the stroke of a pen.

I think it's the right thing to do. As we all know, in the last few years there have been circumstances where

governments have been called back to in fact return the transit workers back to work. I think the other argument you could make in this whole scheme of things is that the arbitrated settlements are often higher. This is a cost, of course, that in a general sense is on the levy of the municipal level of the city of Toronto, certainly.

But I guess I have to look back at the contradictions. The member from Don Valley East earlier this year had a far-reaching intrusion into workplace harmony, if you will, saying that all transit systems should be dealt with this way. I wonder if, in his response, the minister might approach that because transit is kind of a number one capital investment that is going on. The amount of money being spent with Metrolinx—it's my understanding that Metrolinx and those capital investments are basically monopoly positions. They're quite tenuous, too, because when you look at, for instance, the GO train—I take the GO as much as possible, not every day but most days. I get a pass and stuff like that. There's CN, and that's a different worker situation. Then they've got the GO people on the trains themselves. They don't actually operate the trains. They just take tickets and check tickets, basically. It's quite complicated, who you're ordering back to work or how you're going to settle all these disputes because some of them are federally regulated organizations.

I think this is an approach to respond to Mr. Ford, and I'm anxious to hear our critic respond to Bill 150 this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to first of all say that I don't envy the position of the new minister. He has to deal with this. I frankly think that this is simply a political move by the Liberal Party to salvage their 20 seats in Toronto. Speaking from a labour background, I can say that if it wasn't for unions and for their bargaining over the last 60 years, people would probably be working for about \$9 an hour and working 14 hours a day. I also believe that this legislation will set unions back 60 years. If you saw what happened yesterday in Minnesota—they caught a governor talking to someone who was pretending to be a big executive for Coke, I believe, and he didn't say very nice things about working people in his state and he didn't say very nice things about unions.

Is this the mentality of the hierarchy of governments? I'm not sure. I think what you're getting here—I also have papers here, which I will read further down the road as we discuss this, that the former leader of the Conservatives doesn't think it's a good idea. I will quote him on pages of why he thinks it's not such a good idea.

I can safely say that this is simply a political move to salvage seats. I think you're not—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Please. I don't want to see one Liberal stand up and say they respect collective bargaining. I don't want to see one Liberal say they respect unions because they don't. That's a farce. It's not true. They're going to set unions back 50 to 60 years with this man-

oeuvre. I really think that they're using intimidation; Ford is using intimidation and the Liberals are using intimidation to squash the unions' rights and squash unions throughout North America—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise in support.

I appreciate the member opposite's perspective. I think it's important to recognize that this request comes from the council for the city of Toronto, who have made a decision that they would like to declare the TTC an essential service and they have asked us to put in place the necessary requirements for them to be able to do this. So what we said we would do is we would take this under serious consideration. We did have the conversations that took place with union members and also with members of council, and we decided to support the decision of the elected people of the city of Toronto.

0930

I think this is a really important part to recognize. There was an election in the fall. A municipal election took place, and there were proposals put forward. This was one of the proposals that had been spoken about all across the city of Toronto. The people of Toronto also spoke and they voted in a particular council. This resolution went to the council. It was debated at council. I'm sure my honoured friend across the way had an opportunity to speak and articulate his positions to that council, as many other folks have been able to do, but the council ultimately made a decision, and they are the elected individuals who govern the city of Toronto. What we were able to do was support that decision through the request, after we did our due diligence. So I think it's really important that as we move forward it is recognized that the city of Toronto and the councillors have asked for this. They are the ones who will then proceed as they move towards the essential service, and the conversations need to be held between the city of Toronto and the TTC membership.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Let me begin by congratulating the new Minister of Labour on introducing his first bill into the Legislature. I can remember having had that privilege when we were elected in 1995.

It's interesting to see this legislation come forward. I think, as has been said, this legislation is here before us to declare the TTC an essential service based on the fact that it has been requested by Mayor Ford and the Toronto city council. Obviously, it needs to move forward before the end of next month, and if you take a look at the response from the public—if you look at the Toronto Sun today, it says, "Are you happy with the province's legislation to declare the TTC an essential service?" There are 86% of the people that have indicated that they do support this. So obviously this is something—this move which we are now going to be debating, to declare the TTC is an essential service, is strongly supported by the

people in the city of Toronto. So it's moving forward, and I'm anxious to hear from our critic—the critic for labour—who will be sharing with the public and with this House our position on this legislation. But you know, regardless, this is an issue that is currently obviously well supported by the public.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Minister of Labour has two minutes for his response.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the contributions by the members from Durham, Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Etobicoke Centre and Kitchener–Waterloo. In regard to the request before us by the city of Toronto, it is unique in its nature to the province. It doesn't affect other municipalities or other agreements with other locations. It's strictly with regard to the TTC and the request by the city of Toronto, given the unique nature of the scope and size of the Toronto Transit Commission and the vital impact it has not just on the livelihoods and well-being of the people in the city of Toronto, but also on the health and safety issues.

I do want to comment on the rights of workers and the impacts it has and the fact that the collective agreements are continuing to be the course in regards to what we put forward. If an impasse occurs, then it goes to an arbitrator, but we are still going to respect the collective agreement process. We still encourage the collective agreement by which to proceed. We believe it's the best way when we achieve settlements. In the majority of cases where essential services legislation exists, over 80% of the time those collective agreements are agreed to and they do occur. We always support that process, and we'll have our professional mediators available should ever that be required.

Again, further to the comments made by some of the other members in this Legislature, this does come to us as an official request by the elected officials of the city of Toronto, based on the calls and the demands from their constituents. Given the severe impact it has on all people concerned, we have opted to proceed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's wonderful to welcome the new Minister of Labour with his first new bill, Bill 150, An Act to provide for the resolution of labour disputes involving the Toronto Transit Commission.

I have to commend the minister, first off. Obviously, he has pretty significant skills, as he spoke with such clarity while having a crow in his mouth, because we all know that just a few months ago there was an essential services bill before the House by a member of the minister's own party, the member for Don Valley East. He brought in a bill to make the TTC an essential service and of course, he got absolutely no support from this Liberal government. But the minister was very clear in his articulation of the importance of this now priority for this little government.

I think it's really interesting to hear that it is now a priority. This is a priority after seven years of being in government—seven and a half years.

Mr. John O'Toole: It seems longer.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Yes, much longer, on the backs of many people of Ontario.

In seven years, we have seen such a host of Liberal priorities: banning plastic bags, banning pit bulls, banning how many kids can be in the car. But now this is the priority.

I realize that—the minister makes some good arguments for this. We have had five labour disruptions with the TTC over the last number of years. There have been 11 lost days on the TTC. Who knows how many days would have been lost if the Legislature had not come back and voted on back-to-work legislation? But all of a sudden, this is now a priority. Why was it not a priority in 2008 when there was the last labour disruption? Where was the Liberal mindset then? Where was it a couple of months ago, with the member for Don Valley East?

But I will have to also commend—because it's not too often we see this from the Liberal government—that this government is now responding to the requests and the desires of a municipal government. I have to give you credit for that. Here we have a resolution passed by the Toronto council, clearly in line with the mandate that Mayor Rob Ford ran on and was elected on in the municipal election, to make the TTC an essential service, and this government is moving on that. On that, I commend you.

Again, I'm not sure, because we have seen so many requests by municipal governments for many, many action items from this Liberal government that fall on deaf ears. But this one seems to have caught the government's attention. Now, I guess somebody who might be cynical might suggest that it has something to do with the election this year. I don't know if that was really the motivator behind this bill: the Liberal government's own political fortunes or misfortunes that will happen this year.

When we talk about the request by municipal governments, many of them have made many representations to this Liberal government about the essential services and the labour laws that we presently have in place and the difficulties that they have in finding the funds to pay for the essential services. Anyway, we'll get into that in a little bit.

0940

The PC party did support, on second reading, the private member's bill of the member from Don Valley East when he proposed an essential services bill for the TTC, and we do support Mayor Rob Ford's efforts to respect the taxpayers of Toronto and to uphold his election mandate and commitments.

I want to get into a few of the details that aren't in the bill or haven't been addressed by this Liberal government, and I'd like to hear the minister's response to why these things aren't included in this legislation.

The first one I want to talk about is, here we have the TTC being designated as an essential service. It's clearly a hub for public transit, serving many, many people. He talks about the 1.5 million riders of the TTC. He talks

about the numbers of people in Toronto. But of course, what we also have to look at is all the feeders to the TTC. They're not being declared essential services under this legislation.

If you're on one side of Steeles, public transit is essential. On the other side of Steeles, public transit isn't quite so essential in this legislation. Public transit in Ottawa and London is not essential under this legislation, but it is in Toronto. The TTC is defined as essential. I'd like to know what it is in this government's mindset that makes the TTC stand in a different light than all the other public transit systems.

The other thing is, we have our own government of Ontario transit that feeds into the TTC, our GO system. Why is it not essential? Of course, the GO system is a major feeder into the TTC, a major mover of commuters. But there's no discussion, no mention, no talk of the importance of GO Transit.

I'm glad to see the minister taking notes on what we're speaking about here today, because I do believe these are important elements that need to be addressed, need to be spoken about and need to be rectified if there are failings within this legislation.

Of course, we will have time after second reading to have this bill in committee, explore those questions in some greater detail and see why people, the families in York region, are viewed in a different light than the people in Toronto, why the people in Mississauga are viewed in a different light than the people in Toronto and also why those other transit systems around the province, like I mentioned—London, Ottawa; they have all endured public transit strikes as well. The last one in Ottawa was a very significant, lengthy public transit strike. It caused a significant disruption in the middle of winter, but they didn't get back-to-work legislation then, and they're not included in this bill today.

I also want to speak about the binding arbitration aspect of this bill. The government has extracted a standard clause in the bill from other labour legislation, and that is on the criteria that require the arbitrator to consider the ability to pay of the city of Toronto and also the province of Ontario. This is a standard clause. We see it in every other essential services bill—those for police and fire-fighters.

I want to ask the minister this question specifically, because when I was being briefed by your officials yesterday—we know that the Ministry of Labour has received many, many undertakings and requests to have your arbitrators respect that intent of the ability to pay. I've heard it directly from all the municipal governments in my area, and I'm sure every member has heard it from every municipality in their own riding, that the arbitrator's view is that the ability to pay is not a restriction; the ability to pay is viewed as the ability to tax, and as long as you have the ability to tax, you have an endless ability to pay. We've seen this—and this is a fear and a concern that has been addressed by others, including yourself, and by Mayor Rob Ford, that an essential service increases the cost of that service. That is one of

the key reasons why, when we designate an essential service as such—the arbitrators don't recognize the difference between ability to pay and ability to tax.

So we know, we have a long history, demonstrated time and time again by all our municipal governments, that this clause is not strong enough; this clause is not respected; the intent is not brought forward. But what has this government done? It has disregarded those years of concerns, the endless number of resolutions and discussions, and has taken that exact, same clause that causes problems elsewhere and inserted it into a new piece of legislation. I believe that if this government was and is truly interested in bringing forward a good piece of legislation that respects the taxpayers of Toronto, respects the commuters, respects the mandate of the elected council, instead of rushing this bill into the House on the first day back, they would have taken a little time to see how they could strengthen that clause so that the ability to pay is not confused with the ability to tax.

I trust—because you've heard this from others—that there must be some working group within the ministry looking at some legal language to improve that clause. I would like the minister to explain to us why that clause has not been strengthened, why this bill has been brought in prematurely, if you are indeed working on strengthening that clause. Or is it the case that you're just not working on that language at all, that you're just not interested, that you just don't care. I trust and hope that that isn't the case. But if you are working on that language, then it is premature to bring this bill in. You should have waited a period of time to make sure you got things right.

I also want to mention—we know that the justification for this bill should be the request from the elected Toronto city council. That's what the motivation should be. That's where the request came from. When I was listening to your speech, I heard these words about priorities and different things, but I also heard that you are doing this because it's green. Did everybody hear that? They're bringing this bill in because it's green. Now, I don't know when we started confusing green with labour and green with collective bargaining. I know there's some confusion with green and windmills and different things, but now labour legislation is going to be green. That's a new one in the House.

0950

I guess I should say, as we've seen demonstrated, especially in the last number of months with the backtracks on the offshore wind and the backtracks on the microFIT programs, be careful of any bloody green contract you get into with this Liberal government, because it's not worth the paper that it's written on.

I'm not sure what's going on with the green transit plan and the green energy plan, but we do know that whenever the word "green" comes out of this Liberal government, chaos is sure to follow shortly afterwards.

There are a number of things that do need to be addressed in this legislation: once again, other public transit systems that feed into the TTC, the ability to pay and criteria so that it is not confused with the ability to tax. I

really think we should get off the high green horse here. I know the GO trains are green but, really, this is not a green bill.

We should not confuse people with the intent, the expectations and the motivations of this bill. This bill will hopefully end the disruption of commuters and stem the economic loss when those disruptions happen, but it's going to come with a cost; we're not sure what that is. We've seen that the government has not really put anything in there to protect the taxpayers of Toronto.

I guess the other thing we should say—I have to agree with the member from Hamilton, from the third party. As we hear the Liberals stand up and boast about how much they embrace collective bargaining on the same day that they're bringing in a binding-interest arbitration bill, we have to take that with a little bit of crow; there are a few feathers that are coming out of the windpipes on that one as well.

Let's keep it to the facts, let's keep it truthful and let's keep it honest. Let's deliver up a good piece of legislation that serves and benefits those who it's intended to without harming those who are left out of the bill.

With that, I'd like to hear back from the minister on those comments, those thoughts, on how we're going to deal with those subjects. I look forward to hearing a response.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm going to be beginning my one-hour lead in response to the minister in relatively short order, in approximately 10 minutes' time. Obviously, I'll only be able to start; I won't be able to finish it.

New Democrats don't support this legislation. Quite frankly, we're not surprised at the position taken by the Conservatives. Their position is consistent with a perspective and a philosophy that they've been articulate about and unashamed of for a good chunk of time. I disagree absolutely. New Democrats disagree absolutely with the position the Conservatives take, but on this issue, we've always disagreed. And I say that the Conservatives come to this debate—with however erroneous a position and philosophically flawed a position—with a history of integrity around the issue, because they've never pretended to be anything but in the position that they stand.

The Liberals, however, come to this debate with far less than candour and, quite frankly, with a level of cowardice, gutlessness, because when I hear the Liberal minister or one of his minions in the backbenches stand up and say, "Why, don't shoot the messenger. We're only doing this because the city of Toronto wants us to do it. Perhaps—we're leaving this for you to guess—we don't really believe in it." It's a hell of a way to make public policy.

Mayor Ford wants a prohibition on strikes by TTC workers. Well, look: My city council down in Wainfleet wants this government to add \$100 a month to the food allowance of people on social assistance. The township of Wainfleet passed a resolution to that effect just a

couple of weeks ago; I read it onto the record yesterday. Where is the government with respect to that proposition?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Joe Dickson: I do wish to respond to the previous speaker.

It's very interesting that when we were introducing legislation in response to a request from Toronto city council to declare the Toronto Transit Commission an essential service and refer all outstanding collective bargaining matters to binding arbitration—I think a lot of people here in this place this morning forget that there is a new city of Toronto council. If you respect democracy, then so be it. It is in place. Let Mayor Rob Ford and let the members of Toronto city council proceed as they see is the correct direction. They have done that, obviously after a lot of discussion and thought. They are proceeding in that direction and have asked us to proceed, in this Legislature, with that legislation. It's very important.

I think you heard very clearly this morning from the Minister of Labour how intricate the work has been and the references between all parties; that all parties are being included for due diligence. That message is coming forward to this forum.

I can tell you that I was surprised when I actually noted, from one of the opposition members, a reference to a Toronto media report which showed that 86% of the people of the city of Toronto—and there are 1.5 million riders—said, at 86%, “We want to have this legislated. We don't want the embarrassment, the trials, the tribulations and everything that has transpired in the past.” It's something we—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Further questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to add a few comments to the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington's. The honourable member spoke in reply to the minister's proposed Bill 150. I think he gave a good synopsis of some of our concerns with this bill.

I know one of the issues I have is the arbitrators taking into account the municipality's ability to pay. It seems kind of odd. I did some interviews just in the last couple of days with some of the press back home in my riding. I know that's a big issue there and in the London ridings as well. I'm sure we're going to hear about it next week at OGRA, the Ontario Good Roads Association, and ROMA, where municipalities are going to come. I'm sure that that issue, the ability to pay—arbitrators taking into account a municipality's ability to pay and not continually just telling the taxpayers to ante up and to put the tax rate up, to put the mill rate up to pay these bills. That's something I'm going to be looking at and I'm sure that we're going to have a lot to say as we go forward on that.

On the big issue, ability to pay, the criteria, we feel, in this bill are lacking in enough detail that they should be interpreted. The arbitrators apparently feel that they couldn't take any guidance on that because then they

would be being dictated to by the province. They won't seem to listen to the municipalities who, at the end of the day, bear the brunt of their decisions.

1000

I would urge the rest of the members, as we look at this bill, that we consider amendments to it, that we try to strengthen it and take into account—let's take a look at giving these arbitrators, if they won't take our advice, a stronger urge that way, that they take into account the ability of the employer to pay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I want to send a strong message to the people across the floor that this is not just about the ATU. You've got to understand that there are different unions within the ATU; you've got machinists, mechanics, CUPE workers. Do you think that by this forced legislation, this lack of transparency to talk about it with all these other groups, it's going to do you justice? I think not.

Do you think that's going to end a strike? Have you ever heard of work-to-rule? Have you ever heard of other disruptions that unions can do if they're not happy with what's going on? If you think this is just going to clean off unions with one stroke of the brush, it's not going to happen.

I'm sending out a warning to every card-carrying union member in Ontario and, more importantly, every union leadership: You should pay very close attention to what's going on here. Mr. McGuinty will strip you of whatever he wishes to for his own political gain. Stop supporting anti-union governments. Send Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal union-busters a strong message next October.

If you see what's going on in the States, in Minnesota, watch in the next few days what develops there, the mentality of the government leader there and the little phone discussion that they taped that he had.

There's a North American movement to break the backs of union members, and there's a North American movement by industry and big business to make everybody work for \$11 an hour. And do you know what's going to happen? Who's going to buy those houses, fridges, stoves and cars when you're working for \$11 an hour? Nobody. This is going to have a negative effect, it's going to be non-productive and it's going to come back and bite you all in your taxes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to thank the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member for Sarnia–Lambton, the member for Welland and—who else did we have?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ajax.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Ajax–Pickering. Thank you.

I think there are good comments coming from the third party as well. I'll just reflect a little bit on my time when I was a member of a union, when I was a member

of the IBEW. At that time, we had a little adage that a union got the employer it deserved, and the employer got the union it deserved.

The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek made a good point. Passing legislation does not create labour harmony. It doesn't do that at all. It does create some certainty. It creates some stability. But it doesn't create labour harmony.

I do believe that what we've seen in the last number of years, in the last decade or so, is that our public sector unions have not kept up to pace with our private sector unions. Very seldom do we see private sector unions going on strike nowadays in relation to our public sector unions, and that speaks to a bigger, broader principle and failing that this government has not looked at in this bill. It has not looked at, in the total context, how we bring our public sector unions—move them along in the same vein as the private sector unions, recognizing that strikes are not the be-all and end-all; that there needs to be some labour harmony.

But I am looking forward to the minister's response on those other questions that I offered earlier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. Unfortunately, as you know, I've only got 10 minutes this morning until you have to adjourn for question period, but I'll be back, I suspect, on Monday afternoon.

I want to make it clear once again at the outset that New Democrats are not supporting this legislation. We'll have no part of what is an assault, and part of a history of assaults, on the rights and interests of working people in this province, across this country and, indeed, throughout North America over the course of the last, yes, almost two decades.

I was prompted to recall the old RCA Victor ad, the painting of the Victrola with the big horn speaker and the dog, the little fox terrier, sitting at the Victrola with its nose into the horn of the Victrola. The title of that painting—it was an ad before the time of many of you, but when I was a kid, RCA Victor used this as its logo, as its promotional piece, and had since the 1920s. It was an ad with this little dog, a terrier, sitting in front of the Victrola, and it was entitled His Master's Voice.

Now we learn that Rob Ford is the master and the minister is but his voice. I learned that the name of the dog is Nipper, if that's any comfort to the minister. So I say to the minister, or Nipper, as he more appropriately ought to be known, that we clearly hear him and his colleagues saying, "Don't blame us." They're like the little boy who soiled the bed. They insist they have nothing to do with it in the morning. "Don't blame us. It wasn't me. I wasn't there. It's all that Rob Ford." Hell's bells, as if any of these people were out there campaigning for Rob Ford during that mayoralty election.

This chamber, of course, wasn't sitting, but Parliament was absent any Liberal members. They were all out there campaigning for one George Smitherman, the losing candidate. I'm not sure Smitherman's position would have

been any different than Rob Ford's at the end of the day because Smitherman, of course, got himself into a campaign where he had to out-right-wing Rob Ford. He couldn't outweigh him in the ring, but he had to out-right-wing him, although he probably tried in both respects.

So here we have Rob Ford calling the shots for Queen's Park. I find that a remarkable thing to happen, a very disturbing thing to happen, and one hell of a way to set public policy that has impact far beyond the city of Toronto and far beyond the ATU and its sister and brother unions representing working women and men at the Toronto Transit Commission.

Let's not make this mistake either: It's not about the ATU and its membership. It's not about the membership in those sister and brother unions of workers who work for the TTC. It's not about any given union leader or how he or she combs their hair or how their communications people tell them to speak to the matter in the press and in public.

This is about rolling the clock back in the province of Ontario. It's about this government, McGuinty's Liberal government, and his gang in cabinet jumping on that right-wing bandwagon that's spread across North America where—who becomes the target? Not the Conrad Blacks. And, by God, it did take the Americans to put him in jail; Canada could never get the guts to do it. The target is not the Conrad Blacks, not the Bernie Madoffs, not the stock manipulators and the money traders. It's not the big banks. Good Lord thundering—the big banks have their best friends sitting right here in the executive council. The big banks, every one of them profitable—I know it every time I get nickelled and dimed by one of those thug banks at the teller's cage and every time I see their ever-growing profits, notwithstanding difficult economic times throughout the rest of the economy. These are the big banks. These are the friends of this government, the big banks that got themselves a multi-billion dollar corporate tax cut while working women and men got the HST, skyrocketing electricity prices and now an all-out frontal attack on fundamental rights.

1010

I said this the other day, and I want to say it again. It's necessary that we lead off this discussion, this conversation, by making this point very, very clearly: In any free and democratic society, the most fundamental right is the right of any working woman or man to withhold their labour, and when that right is denied, a fundamental freedom has been put under attack, and nobody here should take any pride at being present during this dark hour and participating in this despicable practice of targeting working women and men.

Good God. Some talentless rock star earns themselves another million or hundred million or billion dollars more a year and they get on the front page of Maclean's and Time magazine, and they're celebrated as some kind of folk hero. When a working woman or man wants a nickel- or 10-cent-an-hour wage increase, they're vilified as being greedy and slothful and lazy. What horse feathers. What a perversion.

And it can't be said often enough, least of all during this debate, that if it weren't for the existence of trade unions and the trade union movement or unionized workers here in the province of Ontario, across this country and throughout North America, by God, there wouldn't have been, ever in our history, a working middle class. There wouldn't have been a need for the blossoming of universities and colleges during that great period of democratization of post-secondary education in the late 1960s, a period I remember well. Because the modest affluence acquired by unionized working women and men was what enabled their kids to go to college and university. The modest affluence won and earned by unionized working women and men is what made it possible for that working middle class to pay far more than their fair share of taxes, but that meant building those schools and colleges and universities—yes, and hospitals and health care, amongst those other public things that make all our lives safer and healthier.

I'm sure we'll have occasion to revisit it in the course of the next hour, and as I wind up for the purpose of this morning, let me present to you another very obvious theme in this whole debate. One regrets the refusal of this government to acknowledge that not only is it rolling back the clock when it comes to the rights of workers in this province, working women and men, rolling back the hard-won victories of working people over the course of decades and generations here in the province of Ontario and across this country, across North America, but it's also encouraging, nurturing, a labour relations era that is bound to have more conflict, more discord, more strife and far less productivity.

Back to the submissions made before Mr. Justice Rand back in 1967-68 when he was conducting the Rand commission: Mr. Justice Rand had been to Australia, and he had witnessed the Australians' fascination with compulsory arbitration as a dispute resolution means. Let me tell you, that was long before dispute resolution as a science had even been titled that, had even had its label, had even earned its slot in academia and in practice, in the real world as well as in the world of research and academia.

But Australians were telling Rand, Australian scholars were telling Rand, one of them being Kingsley Laffer, senior lecturer in economics at the University of Sydney: "In important sections of the industry arbitration seems to be retarding rather than assisting the development of good industrial relations—"arbitration retarding rather than assisting the development of good industrial relations.

The observation made by the Ontario Federation of Labour in their submission to Rand during his conduct of that commission pointed out that arbitration—listen to this, please—"Arbitration is no substitute for free collective bargaining. Where both sides know that arbitration is the terminal destination of bargaining, then the vitality and calibre of collective bargaining is greatly weakened."

It doesn't take a rocket scientist, in the year 2011, to know that a dispute that is negotiated to resolution by the parties collaboratively generates a resolution that is

healthier, more robust and has a far greater likelihood of voluntary compliance by both parties, in contrast to imposed third-party resolutions.

I'll carry on with this when I next have the floor, which I suspect will be Monday afternoon coming.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being past 10:15 of the clock, this House is recessed until 10:30 a.m., at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce two Rwandan youth ambassadors, their chaperone and staff from World Vision. Welcome to Rachel Uwamahoro, Ivan Gatete and Nadine Mujawamariya. They are here on a month-long educational tour of Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to introduce Michelle Fernandes and her husband, who are here to watch the proceedings today. They're from Beaches–East York.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today, seated in the Speaker's gallery, Scott Reid, the member of Parliament for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, the McGuinty government's policies continue to make an expensive mess out of our hydro system, and you don't respect the fact that Ontario families have to pay the bills at the end of the day. Minister, before the last election, you announced a moratorium on industrial wind farms as an election ploy. After the election, you brought in the Green Energy Act, which effectively stripped away the ability of local communities to have a say over projects in their hometowns. Why won't the McGuinty Liberals respect Ontario families and give them a say over whether they want projects in their communities or not?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The Leader of the Opposition has lots of opinions about the efforts we've made over the last seven years to turn around an ugly energy legacy—his dirty, unreliable, outdated energy system—into a clean, reliable, modern system that Ontario families can count on. He's once again sitting on the sidelines chirping as he remains afraid to talk about his own energy plans. Why doesn't he talk about his plan for energy? Maybe it's because he doesn't support our clean energy benefit that is taking 10% off of families' bills beginning in January. How would he explain that to Ontario fam-

ilies? Maybe it's because he'd have to explain why he continues to oppose our efforts to get out of coal and build a healthier future for our kids and grandkids.

I say to the Leader of the Opposition: Bring out your plan. Let workers and Ontario families know—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I do hope that the minister's rather sophomoric answers will come to an end and he'll address the essence of my question. Minister, as you know, almost a year ago the Ontario PC caucus called for a moratorium on your expensive wind and solar projects in communities where they're not welcome. We said to restore local decision-making to democratically elected councils, and we said to make sure rates were affordable to Ontario families who have to pay the bills. You voted against it, and today you're announcing that you're shoving more projects down the throats of communities who don't want them. Will you do the right thing, Minister? Will you restore local decision-making and will you support the Ontario PC Party call for a moratorium on these projects?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I was delighted this morning to announce that we're moving forward with 40 new large-scale renewable energy projects that are contributing \$3 billion in private sector investment into our economy, 7,000 direct and indirect jobs being created. I think what those workers want to know, what Ontario families deserve to know, is: Are you going to kill those 7,000 jobs too? Are you going to try to undo all the work we have been doing with Ontario families to build a clean, modern, reliable energy system?

The Leader of the Opposition refuses to come forward with his plans. It's because he wants to kill those 7,000 jobs that we announced this morning. He wants to kill the 13,000 jobs we created last year. He wants to kill the billions of dollars of private sector investment that we've brought into our clean energy economy. Come clean with Ontario families—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, please come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister of Finance. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, you just don't get it. Municipal councils can have their say about the location of a Tim Hortons. They can have their say about the location of a 7-Eleven. But when it comes to your expensive industrial wind farms that could be several football fields in length, you believe that Premier McGuinty knows best; you believe that Minister Duguid knows best. We believe that local, democratically elected municipal councils know what's best for their communities. Minister, not only that, but you have signed very expensive energy schemes that are driving up rates: 80 cents per kilowatt

hour when the price of power in the marketplace is a nickel.

Minister, you know your projects have gone badly off the rails. Will you do the right thing and clear out the moratorium until you fix up your expensive energy mess? Do the right thing.

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thousands of Ontario families are participating in our clean energy programs. Thousands are benefiting from our feed-in tariff wind and solar programs. But this is what the member for Simcoe—Grey had to say early on in February. This is what he said: "We're not going to sign any more of these FIT contracts.... Those days will be gone." Then this is what he mused: He mused about ripping up these contracts and he said, "Whoever gets a contract now, enjoy it while you have it."

This is the kind of disrespect the PCs have for farmers, this is the kind of arrogance that party has for Ontario families, and I know Ontario families and farmers are going to reject that arrogance. I know Ontario families and farmers want to build a cleaner, modern, reliable energy system and see right through that Leader of the Opposition.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, I think people see right through you and your expensive energy mess you've created in the province. Come on. You have declared a moratorium so you can save your own seat in Scarborough when it comes to offshore projects. People know what this is all about. You made a decision to save your own skin and you said to other communities across the province, "You're on your own."

Minister, you did a moratorium on offshore. You seem to care about the health of the fish and the birds and the creatures of deep blue sea. What about people living in communities across the province? Make it the same. Call a halt and fix your expensive energy mess.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I can understand why the Leader of the Opposition is afraid. He's absolutely afraid to share his energy plans with Ontario families, because how are you going to explain to Ontario families why you don't support our efforts, with our clean energy benefit, to take 10% off their bills? How are you going to explain to Ontario farmers—and I'm assuming you support the comments of the member from Simcoe—Grey—that you're going to rip up their contracts and leave them out to dry? How are you going to explain that to Ontario farmers? While you're at it, what are you going to say to the thousands of workers who are working in our clean energy economy across this province? What are you going to say to them about the fact that you're going to kill their jobs at a time when they need them most?

He laughs, he gives his smug smile, but nothing comes out because he's afraid to talk to those workers. He's afraid to tell Ontario families what he's all about. I'll leave it there.

Interjections.

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

1040

Mr. Robert Bailey: The people of Ontario don't agree with you guys.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Sarnia-Lambton would be best in his seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Infrastructure, please come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance and the Minister of Community Safety.

I'd just remind the honourable member from Oxford as far as using any sort of props. The same holds true for the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Is the knife in Norm's back a prop?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister of Finance.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, Minister, this is what I say to the people of Ontario: The McGuinty government has made an expensive mess out of our hydro system, rates are going through the roof and it's time for change in the province of Ontario.

Do you know what, Minister? Your Premier and you had the gall to say to the people in Smithville, to say to the people in Elgin, to say to the people in Middlesex, to say to the people in eastern Ontario that if they opposed the projects, they were NIMBYs. You had the gall to say they couldn't stand up for what they believed in and that the Premier knew best. Well, there's a new phrase for you, Minister; it's called NIMSIAR: not if my seat is at risk. That's why you made your decision on offshore energy plans.

Why don't you have it the same throughout the province? Get this program right. Make sure rates are affordable and that they're in communities where they're welcomed and wanted. Won't you do the right thing?

Hon. Brad Duguid: If the PC Party actually cared about helping Ontario families with their cost of living, they would not have voted against reducing electricity bills by 10% through our clean energy benefit, and they would not, frankly, have voted against our tax cuts for 93% of Ontarians. They're all show.

If the PC Party actually cared about building a bright future for Ontario families, they would not have plans to kill thousands of clean energy jobs that Ontario families are counting on. If the PC Party actually cared about strengthening and modernizing our electricity system, they would not be opposing every investment we've made to clean up the mess that they've left behind.

Ontario families deserve to know. Where is your energy plan? Why are you afraid to tell Ontario families

what you really think and what you're going to do? Why are you afraid to tell Ontario families who—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, if I've said it once, I've said it 100,000 times. This is how you should proceed: Make sure projects that you sign are affordable to the seniors, to the families, to the small businesses who have to pay the bills. And make sure any of these projects are in communities where they're welcome, because the industrial wind farms you're forcing on communities across the province are driving up rates and have over-ridden local municipal decision-making.

We would restore the right of local municipalities to have their say on these projects, and we would make sure that projects signed are affordable to families—a competitive, transparent process so they get the best technology at the best price for the ratepayer.

Minister, instead of being a NIMSIAR, instead of trying to save your own behind, will you do the right thing and put your moratorium province-wide for all citizens of the province of Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: John Lennon said it right: The Leader of the Opposition is the nowhere man of Ontario politics and, day after day, he confirms this status. He sits on the sidelines and chirps at our efforts to reverse his legacy of an energy system left in shambles, but he hides from Ontario families when they ask him what his alternative is.

The nowhere man is nowhere on getting off of coal and building a cleaner, healthier future for our kids and grandkids. He's nowhere on what he's going to do with the thousands of clean energy jobs that we're creating. The nowhere man is nowhere when it comes to whether he supports our clean energy benefit.

There's no question this Leader of the Opposition is the nowhere man of Ontario politics, and Ontario families can and will see right through him.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Families might be able to trim and cut a lot from their household budgets, but everyone needs to keep their lights on and their home heated. Why won't the McGuinty Liberals exempt home heating from the HST?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We've created the Ontario clean energy benefit. We've created a range of tax credits for individuals and families. We've cut the first rate of income tax—now the lowest in Canada—for working Ontario families.

Our plan is the right plan for the future of this province. We have lowered taxes for 93% of Ontarians. Unlike the leader of the third party, who offers no plan, offers no ideas—one day she wants to remove the HST and the next day she wants to keep it.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: Will it stay or will it go?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Will it stay or will it go? We don't know what they stand for. What we stand for is

more jobs, a better economy and a better future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: According to a government document obtained through the freedom-of-information request, the governing Liberals considered an HST rebate for home heating. They actually considered it. Government bureaucrats in fact prepared a detailed memo explaining how it would work and exactly how much it would cost. My question is a simple one: Why did the McGuinty Liberals reject that much-needed relief for families?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Because we gave more. We did. We did the Ontario clean energy benefit. We exceeded what she called upon us to do. She called upon us to remove the provincial portion of the HST. We said that's not enough. We said we are going to help people directly through the Ontario clean energy benefit; not only take the HST off but give them a rebate on the tax portion of their bill as we transition through this new tax system that will create jobs and that will serve all Ontarians. That's why the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives said that this policy is neutral on family incomes. That's why other experts have pointed to the fact that Ontarians of more modest means will see overall tax cuts.

This province has strong leadership in Premier McGuinty, taking the tough decisions to build a better economy and more jobs for Ontario's future.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It takes a truly out-of-touch government to think that people are fooled with a temporary tax cut on a permanent tax. It's pretty clear that the government made a choice. They could have given families that desperately needed permanent break—some extra help. Instead, they invested in massive corporate tax giveaways. How can the Premier and the finance minister justify finding billions of dollars for some of Ontario's largest corporations while rejecting help for families struggling with their bills?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Eleven billion in tax cuts for citizens; \$4 billion for corporations. It's the right policy.

Last night, I had the privilege of joining my colleague—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Member from Durham. Member from Hamilton East.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Last night, I had the privilege of joining my colleague from Peterborough with 7,600 Peterborough citizens on a telephone town hall, and we heard from them on a variety of issues. They understood, as we took questions, the importance of creating jobs. They said that their top priority is job creation.

This plan will create jobs. This plan—

Interjections.

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

Question period, as we all know, is an important time for all members, both in the government and in the opposi-

tion, to deliver their message, but it's also an important time for the people of Ontario and our guests who are here to be able to hear both the question and the answer. When the Speaker has difficulty hearing those questions and answers, I'm sure our guests are experiencing some difficulty, and I would just ask all members to be respectful.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That party offers no solution. That party offers no ideas. They want to go back to the old days when we didn't have a competitive tax system, when we didn't have the lowest income taxes for people of more modest means. We're building a better future with more jobs for all Ontarians, from Thunder Bay to Windsor to Ottawa, right across the vast breadth of this great province.

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TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Acting Premier as well. This is how out of touch this government is: They've poured billions of dollars into tax giveaways for corporations—who frankly don't need it—and six-figure pay hikes for hospital CEOs, but families, families struggling with their budgets are told they have to pay more. To add insult to injury, when families win some relief finally in court, they're left to foot the bill for high-priced lawyers.

The Acting Premier was at the cabinet table for all of these decisions. Can he explain these misguided priorities to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Maybe the leader of the third party will explain to the people of Ontario, particularly the north, why she voted against the northern Ontario energy benefit, which provides up to \$200 per family in the north and \$130 per single person. Then she might want to explain to the people of Hamilton and Windsor and all those people whose names she brings in here why she voted against the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which provides over \$1,000 for seniors and \$900 for non-seniors.

You're trying to have it both ways. You have voted against the largest tax cut in history for the poor, the seniors, working Ontarians, yet you say that you want us to do more. You ought to put your money where your mouth is and you ought to vote in favour of those initiatives that help those of modest means, those in the north, those who need our help the most. Stop voting against progressive change for a better future.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats actually proudly voted against the budget that brought the HST to the people of Ontario, thank you very much.

I'll now actually bring another one of those people from Ontario's stories into this Legislature, even though the government doesn't like to hear it. Laurie Oliari from

Dorchester writes: “We never thought that we would be worrying about our heating bills as we are trying to save up enough money for retirement.”

Can the Acting Premier tell Ms. Oliari why her money can't go towards her retirement, but instead is being used to pay for everything from high-priced lawyers who fought a losing case over late billing practices to a multi-billion dollar break to corporations who don't need it?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd be happy if she'd send the information over so I could call that individual. I'd be happy to talk to her.

What that individual may want to ask the leader of the third party is why she voted against lowering income taxes for the poorest of Ontarians; for those with under \$37,000 of income. Why did she vote against every property tax credit we've offered?

She stood up and she proudly said in this House that they voted against the HST. That's fair enough. So, to the leader of the third party: Is it your intention to repeal it? Are you going to repeal the HST, or will it stay?

I come back to the same question. You're trying to have it both ways—no leadership, no vision for a better future.

Interjection: Will it stay or will it go?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Will it stay or will it go? We want to build a better future with more jobs for all Ontarians.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Alice Cupa from Tecumseh writes: “My 88-year-old mother still lives in her house alone and wants to keep it that way for as long as she can. However, it is becoming increasingly harder for her with everything going up.”

Will the Acting Premier tell Ms. Cupa why her mother can't get a break on her home-heating bills, but corporations that don't need it get a multi-billion dollar tax break?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would ask her to submit the phone number for that woman. I'll undertake to call her, because the leader of the third party just—

Interjections.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I need a parliamentary, acceptable phrase. The leader of the third party misspoke. In fact, we did cut her taxes—the property tax credit for seniors, \$1,025—and you and your party shamelessly, for cheap, partisan political gain, voted against her. You voted against seniors in northern Ontario. You voted against seniors in Hamilton. You voted against seniors in Toronto. But most of all, the NDP have voted against a brighter economic future, against more jobs, against a better future for our children, and now they won't even tell Ontarians what they'll do.

I look forward to the election. I look forward to job creation. I look forward to a better education system, and I look forward to a third party—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind a number of members—

Interjections.

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

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for Minister of Transportation. The Ontario PC caucus understands that when Ontario families spend too much time in traffic gridlock, they lose valuable time with their children and loved ones. It's why our leader says that an Ontario PC government will make a priority of completing Highway 407 to 35/115 in one phase. The McGuinty government, however, says it will not respect the original commitment to complete the highway on time and in one phase. This latest backtrack makes no sense to the economy, the environment or families looking to get back some time with their loved ones.

Why isn't Premier McGuinty and his government showing respect for Ontario families by completing the 407 eastward extension on time in one phase?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the party opposite had not sold the 407 off in a fire sale, we could have built the 35/115 and back again by now.

Here's the reality: We are going ahead despite the economic downturn, the depth of which no one could have predicted. We are going ahead; we are building the 407 to the 35/115. We are doing it in stages. We are in conversation with the mayors of Durham to make sure that the traffic flow goes in the way that is best for the community. But we are building that highway because we know the jobs are important, we know that the congestion needs to be dealt with and we know that the people east of Toronto need that highway built. We're going ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I know that the minister has met with the mayor of Oshawa, His Worship John Henry, who I'm pleased to say is present here with us today. She has also met with members of council and Durham residents, and she knows that everyone is unanimously opposed to Premier McGuinty's backtrack to stop Highway 407 prematurely at Simcoe Street and Columbus. What she should also respect is that Mayor Henry has the support of municipalities across Ontario, not just Durham region—from Peterborough, from Vaughan and from St. Catharines, among other areas, that are also against this backtrack on the 407.

This afternoon my resolution will be debated calling on the McGuinty government to extend the 407 eastward as originally contemplated in one phase to 35/115. Minister, why not show respect for Ontario families here and now and complete the 407 eastward to 35/115 in one phase as originally contemplated?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the deep respect that we're showing for Ontario families is that we're going ahead with this project, that we're investing billions of dollars in building this highway that is critical. I

welcome Mayor Henry and all of the folks from Durham to the Legislature. As the member opposite mentioned, I have had conversations with them, and we're in ongoing conversations with them—MTO with the region about the traffic flow.

Our deep respect for Ontarians is this: We understand how important infrastructure is to this province. We understand how important it is that the economic development that flows from an infrastructure project like this be in place. That's why we're going ahead. Projects like this need to be built in phases. The first part of the 407 was built in phases. We will build to 35/115. We will do it in phases. We will create thousands of jobs by building that project; invest billions of dollars in the region; we'll make sure the traffic flows.

I look forward to the ongoing conversation with the members of Durham region.

DISCLOSURE OF TOXINS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, you learned last week, as we did, in the *Toronto Star* and subsequently in other media reports, that the use of Agent Orange within the Ministry of Natural Resources has caused great concern in northern Ontario when it comes to the health effect.

1100

I have here an email from former MTO supervisors who are saying that your ministry, up to the 1980s, used Agent Orange along the side of the highways across this province to try to control the growth of grass and other shrubs. Has anybody in your ministry briefed you about that? Are you aware that your ministry is alleged to have used Agent Orange up to 1980?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Acting Premier will want to follow up with the supplementary, because I know that the Minister of Natural Resources has spoken to this issue in the House.

I have just been made aware that there are questions being asked about practices within the Ministry of Transportation. Obviously, the Ministry of Transportation always would have worked within the existing rules. I will certainly be briefed on the details of that.

In the meantime, I know that you can understand that the Minister of Natural Resources is extremely concerned about this issue and is looking into all of the implications and ramifications, and I will do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, if I understand correctly, what you tell me now is that you are aware that it was used. My question to you is, why have you not come forward? Why does it take the opposition to say what has happened within the Ministry of Transportation?

The issue here is, it would appear at this point that not only the Ministry of Natural Resources but the Ministry of Transportation, and who knows who else, had been using Agent Orange up till 1980.

My question to you is, at what point did you find out, and why did you not make that information public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was told this morning before I came into question period that there were questions being asked about the practices of the Ministry of Transportation. I have said to the member opposite that, having found out this morning, I will be briefed as quickly as possible on this issue.

This is obviously a very important and potentially scary issue for people in the province, and we're taking it very seriously. I will take it very seriously in my ministry, and I think it behooves the opposition to be clear that this is something that we all need to look into. We are on it, the Ministry of Natural Resources is looking into it, and we'll do our utmost to make the information available as soon as we have it.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Labour.

Although Ontario is one of the safest places in the world to work, it is still too often that we hear of a worker who gets injured on the job or, even worse, loses their life. When our friends and family leave for work in the morning, we want to feel assured in knowing that they are safe at work and will come home at the end of the day.

This House has been following the progress of the health and safety review panel led by Tony Dean. Last December, when Mr. Dean delivered his recommendations, it was named the largest overhaul of Ontario's health and safety system.

Minister, a lot of recommendations were put forth by the health and safety review panel, but just recently I heard you announce the implementation of an interim prevention council. Can you please tell the House more about the role the interim prevention council will have in making Ontario a safe place to work?

Hon. Charles Sousa: It is with great pleasure that I respond to the question.

I congratulate Tony Dean and the members of the health and safety review panel for their consensus report and recommendations.

Our recent announcement of the prevention council is the first step of many to follow. The interim prevention council's role is to get things under way before our chief prevention officer is named, and I'm pleased to tell the House that they had their first meeting just yesterday.

We're pleased that Paavo Kivisto, former deputy minister of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Labour, is leading the prevention council. I've met with him and know that he and his team share our eagerness and dedication to further improving health and safety in this province.

I look forward to working with the council to ensure that all Ontario workers arrive home safely at the end of each workday.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I certainly look forward to hearing updates from the prevention organization as their

work gets under way. However, there are 46 other recommendations that Mr. Dean and his panel delivered, leading me to believe there is still a lot of work to be done on health and safety in Ontario.

Minister, in addition to the appointment of the prevention council, can you tell the House about some of the changes we can expect to see in the near future that will make Ontario a safer place to work?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The panel identified priority recommendations that the prevention organization will focus on. To name a few priorities: (1) creating a health and safety display that explains the key rights and responsibilities of the workplace parties, including how to contact a Ministry of Labour inspector, and it will be mandatory to post this in the workplace; (2) creating mandatory health and safety awareness training for all workers and supervisors with front-line workers; (3) the development of mandatory entry-level training for construction workers is another priority, starting with consultations with stakeholders to determine those sectors that should be subject to a mandatory training for workers.

I look forward to working with the interim prevention council and the chief prevention officer and implementing the recommendations from the panel.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: I'd like to follow up on the question that the member for Whitby–Oshawa put to the minister. Specifically, that question was: Why did the McGuinty government break its agreement with the federal government to complete Highway 407 by 2013? That was a very specific agreement.

I've heard the minister say that there was an unexpected economic downturn. Here is the point: It was precisely because of that unexpected downturn in the economy that funds were flowing from the federal government and the province for infrastructure programs. That is an infrastructure program if I ever saw one. My question is, why did the ministry not prioritize that highway, for which there was an agreement in writing?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to give a bit of an update on the Flow projects, which are the projects that both the member for Whitby–Oshawa and the member for Newmarket–Aurora are talking about.

The Highway 404 extension into York region, which is a Flow project, is going ahead. I know that was one of the ones that, of course, the member for Newmarket–Aurora would be very interested in. The 407 east extension, as I've already said, is going ahead. We are in the process of beginning the two stages. We are extending to 35/115, but we're doing it in stages.

So the Flow projects are going ahead. To talk about some kind of breach of an arrangement, I think, is absolutely flawed. I think the reality is that we're going ahead with the projects and the ones that are in York region, I think, the member for Newmarket–Aurora is aware of—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: We are well aware of what that agreement says. That agreement specifically stated that the 407 east would be completed by 2013. That's the issue we're raising here.

The minister continues to say, "We're going ahead with the program." That's not the point. The program is and should be to complete that highway by 2013. We're asking the minister a simple question: Why has the ministry broken its agreement? It's not a question of a downturn of the economy; it's a question of the downturn of the credibility of this government. That's what's at stake here.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think there was a statement at one point about events happening. The member opposite referred to the economic downturn, which I have noted many times. The reason that we are not able to go ahead as quickly as we would like—and we would like the 407 extension to be built by now. As I mentioned, had it not been sold off, it might have been built by now. Who was it that sold it off? It was the party opposite that gave it away, and we are picking up the pieces of that sale.

We're moving ahead with the extension of the 407 while we're working on all of the other Flow projects that were agreed to with the federal government. The fact is that it is a very, very strong indication of our support for the eastern region that we build that 407 despite the economic downturn.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Finance. At the same time the McGuinty government imposed an unfair tax on home heating and other daily essentials, it shovelled more than \$2 billion to wealthy corporations, taking billions of dollars out of the pockets of those who will spend it on necessities and giving it to profitable corporations sitting on record piles of cash. That's simply bad economics. What does this government have to say to Ontarians who say corporate tax cuts at the present time are just plain wrong?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The pulp and paper industry and forestry industry in Ontario, which are hardly flush right now, have overwhelmingly supported this plan and have indicated that it will create jobs. The automotive sector, which has gone through one of its most difficult periods, supports the policy. It is about jobs. It's about a brighter future. It's about a more efficient and fair tax system. It is about a better future.

Jack Layton has now backed off at the federal level on this. Apparently, he's going to continue to support—I read that with great interest—the Harper Conservatives on this policy. Mr. Layton understands, I think, how important job creation is right now.

I think most Ontarians agree with us and reject the empty rhetoric that's designed to close plants, kill jobs and not help northern Ontario and southwestern Ontario

particularly, which have suffered so much in the last few years.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, he certainly knows his talking points.

Today in the finance committee, the NDP moved a motion calling for the rollback of the McGuinty corporate tax cuts and the implementation of employer incentives that would encourage real investment and create real jobs. This motion was defeated by the government members of the committee. What does this government have to say to people who want jobs, not corporate bonuses?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I reject the tired, empty rhetoric of a party mired in the past. It is about a more efficient tax system for individuals and for corporations. It's about attracting new investment. We simply could no longer afford to be one of the highest tax jurisdictions in Canada. We were already seeing capital move from Ontario to Alberta, Saskatchewan and British Columbia.

What the NDP want to do is create jobs in Alberta, they want to create jobs in British Columbia, they want to create jobs in Manitoba and simply ignore the harsh realities which we all find ourselves in today.

Our policy is the right policy. It's about jobs. It's about a better future for our kids, and like Jack Layton, we believe that it's the right thing for everyone in Ontario.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: My question is for the Minister Responsible for Women's Issues. Minister, International Women's Day is marked in Ontario and across the world every March in celebration of the economic and social achievements of women everywhere. I know the front-line workers in my community, like at Maison Interlude in Hawkesbury, are working hard every day to help women gain access to services so that they can get the help they need to rebuild their lives for themselves and their families.

Minister, can you tell this House what the government is doing to support the work of these organizations?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to thank the member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for his question and for asking it just one day after the Premier and all parties committed to bringing even more women's voices to the Legislature through our collective Equal Voice commitment, because we need women's voices to be here on behalf of all women in Ontario.

Our government knows that to have a prosperous Ontario, we need women to feel safe in their homes, at work and in their communities. We need them to be strong. We need them to achieve economic independence and reach their full potential. That's why we've increased our investments to domestic violence by more than 48%,

why we've changed the Occupational Health and Safety Act, why we've helped more than 6,000 women annually to access social services, why we've accelerated the OCB, why we've invested in child care and why we've trained more than 1,500 women to secure high-paying jobs.

This government has supported and will continue to support women because we know that they have to be their best and we have to ensure that this—

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

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Merci, madame la Ministre, pour cette info.

La sécurité des femmes et de leurs enfants est une inquiétude à travers la province. Le gouvernement doit aider ceux et celles qui fuient la violence en permettant aux femmes et aux enfants de retrouver un environnement sain. Est-ce que la ministre peut expliquer ce que le gouvernement McGuinty fait pour améliorer les services pour les femmes et les familles qui font face à la violence? De plus, comment est-ce que notre gouvernement s'assure que ces services sont disponibles en français?

L'hon. Laurel C. Broten: À la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones, s'il vous plaît.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Le gouvernement de l'Ontario fournit des refuges sûrs et des programmes de soutien pour les femmes et leurs enfants qui fuient la violence à la maison. Nous avons investi dans la construction de deux premiers refuges francophones à Timmins et à Toronto. En mai 2006, nous avons aussi lancé une ligne téléphonique, Fem'aide, pour les femmes francophones en situation de crise. Il y a deux semaines, nous avons annoncé, en partenariat avec Action ontarienne contre la violence faite aux femmes, du financement supplémentaire pour les fournisseurs de services de première ligne. Notre gouvernement prévoit 141 millions de dollars annuellement pour des programmes qui aident à combattre la violence domestique. C'est une augmentation de 48 % de financement depuis 2003.

The issues women face will only be fully understood when they have a seat in this Legislature and at the cabinet table.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Transportation on the impacts of ending the 407 in Oshawa. The financial impacts of ending the 407 at Simcoe Street are going to represent another substantial tax increase to cover the cost of the end-of-line gridlock. The McGuinty decision will once again make Oshawa families pay more in taxes.

Minister, why didn't you consult with the city of Oshawa on the financial impacts before announcing the 407 would end at Simcoe Street in Oshawa?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I've said previously, I think it is a very important boon to the people of the region of Durham that the 407 is being built, that it's being extended. I think that the message we've heard

most clearly is that people want this road built. They want it to go ahead as quickly as possible. That's why we're building it in stages, and that's why we remain committed to building right through to 35/115. As the member opposite knows full well, we're in conversation with the mayors of the region to make sure that the traffic flow issues are dealt with.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John O'Toole: Not only has your government failed to honestly consult with Durham residents but it has also failed to give them basic respect. From making families pay now for the illegal hydro interest charges to breaking your commitment and promise on the 407 extension, your government has a complete lack of respect for families generally.

I think of a couple in my riding whose home was expropriated by MTO for the 407, only to be left high and dry by this government once that family moved out. It's important to know that one of the family members is physically disabled and requires additional renovations to the home, and rather than keeping their word, they didn't help them. Now the government refuses to even speak to the family.

According to your own ministry resources, 255 more property owners are in the same boat. How many more families will be left high and dry through your broken promises and lack of respect for families generally?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I guess I'd like to ask the member opposite how giving away, in a fire sale, the 407 when he was in office showed respect to the families of Ontario, the families of Durham or anywhere else?

The fundamental respect that we're showing to the people of Ontario and to the people of the Durham region is that we understand how important it is to build this road, that we understand how important it is that we make sure that the traffic flow is what it should be, that we make sure that the infrastructure is in place. That's why I've been out to Durham, that's why I've met with the mayors, that's why I've met with the community folks—to make sure they understand that our technical folks at MTO are going to work with them to make sure that the traffic flow works for them.

The economic downturn hit. We had to make a decision. We made a decision out of respect to the people in the Durham region that we would build this highway, and that's what we're doing.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Culture. First Nations members of the Algonquin Union are here at the Legislature today, and in fact, Daniel Bernard, Algonquin Firekeeper, is here in the gallery. They're here because the McGuinty government is allowing the clear-cutting of one of the most biodiverse urban forests in Ontario, all for a new subdivision. The South March Highlands outside Ottawa is considered an ancestral site by elders of the Algonquin Nation and has been shown to be of archaeological significance.

My question to the minister is, why will he not stop the destruction of this unique forest?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. The Minister of Tourism and Culture regulates archaeologists. Under the Ontario Heritage Act, the ministry licenses archaeologists. As well, the ministry reviews the archaeological assessment report.

The assessment in question was completed under the 1993 technical guidelines or standards and guidelines. The assessment report meets the Ministry of Tourism and Culture requirements. The ministry is not an approval authority in respect to any development project. That said, we do recognize the city of Ottawa's effort to force the dialogue between the development proponents and the aboriginal community on this matter.

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The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm sure the minister knows that the study that he cites as proof that there's no archaeological value to the land has been called "fatally flawed" by the past president of the Canadian Archaeological Association. A report released in January suggests again that the land was very likely occupied by early aboriginal populations and is likely of significant archaeological value.

Will the minister listen to the Algonquin Union, Algonquin chiefs and thousands of citizens and issue an order, as is his responsibility, under the Ontario Heritage Act to halt clear-cutting until a comprehensive study of the archaeological value of this land is conducted?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much again for the question.

Our government is committed to building a relationship with the aboriginal people in Ontario. The Ontario government is working with the First Nations and Metis people. We are working to ensure that the artifacts and human remains that may be attributed to aboriginal people are handled with appropriate care and respect.

We recognize the city of Ottawa's effort to force the dialogue between the developer and the aboriginal people. Our government is committed to protecting and promoting heritage. In fact, we are the first government in 30 years to strengthen the Ontario Heritage Act. We strengthened the act to give municipalities the tools they need to protect heritage properties important to our community.

TAXATION

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Many experts continue to say that our Open Ontario plan will help create jobs and strengthen the economy. As you informed us yesterday, Minister, the highly respected Jack Mintz was presenting to the Economic Club of Canada and did in fact speak very positively about the HST and, just as importantly, our comprehensive tax package.

I wanted to take the minister up on her offer and accept those tickets yesterday but I thought it was more

important to make them available to the opposition members to attend, and I understand that that might not have been done.

Since I didn't get a chance to go, can the minister please update us on exactly what Jack Mintz was talking to us about on the HST?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'd be happy to update the House on Mr. Mintz's presentation yesterday. Jack Mintz said yesterday exactly what we've been saying all along, and that is that the HST is working, that it makes us stronger, that it makes us more competitive, that it's helping create jobs and that it is creating jobs here in Ontario. In fact, Jack Mintz stated yesterday if we got rid of the HST, two things would happen: One, we would increase taxes on business inputs; two, we would make businesses less competitive.

I know that the opposition parties would have benefited from Mr. Mintz's presentation. I know that the HST is good for Ontario, Jack Mintz knows that the HST is good for Ontario, John Tory knows that the HST is good for Ontario and Jim Flaherty knows that the HST is good for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I want to follow up with the minister. The official opposition is floating the bait about rolling back the HST by 2%. We do know that this means billions of dollars cut from the tax revenue of the government of Ontario, which provides us with critical services.

The people in my riding do remember the story underneath the bait of an easy answer: a 25% cut in welfare, closed hospitals, fired nurses, chaos in our education system. They're very aware that a rollback to the HST means cuts to services. I'm talking about services like health care and education that we so desperately want and we've already started to fix.

Minister, can you provide us with a clear picture of what a 2% cut in the HST means to the people of my riding in Ontario?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: A 2% cut would be billions of dollars in lost revenue for Ontario.

Let's put it in perspective: A 1% cut in the HST would mean a cut of \$3 billion. The \$3 billion is the equivalent of getting rid of almost 48,000 experienced nurses. What it would be is firing over 38,000 elementary school teachers. In addition, another 1% cut would mean that in my community of Hamilton, there would be no brand new Juravinski Hospital. The other thing, is we wouldn't have the 11 new schools that we have.

Our priority is to make Ontario stronger. We're moving forward; we're going to keep on moving forward.

SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, is it okay with you that children with special needs are waiting for assessments at the Halton District School Board and in fact are being bumped by assessments for gifted children? Are you okay with that?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to talk about an issue that, as you would know, falls within the Ministry of Education with respect to what the school board is doing. But let me just take a moment to talk about the good cross-government work that we're doing to tackle issues associated with making sure children with special needs across a variety of sectors get those assessments.

The work that we're doing right now is with Dr. Charles Pascal to bring his vision to reality with respect to the Best Start child and family centres. In fact, we'll be hosting 60 people in Toronto today, experts from across the city, exactly to look at issues such as this. How can ministries and cross-ministries ensure that children who come into our entry point, perhaps as a child younger than school age, transition into school age and deal with many of the challenging issues that exist?

I know that the Minister of Education will be looking into this issue, and this is a priority within the Ministry of Education. Cross-government-wide, we continue to find ways to better serve kids and better serve their—

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would have thought that a minister who is responsible for children and youth in our province, a minister who is supposed to be advocating for children and youth in our province, would have been speaking to the Minister of Education and saying, "It's not right."

You know that wait-lists for assessments in Halton can be as long as two years already, yet trustees in Halton have acknowledged that this change is going to push children who have special needs in the classroom to the back of the line again.

Minister, I cannot believe that you haven't taken the time to talk to the Minister of Education to advocate for the children within your ministry. It is shameful, and you should be embarrassed that you're talking about a report that has nothing to do with what's happening in Halton today.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Let me tell you that I am very, very proud of the focus that we have brought on children's issues in this province. It is our government that created the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, which I'm very privileged to lead.

Our record, in contrast to your record—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to focus on the contrasting records for a moment. The Leader of the Opposition called full-day learning a shiny new car. When it comes to investing in our tomorrow, they simply don't get it.

They voted against recent increases to children's treatment centres. That means about 3,600 children and youth with special needs would still be waiting for treatment if you were in office. When your federal government took away billions of dollars from Ontario's families for child care, you sat silent over there. You failed to support

2,200 new child care spaces. You failed to support the first base increases in children's mental health. Investments in autism: You failed to support that. You failed to support the Ontario child benefit. I'll contrast our record to theirs any day.

The issue in Halton is a serious issue. The Minister of Education has spoken to it and she is encouraging the community to speak up, deal with their school boards and call their trustees.

1130

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for Minister of Health. My constituent Michelle Fernandes has been in agony for six years, following an unsuccessful bone spur surgery on her foot. She now has nerve damage for which curative surgery exists and is funded by OHIP. The problem lies in the fact that no Ontario doctor can perform the nerve resection surgery she needs. She has applied for out-of-country funding to have the operations done in the United States. She has written to this minister and to the Premier, begging for action. She is here in the gallery today. Will the minister please explain why ministerial staff continue to oppose Ms. Fernandes's funding application?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you for the question. It is not a case that I am personally familiar with. I would be more than happy to meet with your constituent following question period to learn more about this particular situation.

We count on our health care professionals to make decisions about appropriate care. These are not political decisions. These are decisions made by our health care professionals. We do fund people to go out of country or out of province if we do not have the expertise here.

I will happily look into this particular case to better understand what the problem is here.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the minister for that commitment. Ms. Fernandes, her husband and I will be outside.

The problem exists here that Ms. Fernandes has been frustrated because ministerial staff continue to deny her access to care by the only doctor in North America who can help. She has been to countless meetings with ministerial staff. She has exhausted all of her personal resources fighting ministry staff's short-sightedness. She has asked, and I asked too—and perhaps you can ask today—if the staff can refer her to an Ontario or Canadian doctor with the expertise, please do so.

In any event, we thank you for agreeing to meet with us afterwards. We will be outside.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, I reiterate the offer to meet after question period.

We're really working hard to improve health care in this province. We've been able to bring wait times down substantially. We've got far, far better access to primary care than we had when we took office.

As we continue to improve health care in this province, these particular cases that are unusual are ones that deserve special attention, and I will undertake to meet afterwards.

TOURISM

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Culture. The President of the United States' proposed 2012 budget includes a plan to impose taxes on Canadian air and marine travellers by charging \$5.50 for every entry into the United States. According to a US Department of Commerce report, in 2009 more than seven million Canadians flew into the US, with the majority of Canadians going for holidays or vacations.

Minister, what is the government doing to encourage Ontarians to plan a "staycation" and attract Canadians from other provinces to visit Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you to the honourable member for the question. Our government has been working very hard to promote tourism in Ontario and support growth in this sector. We understand that tourism brings jobs and creates growth. This is why, since 2003, we have invested \$450 million in the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corp. to promote Ontario as a world-class destination and world-class attraction. Our There's No Place Like This campaign has generated over 2.1 million trips and \$376 million in visitor spending between 2007 and 2010.

Our message is clear: Stay in Ontario. Come and explore all that Ontario has to offer. Avoid the US travel fee.

MEMBER'S CONDUCT

Mr. Dave Levac: On a point of order, Speaker: I believe we may have had a breach of the standing orders, and if not, at least the tradition of this place, inside of the chamber. Earlier this morning, envelopes were delivered to each of our desks, including mine, and that's why I'm standing on this point: The pages may have been used for the envelopes to be delivered, which was inappropriate. I understand that it was stopped and that the continuation of the letter was presented. However, what I'm talking about, in terms of the tradition of the place, is that the contents of the envelope contain partisan information and partisan attack that I believe is not the tradition of this place. I would like to see if there could be a ruling as to whether or not it was an appropriate thing to do in this place.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Wellington-Halton Hills on the same point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to address this point of order. It was my constituents who asked me to distribute the postcards. I'm sorry it's upset the member for Brant.

I would now seek unanimous consent to allow members to wear this pin on their lapels.

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

The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I think I understand the tone or the intent behind the point of order, and it was a political shot. Far be it from me to be critical of political shots, but people should be careful what they wish for. If the member rising on the point of order wants the Speaker to forbid the distribution of material in the Legislature, then the Speaker is entitled to do that. That means that members who want to distribute their Stratford calendar, that means that people who want to distribute their Muskoka festival, that means that people who want to distribute any number of regional promotions or promotions around—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I apologize to the member for Welland. I just ask the members—this is an important point that was raised by the member from Brant in response—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Government House leader, I'd like to hear the points of order and the comments that are being made.

The member from Welland.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Not only regional promotional material, but from time to time outright partisan material or self-interest material, like promotion of one's private member's bill. I was here when the member who is being complained of—the member for Wellington–Halton Hills—was himself distributing and then appears to have engaged the assistance of a page to help distribute envelopes that were sealed. I saw the Sergeant-at-Arms respond promptly, and when he appeared to advise the member that pages weren't to be used for that purpose, the member promptly took the material back and continued to distribute it on his own.

I just make this observation: The member from Wellington–Halton Hills is one of the least partisan members—

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Kormos: Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Be fair. Be fair. The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, in my experience over a couple of decades now, is one of the least partisan members in this chamber. I find it regrettable that, in the pursuit of political shots and gotchas, he becomes the target of this kind of point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please remove the button that the member from Wellington–Halton Hills is wearing. He asked for unanimous consent. It was not granted. Please don't flout the authority of the Chair.

The member from Welland can continue.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I leave it at that. I would ask the Speaker to dismiss this as a frivolous point of order, because we may not enjoy the ruling that you make. I recall the regrettable Marland point of order, which led to us not being able to use props or even displays that were representative of issues in the chamber. I don't challenge that ruling, but I'm confident that colleagues of Ms. Marland, who made the point of order upon which the ruling was based, regret that point of order ever having been made in the first place, because it has to a large

extent handcuffed us in a way that I think Ms. Marland never intended.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I do believe that what was distributed today violates the standing orders. I find it regrettable that a former Deputy Speaker would flout the rules, as he is well aware of them. It does not respect our democratic rights as members to distribute things that are of such partisan nature. I do understand the member from Welland's point, that we don't want to preclude the distribution of calendars or other such things, but this is incredibly partisan. It was delivered in white envelopes without any return address of who it came from. If we hadn't ourselves seen the member from Wellington–Halton Hills distributing it, I would not have believed it was him either, but clearly he has taken a very partisan stance on this one.

What he has distributed, I would argue, violates section 23(k) of the standing orders on a point of privilege, as it uses abusive and insulting language against members of the government. I believe that he did ask the pages to assist him; they were asked to stop. That did occur. I don't have an issue with that. The rules of the House allow things to happen as they happen and that was stopped.

He did, however, continue to distribute highly partisan, offensive literature in the House on a unanimous basis. It is insulting and I hope that he has not used any of his resources of the Legislature on this, because under the Legislative Assembly Act, subsection 67(10.2), there are restrictions on using our resources in a partisan manner. I would argue that this is incredibly partisan and it doesn't actually indicate that it's from the member in any way, shape or form, and would violate the Legislative Assembly Act as well.

I think this is a serious matter. It is incredibly partisan and I think that we should preclude this kind of activity.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the honourable member from Brant, the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, the member from Welland and the government House leader.

I listened closely to what the member from Welland said and initially I was prepared to make a ruling, but I want to properly give this thought because I am concerned about what took place today. It is serious. I'm also cognizant of how my ruling on this issue may impact on anything in the future. It is something that I do want to give proper thought to and I will defer a decision at this time.

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

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Margaret R. Best: As part of heart health month, I would like to introduce the following visitors

from the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario who are with us in the Ontario Legislature today. We have Ms. Laura Syron, vice-president, research advocacy and health promotion; Mary Lewis, director, government relations and health partnerships; and Nadia Yee, senior manager, government relations. We welcome you to the Ontario Legislature this afternoon.

Mr. John O'Toole: Later this afternoon I'll be pleased to welcome David Rempel, a high school teacher at Bowmanville High School, and his grade 10 class, who will be joining us here today around 2 o'clock. I wanted to get it on the record so I can include it in Hansard to send to the school.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As the House may know, today is the 50th anniversary of stem cell discovery in Canada. We are honoured to have in the House today the daughter and family of the late Dr. Ernest McCulloch: Cecilia MacIntyre in the Speaker's gallery; Dr. McCulloch's grandson, Hugh MacIntyre, who is from my friend Julia Munro's constituency, and I forget her constituency—I know I just broke a rule there, but he's very fond of her; Paul Alexander, Dr. McCulloch's son; and Dr. McCulloch's lifetime colleague and fellow discoverer, Dr. James Till. We're very honoured to have them here in the House today.

Mr. John O'Toole: I wasn't sure if it was clearly and formally recognized that the mayor of Oshawa, John Henry, was here today making statements on Highway 407. I wanted to recognize him and have that on the record in Hansard on his behalf.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): From my riding of Elgin–Middlesex–London, I'd like to welcome the students of Davenport Public School who are visiting Queen's Park this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John O'Toole: Another group from my riding, Martha and Peter Jaworsky, are here at Queen's Park today. I hope they will be able to join us later on. They are just celebrating their freedom in Ontario.

Mr. Kuldip Kular: I want to welcome the students of Grenoble Public School from my riding of Bramalea–Gore–Malton. They have been here before.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Randy Hillier: Today, I've tabled a motion here in the Legislature that, if passed, in accordance with a motion in the federal House of Commons, will entrench property rights in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms under section 7 alongside the rights to life, liberty and security of the person.

Numerous constitutional documents across the world list the right to property as a fundamental right. This dates back to the original liberal principles laid down by John Locke of life, liberty and property. Unfortunately,

our Charter of Rights and Freedoms makes no mention of property rights. This motion will change that.

This will be the first time in our province's history that we will have used the section 43 amending formula and the first time in Canadian history that a provincial and federal representative likely to represent the same riding have come forward to amend the Constitution.

I would like to add that maybe the good member from Peterborough will co-sponsor this, as he mentioned back in September 2007 that he believed we need to have the entrenchment of private property rights in our Constitution.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to speak about some of the jobs being created in Ontario's rapidly expanding clean energy sector. Earlier this month, the McGuinty government announced the creation of 40 jobs at Satcon power systems of Canada in the great city of Burlington, my neighbouring community. Satcon is one of more than 20 companies that have announced they're setting up or expanding plants. They're going to manufacture parts for the solar and wind industry, and that's going to create new jobs for Ontario.

Thanks to bold initiatives like the Green Energy Act, Ontario is leading the nation now in job creation. Last month, it was reported that 36,000 new jobs had been created in the province. In total, Ontario has recovered 95% of the jobs that it lost during the global economic downturn. Strong economic leadership of the McGuinty government has delivered real results for real Ontario families like those in Burlington.

The previous PC government, however, left a legacy of neglect, mismanagement and waste in the energy sector. It was addicted to dirty coal, allowing its use to rise 127% during their term.

Today, however, the province has over 700 wind turbines. It's a leader in solar capacity. It has got the world's largest solar farm in Sarnia. Clean power investments will allow the government to shut down all dirty coal in the province by 2014.

Announcements like Satcon in Burlington are just the latest example of the McGuinty government's commitment to clean energy jobs, and point to a really bright future for Ontarians.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. John O'Toole: Every day, residents from my riding of Durham face the gridlock that is becoming an epidemic across the GTA. It literally takes families hours to get to and from work and home again each day.

Today, Mayor John Henry and his assistant Mark Sheriff from Oshawa joined Christine Elliott, Jerry Ouellette and me to call on the government to make good on its promise to complete Highway 407 east. Mayor Henry's trip to Queen's Park today is the perfect example of gridlock. His trip was 67 kilometres, but it took him

over two hours to get here because he couldn't go over 50 kilometres per hour.

This government's broken promises and lack of respect for families is costing money, time and, you might say, lives. Some \$329 million in capital road costs, \$90 million a year in upkeep and hours of wasted time in traffic are what Dalton McGuinty is giving to Durham, all of which could be avoided if Premier McGuinty would simply be a man of his word and respect families enough to complete Highway 407 east, as promised, by 2013.

There's no surprise; he's a man who has broken many promises. If this government is really serious about the 407 extension, I call on the Premier and the Minister of Transportation to support the extension in a single-phase promise. But I don't hold my breath. From a man who has broken his word so many times, I expect nothing—

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

AGNES MACPHAIL PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST

Mr. Michael Prue: It was indeed my privilege and honour last night to attend a public speaking contest in honour of Agnes Macphail. As the borough of East York does each and every year, we honour people under the name of Agnes Macphail. We have an Agnes Macphail award, which will be presented on the 24th of March, as we do each and every year, but we also have a public speaking contest. We invite students from grades 7 and 8 in the local public schools to attend and to make speeches in Agnes Macphail's honour.

This year we had eight students who presented speeches. Two were from G.A. Brown, two from Earl Beatty, two from Valley Park school and two from Westwood. All of the speakers were absolutely excellent in what they were able to deliver. They spoke on a broad range of topics—everything from rainforest deforestation to animal testing, cyber bullying, the Canadian seal hunt, gender-specific schools, gay rights and the negative impact of technology. They did so in an absolutely brilliant way. The judges had a very difficult job, but I am pleased to tell you that the judges came to a conclusion and chose Jessica Cholette-Barr of G.A. Brown school as this year's winner. Her topic was animal testing. She gave a very impassioned speech on why that was wrong, and certainly convinced all the people present of her cause.

There were members of Parliament and provincial Parliament present, and I think that we could learn a few lessons from those students on how to better speak in public.

1310

KRAFT HOCKEYVILLE 2011

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: It is my pleasure today to rise on behalf of the great hockey-loving people in Navan, Ontario, in support of their bid to become Kraft Hockeyville 2011.

On Sunday, Navan will celebrate 100 years of hockey in their community, and I will be there. Navan has finished first in Canada for the most testimonials submitted online in support of their quest.

The residents of Navan have always worked together through thick and thin, and have a well-established reputation for their community spirit and resilience. In 1953, they rallied together and built their first arena. Unfortunately, eight months later the arena was destroyed by fire. It was immediately rebuilt through community labour and support. In 1982, the arena was condemned. Once again, Navanites rose to the occasion and built what is known today as the Navan Memorial Centre.

I would like to acknowledge the hard work of Lyne Proulx and Barry Irvine, co-chairs of the Navan for Kraft Hockeyville committee. I invite everyone to visit navanhockeyville.ca and support Navan's quest to be crowned Kraft Hockeyville 2011.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Ted Arnott: Few things better unite us in Wellington–Halton Hills than our common appreciation for our local hospitals. This is why I have spent so much time in recent months advocating for our hospital projects in Georgetown and Centre Wellington.

One month ago tonight I attended a public meeting in the town of Halton Hills, where the Georgetown hospital's CT scanner and emergency department renovation project was discussed. While there is strong community support for this project, Halton Hills residents want to know why the province has yet to indicate a willingness to make a meaningful contribution to the project. The Groves Memorial Community Hospital in Centre Wellington continues to await the ministry's permission to move forward to the next stage of planning for a new hospital and the provincial planning grant that would go with it.

I want to thank my colleague, the member from Whitby–Oshawa, who serves as our party's critic to the Minister of Health, for visiting our riding on February 14. Her interest in our area's health issues is appreciated and stands in stark contrast to the minister's apparent disinterest, at least to date. More than four months ago, I invited the minister to come to Wellington–Halton Hills, hoping she'd tour our hospitals in Georgetown and Centre Wellington. She hasn't yet done so, but I reiterate the invitation today. I also invite the members for Guelph and Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock to come to Wellington–Halton Hills as part of their rural health consultations.

I extend these invitations in a spirit of non-partisan co-operation, because politics and the traditional voting patterns of communities must never be allowed to impede the progress of hospital projects in those same communities. Let's show that the promise of the future includes better health care and modern facilities for all our residents and that politics will not stand in the way.

NATIONAL UNITY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Last evening, over 450 people crowded into the lobby of Queen's Park to witness the book presentation of Toronto's Many Faces to 10 recipients who worked energetically for Canadian unity. Most of those in attendance were presidents of ethno-cultural associations and presidents of national ethno-cultural congresses, who congratulated the recipients on receiving my book and thanked them for the work they had done through two referenda.

In Quebec, as you know, the purpose was at that time to withdraw and to separate. Mr. Speaker, both of us know that without Quebec there cannot be a unified Canada. You know that we came within a whisker of a calamity, and that is the breakup of our own country. Once again, as we move closer to a third referendum, it is my opinion that Canada's ethnocultural connection is destined to preserve Canadian unity. And it is true: The ethnocultural communities and their people have become the glue that will hold this country together.

Both in 1980 and in 1993, these groups met right here at Queen's Park; organized, with my help, marches to the city hall; and presented the "no" vote in Quebec and, in the referendum, a number of petitions—over 10,000, in fact—that were given to the "no" side. In fact, they did even more, and I can't discuss it now but I wish them well.

I say to all of us: Let's make sure that when the referendum takes place again, we call all our friends in Quebec to make sure that there is a unified Canada which can only lead to more greatness.

PROPERTY RIGHTS

Mr. Dave Levac: I rise to discuss a resolution brought forward by the opposition that I think illustrates an important contrast between the McGuinty government and the opposition. While the McGuinty government seeks to build consensus amongst its partners and build a better future for all Ontarians, the opposition chooses to practise that old politics of division and typical "wedge" issue problems.

They are a party that had constant labour strife during their term in office. They were the party that picked fights with teachers, which led to constant strikes, with 26 million school days lost and an entire generation that went without after-school activities.

We restored peace and stability in the classroom, and Ontario students are seeing the results. Test scores are higher; dropout rates are lower. Under the previous Conservative government it was the other way around.

The resolution brought forward by the member from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is another divisive policy that could be a problem for us. There is a reason property rights are not entrenched in the Constitution. If you were to listen to the constitutional experts instead of listening to the heckling, they were in agreement that there would be unintentional consequences. It

would have a negative consequence on municipal zoning rules, it would have a negative consequence on native land claims, pollution regulations, environmental protection and—an important point that's been brought up this week—there would be a problem with spouses' rights to property on the dissolution of a marriage.

I think the introduction of the bill shows us the difference between the conflicts—

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

TAXATION

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I welcome the chance to rise today and discuss the speech given by Jack Mintz at the Economic Club of Canada yesterday. In his remarks, Mintz proclaimed that the tax reforms undertaken by this government have made Canada and Ontario far more competitive than all other competing jurisdictions. In fact, Canada is the most competitive jurisdiction in the G7.

Mintz went on to say that the provinces that have harmonized their sales tax have had a greater impact on reducing the tax burden on capital when compared to capital tax elimination. Professor Mintz hammered the point home when he told the business crowd that it would be a mistake if British Columbia reversed their decision to harmonize their sales tax and how input taxes would cascade onto one another.

The Leader of the Opposition knows this to be a problem. In fact, he told a group of Tory party members at the Don Valley West PC AGM in March 2009, "The problem with the PST is it cascades, so every step along the way there's tax on tax on tax, which raises the cost of goods and particularly punishes exports. So we understand how [harmonization] can help the economy."

The Leader of the Opposition knows in his heart that what Jack Mintz says is right for the province, and it is unfortunate that he is not willing to admit this—

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Standing order 63(a) provides that "The Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year."

The House, not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain offices on Wednesday, November 24, 2010, as required by the standing orders of this House and by the order of this House dated Tuesday, October 26, 2010, pursuant to standing order 63(b) the estimates before the committee

of the Office of the Assembly, the Office of the Auditor General, the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, and Ombudsman of Ontario are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the estimates 2010-11 for these offices, not having been selected for consideration, are deemed to be received and concurred in.

Report deemed received.

REQUEST TO INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table a request by the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Mr. Johnson, to the Integrity Commissioner for an opinion pursuant to section 30(1) of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, on whether the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, Mr. Hillier, has contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO BARBER ASSOCIATION ACT, 2011

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr44, An Act respecting The Ontario Barber Association.

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

1320

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (RENEWAL AND MAINTENANCE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (RÉFECTION ET ENTRETIEN DES INSTALLATIONS SCOLAIRES)

Mr. Caplan moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 154, An Act to amend the Education Act to allow boards to determine, levy and collect rates for the renewal and maintenance of school facilities / Projet de loi 154, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation pour permettre aux conseils de fixer, de prélever et de percevoir des impôts en vue de la réfection et de l'entretien des installations scolaires.

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. David Caplan: This bill repeals division F of part IX of the Education Act in order to allow school boards to determine rates and collect subscriptions under division C of part IX of the act.

The bill amends subsections 257.16(1) and (2) to restrict the purposes for which boards can determine rates and collect subscriptions to that of renewal and maintenance of school facilities.

The bill also adds five new subsections to section 257.16 of the act. Subsection 257.16(3) explains the meaning of "renewal and maintenance of school facilities." Subsection 257.16(4) requires that, before a board raises any money, the board shall submit a financial plan to the ministry in accordance with the regulations. Subsection 257.16(5) imposes a limit on the rates the boards may determine. Subsection 257.16(6) requires that any monies raised for the renewal and maintenance of school facilities be placed into a separate account of the board. Subsection 257.16(7) requires a board that raises money under division C to submit a report to the minister specifying how the money gets used and to post a copy of the report on the board's website.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MEDICAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

RECHERCHE MÉDICALE ET INNOVATION

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I rise today to mark the 50th anniversary of the discovery of stem cells by two Ontario scientists: Dr. Ernest McCulloch and Dr. James Till. Dr. Till is in the gallery with us today. Together they laid the groundwork for bone marrow transplants that has resulted in the saving of countless lives.

Stem cells are powerful tools in repairing tissue and fighting illness. Stem cell research offers hope for the discovery of revolutionary therapies for diseases from leukemia to Parkinson's disease. For 20 years, these doctors refined and expanded their knowledge base, along with another Toronto scientist, Dr. Lou Siminovitch, and inspired other great Ontario researchers like Dr. Tak Mak, the man who charted the genetics of immunology. There is an unbroken line between their work and the work of researchers like Dr. Mick Bhatia and his team at McMaster University. Last fall, Dr. Bhatia announced that his team was able to make human blood from adult skin cells.

The Ministry of Research and Innovation is proud to support the research through programs such as the Ontario research fund and the Early Researcher Award, and we are proud, as Ontarians, that our province is a

world leader in stem cell research—we have been, ever since McCulloch and Till made their discovery 50 years ago and changed the face of modern cell biology.

Sadly, today we also mark the passing of Dr. Ernest McCulloch. “Bun,” as he was known to his family and friends, was a great communicator as well as a brilliant scientist. Perhaps one of Dr. McCulloch’s more endearing qualities was his prohibition on slide shows at weekly seminars he hosted. He wanted to hear what visiting scientists were thinking, not look at data and charts. He wanted a good old-fashioned “chalk talk,” as he called it.

Dr. Till was impressed by Dr. McCulloch’s way of thinking from the get-go. While Bun was literally jumping up and down after a particularly interesting result, Till was famous for standing by, lean and tall and very reserved. One thing they shared, though, was their devotion to the work and to each other. “When we disagreed, we knew that the right answer was something else,” Dr. Till would say.

En 1969, avec M. Till, M. Ernest McCulloch a remporté le prix Gairdner, une des plus hautes distinctions scientifiques. En 1988, ils sont devenus officiers de l’Ordre du Canada, et en 2004 ils ont été intronisés au Temple de la renommée médicale canadienne.

Notre plus grand regret est que M. Till et M. McCulloch, quoique méritants au possible, n’aient pas reçu le prix Nobel.

Nous sommes honorés que M. Till soit ici aujourd’hui.

Great as these achievements are, what gave Dr. McCulloch the most joy was his family. His wife, Ona—to woo her, he recited verses from Tennyson’s *Ulysses*. The marriage was, according to their eldest son, Jim, “a storybook.” As he put it, “He loved her like crazy.” As for his five children, Bun read to them out loud the entire *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and they used to call him “the voice.”

On the 50th anniversary of this landmark, great Canadian discovery of adult stem cells and on behalf of our government and, I believe, all members of the Legislature, we salute Dr. McCulloch and—I want to thank his partner particularly; a great medical leader—Dr. Till. They are two men who epitomize the spirit and profound impact that research and innovation can have on the lives of Ontarians and indeed, their life-saving benefits for people around the world.

I would ask that all my colleagues here join in the appreciation for Dr. McCulloch’s family and Dr. Till. Thank you.

HEART MONTH

Hon. Margaret R. Best: February is heart health month.

I rise in the House today to remind Ontarians that nine out of 10 Canadians have at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke, two of the three leading causes of death in Canada.

On February 1 of this year, the Heart and Stroke Foundation released its annual report on the health of

Canadians. The report, entitled *Denial Is Putting Canadians at High Risk of Cutting Their Lives Short*, raises alarm bells.

Our government has educated and funded initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of healthy eating, active living and not smoking. However, and to paraphrase the Heart and Stroke Foundation’s report, Ontarians, like many Canadians, know what they need to do to live longer and healthier lives, but they don’t. There is a significant disconnect between what we think and what we actually do. The harsh reality is that approximately half of Canadians do not meet the physical activity and healthy eating recommendations made in that report. The direct impact is that obesity levels have soared to dangerously high levels, among other increased risks. Our government recognizes this challenge and takes it seriously.

I commend the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario for its research and advice on cardiovascular disease, and I am pleased to count them among our many community-based partners on several strategies targeting priority and at-risk populations.

Smoking is a key risk factor for heart disease, and that is why we are building on the success of programs such as the STOP program, which has helped more than 68,000 smokers quit; the Canadian Cancer Society’s Driven to Quit Challenge; and other key Smoke-Free Ontario initiatives. In fact, just last month during National Non-Smoking Week, our government announced, in partnership with the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, support to help an additional 20,000 smokers quit. Beginning in spring 2011, participating family health teams will provide access to over-the-counter nicotine replacement therapy such as nicotine patches and gum, combined with counselling, at no cost to the smoker.

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Additionally, because unhealthy eating and physical inactivity are key risk factors for heart disease, our government supports initiatives to prevent obesity and heart disease, including: the healthy communities fund, a province-wide investment program for local groups to promote physical activity and healthy eating; and Ontario’s after-school program, a program for more than 18,000 children and youth at 300 locations in priority communities, including 11 First Nation communities.

Our government’s healthy living website, ontario.ca/healthy, provides a wealth of expert advice for families who want to eat healthier or become more physically active.

Our northern fruit and vegetable program is providing fruit and vegetables twice weekly to 18,000 students in northern Ontario schools.

The community aboriginal recreation activator program, designed to support recreation and physical activity, is currently running in 15 remote First Nation communities.

However, government cannot do it alone. Everyone has a part to play in improving health, whether it is

getting physically active or increasing activity levels; making healthy eating choices for families; or preventing people from starting to smoke or helping them to quit through cessation programs.

As part of consistent lifestyle changes, small steps can make a big difference in improving health.

We need all hands on board. This is the key to a healthier Ontario. Ontarians, our health is our wealth. It is the most important asset that we have. We have a combined responsibility in addressing this important issue. In this heart health month, it is important to celebrate our hearts. But, more important, we must make lifestyle changes to impact our heart health, for one simple, profound reason: Our lives depend on a healthy heart. A heart is indeed a heart for life.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

MEDICAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I am pleased to join with the Minister of Research and Innovation today in congratulating and paying tribute to two great giants in science, two great researchers whom I was well aware of during my time as Minister of Energy, Science and Technology: Dr. Ernest McCulloch and his partner, Dr. James Till, who is here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

These two men, as the minister said, epitomized the spirit and the immense impact that research and innovation can have on the length and quality of all of our lives. All Ontarians—indeed, people the world over—owe Drs. McCulloch and Till an incredible debt. Their work changed the course of cancer research and paved the way for regenerative medicine, the use of stem cells for bone marrow transplants, and many other types of disease research.

While we mourn the passing of Dr. McCulloch, his legacy will endure in the scientific and medical breakthroughs his work has enabled and in the generations of scientists and researchers he has inspired.

I join with the minister and all members in congratulating these two gentlemen. Thank you for your life's work in improving our lives.

HEART MONTH

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise today to recognize the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Heart Month, which takes place every February to promote awareness and funds for heart and stroke research.

I commend the Heart and Stroke Foundation for the invaluable advice and research that they provide. Unfortunately, there is still much more to be done, especially by government. According to the Heart and Stroke Foundation's 2011 report, nine out of 10 Canadians have at least one risk factor for heart disease and stroke.

In Ontario, we are simply not responding adequately to the reality of this situation. The reality is that nearly one quarter of Canadian adults are obese. Half of

Canadians do not meet the physical activity and healthy eating guidelines. As a result, they are more vulnerable to obesity and to chronic cardiovascular conditions.

Unfortunately, these trends extend to young Canadians. In Ontario, 28% of children aged two to 17 are overweight or obese. I find that a startling statistic. Young people face higher risks of heart disease and high blood pressure.

Prevention plays an important role in decreasing the risk of heart disease. Individuals and their families can take steps towards preventing cardiovascular conditions by having a healthy diet, reducing stress, staying smoke-free, being physically active, and monitoring and controlling blood pressure and cholesterol levels. People need to take responsibility for their own health, but the onus also falls on families, communities, industry, health organizations and government to do their part to protect individuals from heart disease.

One great initiative is the Heart and Stroke Foundation's Spark Together for Healthy Kids program, which helps to respond to the growing epidemic of childhood obesity. This program catalyzes change by sparking grassroots advocacy for healthy living. Spark grants are awarded to local community groups across Ontario. These grants are used to assist groups in planning and carrying out advocacy efforts that support increased access to physical activity and healthy food for children. Grants may also be used to finance projects that engage communities in direct action to implement change in healthy living policy and practice.

An example of this in my own riding has been the Supportive Environment in Schools project. With the help of Spark funding, the Durham region health department worked with the Durham District School Board to mobilize parent councils to advocate for policies that contribute to a healthy school physical activity environment for students.

The foundation is more than doing its part. As members of the Legislature, we now need to do our part to do whatever we can to promote healthy living and reduce cardiovascular disease.

HEART MONTH

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to add my voice to that of the Heart and Stroke Foundation and to bring attention to healthy heart month, February being heart health month.

Heart disease and stroke are the leading causes of death throughout the world. However, 80% of premature deaths from heart disease and stroke can be avoided if we tackle the four main risk factors. Think about it: 80% of heart disease and stroke could be avoided. Those are large numbers, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation gives us the key: We have to tackle the use of tobacco, healthy diet, healthy weight and physical activity—four health promotion ideas that would change forever the face of heart disease and stroke in Ontario by decreasing it by 80%. It would also have a huge effect on many other chronic diseases including cancer etc.

Premature deaths due to these risks could decrease drastically with a comprehensive health promotion agenda. As elected representatives, we have the responsibility to do everything in our power to assist people to make healthy decisions. We have to bring forward policies that will make the healthy decision the easy decision. It makes sense in terms of lessening personal tragedy, and it makes sense in terms of saving precious health care dollars. We should do everything in our power to minimize lives suddenly being cut short, with tremendous hardship on families, friends and loved ones. It is the right thing to do.

In Ontario today, we are doing very little about an ever-growing obesity epidemic. Lots of people talk about the next generation having shorter life expectancies than their parents because of childhood obesity. We know that this is coming. We know the devastating impact it will have on individuals, families and communities in our province, yet we do very little. We need the Minister of Health Promotion to take concrete steps to make healthy living the easy choice, something that has been lacking. I'm certainly looking forward to more action.

One very small step would be for the minister to adopt my Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating bill. Healthy Decisions for Healthy Eating wouldn't cost the government a single penny. What it would do is it would force big restaurants, mainly chains, to post the calories in the food that they serve, either on their menu or on their menu board. It is the law across the United States. Most of those big chains have already changed their menus in the States, and it would also be quite easy to do in Ontario. It would be an opportunity to give people a chance to make healthier food choices. The calorie information is already there, but the way that it is available to us—on the way to the bathroom, on a brochure that nobody seems to know where to get, on the back of the menu or even on the Internet—one person out of 1,000 uses that information to make healthy choices. When you have it right there in front of you on the menu board, it is one person out of two who will use that information to make healthy choices.

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We could take a small step toward the obesity crisis, given the number of youth who love that food. It would make a huge difference. Yet we have a Minister of Health Promotion who sits on the sideline. What an opportunity lost.

MEDICAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Research and Innovation, in the very short time I have, I would like to commend Messieurs McCulloch and Till for the work they did some 50 years ago and to commend their family for sharing them with us and all of the time that I'm sure they spent in research, in providing opportunities for people around the world to be cured where there were no cures before.

I just want to remind governments—and I know there are increasingly fewer of them around the world—that are reluctant to embrace this technology: that it really does work and that we all need to be able, as Ontarians, as proud Canadians, to stand forth and to say to people that this is a made-in-Canada, a made-in-Ontario technology that needs worldwide participation. One day, that breakthrough 50 years ago will lead to the cure of so many diseases.

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature. It's headlined, "Say No to Highway 407 Terminating at Simcoe Street."

"The province's plan to terminate phase-one construction of Highway 407 at Simcoe Street, Oshawa, is a mistake. It is a plan that does not make economic sense, will create end-of-line gridlock, will be detrimental to our rural community and have a significant negative effect on commuters, businesses, tourism, public transit, the historic hamlet of Columbus and all citizens of Durham region."

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend the Highway 407 extension eastward and not terminate it at Simcoe Street."

I'm pleased to present this to the Legislature and give it to page Holly Rose.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Dr. John Peacock, who's an optometrist in Alliston, for sending me this petition and, in fact, for drafting the petition. I put him on warning that I'll be in for an eye appointment shortly.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the slow movement of legislative Bill 171 enacting optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents (TPAs) to treat patients with certain eye conditions. This bill has yet to be enacted now three years later. There has been no timeline for approval of the designated drug regulation set to date;

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

"Please improve my access to my eye care and make our health care system in Ontario more efficient by allowing my optometrist to prescribe TPAs as written currently by Bill 171. Make approval of the regulation package a top priority."

Again, I want to thank Dr. John Peacock.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I have a petition. It's to the Ontario Legislature.

"The province's plan to terminate phase-one construction of Highway 407 at Simcoe Street, Oshawa, is a mistake. It is a plan that does not make economic sense, will create end-of-line gridlock, will be detrimental to our rural community and have a significant negative effect on commuters, businesses, tourism, public transit, the historic hamlet of Columbus and all citizens of Durham region.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend the Highway 407 extension eastward and not terminate it at Simcoe Street."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Oliver.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I am pleased to present a petition to support extending the Ombudsman of Ontario's jurisdiction to include the Tarion Warranty Corp.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas homeowners have purchased a newly built home in good faith and often soon find they are victims of construction defects, often including Ontario building code violations, such as faulty heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, leaking roofs, cracked foundations etc.;

"Whereas often when homeowners seek restitution and repairs from the builder and the Tarion Warranty Corp., they encounter an unwieldy bureaucratic system that often fails to compensate them for the high cost of repairing these construction defects, while the builder often escapes with impunity;

"Whereas the Tarion Warranty Corp. is supposed to be an important part of the consumer protection system in Ontario related to newly built homes;

"Whereas the government to date has ignored calls to make its Tarion agency truly accountable to consumers;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, support MPP Cheri DiNovo's private member's bill, which calls for the Ombudsman to be given oversight of Tarion and the power to deal with unresolved complaints;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act to provide that the Ombudsman's powers under the Ombudsman Act in respect of any governmental organization apply to the corporation established under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act, and to provide for necessary modifications in the application of the Ombudsman Act."

I could not agree more, of course. I will sign it and send it with page Nicolas to the table.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I will sign it and send it to the table via page Maria Van Bommel.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I have thousands of petitions to present to the Ontario Legislature, which read as follows:

"The province's plan to terminate phase-one construction of Highway 407 at Simcoe Street, Oshawa, is a mistake. It is a plan that does not make economic sense, will create end-of-line gridlock, will be detrimental to our rural community and have a significant negative effect on commuters, businesses, tourism, public transit, the historic hamlet of Columbus and all citizens of Durham region.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend the Highway 407 extension eastward and not terminate it at Simcoe Street."

I certainly agree with this petition. I will sign it and send it to the table with page Tyler.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: This is a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"The province's plan to terminate phase-one construction of Highway 407 at Simcoe Street, Oshawa, is a mistake. It is a plan that does not make economic sense, will create end-of-line gridlock, will be detrimental to our rural community and have a significant negative effect on commuters, businesses, tourism, public transit, the historic hamlet of Columbus and all citizens of Durham region.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to extend the Highway 407 extension eastward and not terminate it at Simcoe Street."

I'm very pleased to sign this petition and give it to page Erik.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Barry Burton from Creemore for sending me this petition regarding the

replacement of the Collingwood Street bridge, which is located in Creemore.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Collingwood Street bridge, built in 1913, located in the township of Clearview in the county of Simcoe” in Creemore, “is scheduled for destruction and replacement;

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

“To have the bridge declared to have significant historical value under the Heritage Act, protecting it from destruction; and

“To have the bridge restored while maintaining the existing structure.”

Again, I want to thank Barry Burton, and I will sign this petition.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Donna Stanley who lives in Strathroy, Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and sign it and give it to page Simon.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have close to almost 5,000 names on this petition, which reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the residents and businesses of southern Ontario, oppose any decision to terminate Highway 407 east in Oshawa or Clarington and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to proceed with the Highway 407 East extension project as planned and promised, in one continuous phase from Brock Road in Pickering through to Highway 35/115, with a completion date of 2013.”

I affix my name in full support.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Mrs. Maureen Millar for sending me this petition regarding Duntroon Central Public School.

“Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is an important part of Clearview township and the surrounding area; and

“Whereas Duntroon Central Public School is widely recognized for its high educational standards and intimate learning experience; and

“Whereas the frameworks of rural schools are different from urban schools and therefore deserve to be governed by a separate rural school policy; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we’re not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep swimming pools open in Toronto schools but hasn’t found any money to keep rural schools open in Simcoe–Grey;

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

“That Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the citizens of Clearview township and suspend the Simcoe County District School Board ARC 2010:01 until the province develops a rural school policy that recognizes the value of schools in the rural communities of Ontario.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

PARAMEDICS

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to read a petition. It’s addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I put my signature to it and give it to page Beau, who is here with me today.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas the McGuinty government is conducting a review of the province’s under-serviced area program (UAP) that will result in numerous communities across rural and small-town Ontario losing financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed physicians; and

“Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep physicians are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in communities in rural ridings, such as Simcoe–Grey; and

“Whereas people across Ontario have been forced to pay Dalton McGuinty’s now-forgotten health tax since 2004, expecting health care services to be improved rather than cut; and

“Whereas taxpayers deserve good value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals’ watch at eHealth Ontario;

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

“That the McGuinty government immediately stop its ill-advised attack on rural health care and on rural communities who need financial incentives to successfully recruit and retain doctors.”

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (DAMAGE DEPOSITS), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D’HABITATION (DÉPÔTS POUR DOMMAGES)

Mrs. Savoline moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 145, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 / Projet de loi 145, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d’habitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I am happy to rise in the House today to speak to my private member’s bill. It is the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act (Damage Deposits), 2011.

This bill aims to help protect to the quality of rental housing in Ontario. This bill amends the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, by giving landlords the option of collecting a damage deposit of no more than 25% of one month’s rent from tenants. Currently, landlords are solely responsible for any repair costs incurred, as they are not permitted to require a damage deposit. My reason for

bringing this bill forward is to protect tenants, protect the landlords and particularly small business landlords, as these are the individuals who are most affected.

I said “protect tenants” because if units are not available, Ontarians who need to rent do not have available units. I said “particularly small business landlords” because these individuals are most affected by the repair costs, and if they can no longer keep up with these costs, they may get cut out of the business altogether, which, again, would affect tenants who rely on these units to house them.

The purpose of a damage deposit is to partially—partially—assist landlords in compensating for the cost of repair or replacement of property when wilfully or negligently damaged by a tenant and/or a specified person. Aside from helping landlords with damage costs, damage deposits, I believe, will provide an incentive to tenants to exercise care in their rental units and also help ensure housing units are in good condition for future renters.

Ontario is lagging behind. We’re lagging behind many other jurisdictions when it comes to allowing for the collection of damage deposits. Currently in Ontario, legislation allows for a landlord to collect a rent deposit of up to one month’s rent, but it cannot be used to cover repair costs. This is more commonly referred to as “last month’s rent.” Landlords collect the last month’s rent at the beginning of the tenancy, and it may only be used and applied to the last month’s rent, not to cover any damage or security costs.

British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Manitoba and the Maritime provinces have some form of damage deposit. These jurisdictions require a damage deposit at a higher cost than the 25% that I’m suggesting. Alberta and Saskatchewan, in fact, allow landlords to ask for the equivalent of one month’s rent for a damage deposit. Newfoundland and Labrador allow for a maximum damage deposit of three quarters of one month’s rent. British Columbia and Manitoba allow for a maximum security deposit of half a month’s rent. And British Columbia goes one step further: They allow landlords to ask for an additional half a month’s rent if a tenant has a pet or brings a pet in after they have established tenancy.

This piece of legislation takes into consideration that a new tenant does have additional costs, such as first and last month’s rent, so the damage deposit amount that I am suggesting can be no greater than 25% of one month’s rent. This 25% of one month’s rent is more than landlords can currently ask for to offset damage costs, so it’s certainly a step forward and puts Ontario to the same standards as most other provinces in an effort to protect our rental stock.

This bill is aimed at helping to protect Ontario’s rental housing stock. However, it also helps to protect all tenants, since the cost of damage repair is spread across all existing units at this time. The landlord and tenant must agree in writing as to the condition of the rental unit on the day the tenancy begins, and the damage deposit cannot be used to compensate for ordinary wear and tear.

I'm proud to say that this bill was welcomed by many stakeholders. The Federation of Rental Housing Providers of Ontario supports the intent of this bill, in addition to the maximum damage deposit amount of 25% of one month's rent, as it's more than they can currently recover in the cost of damages.

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The Ontario Landlords Association has also spoken out in favour of this bill. In fact, on February 17, the OLA met with three senior members of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing along with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. At this meeting, the OLA members presented a top 10 list of concerns on behalf of small business landlords. Number two on their list was the request to be able to collect damage deposits. I want to clarify that these individuals advocate for small business landlords, for whom there is usually no way of recovering their losses at the hands of bad tenants.

I have also received emails from many independent individuals acknowledging the positive change that this bill would bring forward. The bill really only becomes a problem to those tenants who create excessive damage to their unit.

Last summer, on July 1, this government introduced their HST, an additional 8% on many services and items. For rental housing providers, this means an additional 8% on services such as hydro, landscaping and snow removal, and there's a long list to follow that. There's a great risk that all these additional costs are leading to small business landlords simply getting out of the business.

For 2011, as you may be aware, the allowable rental increase that landlords can impose on tenants is at an all-time low. It's a mere 0.7%. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that an 8% increase for landlords on various services as a result of the HST alone, with the possibility of a 0.7% increase in rent, makes it impossible for good landlords to continue to maintain their rental stock.

These additional costs of the HST drastically increase costs for landlords, and many have no choice but to dip into their reserve funds in order to make up for the difference in cost. The depletion of reserve funds that are there for emergencies is a very bad idea. Those funds are not to be used for things like ongoing maintenance. This would have serious implications for the rental housing industry.

Landlords do their best to ensure the good condition of their buildings, and we need to ensure that we are helping them as well. We simply cannot afford for them to get out of the rental housing business. These units are critically imperative for Ontarians and for the residents who reside in them.

Although damage deposits do not compensate for the HST, they do offer a means of help—a small means of help—if and when a unit is damaged. Regardless of the cost increases the HST has placed on landlords, the financial responsibility of tenant neglect should be the responsibility of that tenant, not the landlord, and

certainly not the financial burden of the other tenants in the building.

This bill aims to assist in some of the costs of damage for landlords as well as to act as an incentive for tenants who choose to be irresponsible. As I already mentioned, this bill should really only be the cause for concern for those who have a tendency to cause damage to their rental units.

It's really no different than how a hotel or a motel would operate. We know that when you check in at a hotel or motel, your credit card information is taken as a form of deposit for any incidentals. If any damage occurs over your stay, it will be charged to your credit card accordingly. These checks and balances are in place for hotel and motel accommodations, but they are overlooked for our rental housing.

Basically, the only tool that landlords have is that they may enter a premises by providing 24 hours' written notice to the tenant. If there is wilful and excessive damage, there are options for an expedited evictions process reducing the period of eviction from 20 days to 10 days or, in some extreme cases, immediate eviction. This, however, still does not address the costs incurred by the landlord for repair.

I want to go over what happens when a tenant moves out and there is no damage done to their unit. The landlord, of course, is required to repay the damage deposit, including interest, no later than 15 days after tenancy ends. Interest must be paid to the tenant annually on a damage deposit. This is at the same rate as the rent-increase guideline in effect at the time the interest is due.

Should the landlord neglect to pay the damage deposit, the tenant may apply to the Landlord and Tenant Board for an order requiring the landlord to repay any portion of the damage deposit that the landlord was entitled to retain. It is the landlord who has the onus of proving that he or she was entitled to retain the portion of the damage deposit.

I know the world is not perfect and there is never a perfect solution that will be supported by everyone, but anything that takes a step in the right direction to protect our rental stock is certainly important.

I spoke earlier about preserving our rental housing stock, and the enormous importance of rental housing units in Ontario. When a unit is damaged, not only is it not quickly available for the next tenant, but it is a great expense to the landlord as they have to cover the cost of repairs and also lose out on monthly rent. As you know, this is an opportunity for a landlord to raise the rent for the next tenant, particularly in cases where the landlord has incurred a large cost from repairing damages from the previous tenant.

This bill also aims to stop this process. This bill protects the future viability of rental housing stock in Ontario, current tenants and the rental housing providers. It is my hope that every member in the House will see the importance of this bill and that you will support my attempt in protecting Ontario's already vulnerable rental housing stock so that we can ensure it remains in the best

condition possible. I look forward to the comments by other speakers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to debate Bill 145 and share my time with the member from Scarborough.

Like most things, when you look at a new bill—actually, I want to applaud the member from Burlington as well. Thank you for addressing the issues of housing as part of your discussions with your party. When you do your homework and you discover that back in 1995 Al Leach said, “We’re getting out of the business. Housing’s not part of our platform,” it’s really refreshing to know that there are people like you that care that housing is important, and it is important from both perspectives: those who rent and those who are the providers. I thank you for that, sincerely. It really is refreshing.

One of the challenges with dealing with the bill—again, I think that a bill such as this has the opportunity to be able to present both sides of an equation—is that you do hear about things such as damages that do occur, but are they anecdotal or are they factual? Some of that is the question of the economics of this: How much actually does occur? Where does it occur? Under what kind of conditions does it occur? In fact, as you do an economic business case—because on the flip side are the people who rent. While I appreciate that 25% may not seem like a great deal of money, if someone is paying \$1,000 a month for rent, \$250 is a lot on top of another month’s rent at the end. How do you balance that out?

We deal with the working poor in addition to the social housing. Most people spend over 50% of their rent already on high-rise, on apartment rents. That’s just part of the real challenge of the cost of rental housing—or housing, for that matter—in this province. When you hear that a house’s average purchase price is some \$440,000, you start to get concerned about the economic impact of additional burdens on the people who are actually either in some cases purchasing or, in this case, renting.

So where is the economic balance in this? And how are you able to provide, to say that if this occurs, these are the reasons, this is the impact? I unfortunately don’t see that in this bill. I think that needs to be addressed and identified, as to who this impacts on the other side.

I also think that we need to be able to look at some of the questions that—we talked a little bit about the damage, but the damage deposit—how do you determine what is normal wear and tear? Who makes that determination? What about the additional cost that this would have on the Landlord and Tenant Board, if in fact they are the people who are going to do the monitoring and assessment of this? While I would like to think that all things are created equal, including folks who are the providers, not every provider may in fact return that deposit cheque. Who assesses and monitors that process, and how do we incorporate that? Those are some of the challenges that I don’t see being addressed.

1410

Yes, I recognize that there is an opportunity for the issue of regulations, but I think those analyses need to be done ahead of time so that we can balance out both the stakeholders that are involved in this, because in this particular bill, you do have both: You have those who are providers and those who are the renters. What is the impact on both of them?

I also would like to make a suggestion around the issue that is related to low income. I spoke about the ability to pay and what impact that has on folks. If you go out to certain parts in this province, there is a high percentage of apartments that are not rented. Would that be less impactful than someplace that’s in downtown Toronto? The availability of transportation makes a difference for folks and where they choose to live and work.

All of those things play into this equation. What I’m suggesting is that there are costs associated if this occurs. There are remedies already within the tenant act to expedite, and you’ve identified that in your comments.

Are there other opportunities to be able to say to the landlords or the providers, “How can we help you with this other problem that you’ve identified?” Well, then, give us more facts in order for us to be able to really have an understanding of how serious that problem is. Is it a universal problem? Is it in one area more than another? How do you analyze, assess and ensure that, in fact, there’s fairness on both sides of it?

I wanted to very quickly address the HST as well. There’s no question that there are additional costs to landlords that are coming with the HST, but remember, there also will be an opportunity for the costs, for example, of utilities to be reflected in the future guidelines for the annual rent increases. Again, we’re trying to balance this out. Yes, there are costs here and, yes, there will be offsets on the other side.

It’s exactly the same process for a landlord or provider who has to increase their rent in order to ultimately decrease their energy costs. When the energy costs go down, the rent must go down. As you put in the new capital improvements, the rent goes up. But there’s that balancing effect.

That’s what I think is most important here: Where is the balancing effect on both sides? Where’s the economic impact analysis? How are we able to proceed with the assessment and the monitoring? Who does this fall under? Is it the Landlord and Tenant Act? Is it municipal affairs and housing, service providers? I don’t know. But these are the sorts of things that we need to have those discussions on, prior to moving forward on this.

I will reiterate: Thank you for taking the initiative, and thank you for ensuring that housing is spoken on that side of the room. Thank you very much.

I now share this with my colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I’m very pleased to speak to Bill 145, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act,

2011, which has been introduced by my hard-working colleague the member for Burlington.

In fact, I want to begin by commending my colleague for the hard work that she has undertaken on many municipal issues. Of course, today we're dealing with one that is of significant importance to the housing industry.

When I take a look at the bill that she has brought forward to this Legislature, it becomes abundantly clear to me, and I'm sure to other members of this House, why this member has had such a very successful political career, both at the regional and provincial levels of political life.

If we take a look at the bill in front of us, we can see that she has a very nuanced appreciation of a very complex issue. This amendment that she has introduced to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, speaks to her skill at balancing a very complex issue in a very pragmatic way.

This bill involves an excellent compromise for both of the parties involved, namely, the landlords and the tenants. So I do want to congratulate and thank the member for Burlington for introducing this very carefully considered and clearly articulated plan to introduce continuity and stability into Ontario's housing sector, which of course is always very important.

As you know, renting and leasing of apartments, condominiums and houses is a very important sector for our economy in the province of Ontario. Urban areas, such as the GTA and also Kitchener-Waterloo where I live, are particularly affected by fluctuations in the supply and demand of housing, and are also affected by the disagreements that sometimes can arise between landlords and tenants.

Due to the importance of a strong rental and leasing sector, it is certainly in the best interests of the landlords, the tenants and indeed all Ontarians who are looking for housing to have a clearly articulated set of rules governing rental agreements. If we take a look at what the member for Burlington has presented here today, we see that it is very reasonable and a very fair compromise that is indeed in the best interests of both parties: the tenants and the landlords.

It's obvious that the member for Burlington has listened and has consulted with both parties. As a result of that consultation, and based on the experience she's had throughout her political life, she has developed, as I said before, a very thoughtful and very sensible solution to a problem that unfortunately can quickly become quite contentious.

This bill will eliminate many of the divisive issues that can arise between a landlord and a tenant when debating remuneration for property damages. The member has succeeded in finding an appropriate balance that is very satisfying to both parties.

So we have before us a bill that, at the end of the day, is simple and straightforward. Basically, it says the following:

(1) The landlord and tenant must agree in writing as to the condition of the rental unit on the day that the tenancy begins.

(2) The damage deposit cannot be used to compensate ordinary wear and tear.

(3) Interest must be paid annually on a damage deposit at the same rate as the rent increase guideline in effect at the time the interest is due.

(4) A landlord must repay a damage deposit, including interest, no later than 15 days after the tenancy ends when there is no damage.

It's worth noting that this bill will finally formalize a system for damage deposits. This is important because, despite the displeasure of having to pay more up front to cover potential damages, a damage deposit such as what is being suggested here will help to protect tenants and landlords from problems later down the road. Damage deposits provide an incentive to tenants to prevent damage from occurring, and they protect landlords from undue financial consequences.

Furthermore, Ontario is in great need of a formalized process for damage deposits. Other provinces, such as Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia, require an upfront damage deposit. However, this legislation today is unique in that it builds upon the experiences of those other jurisdictions. Whereas other provinces require damage deposits equivalent to half a month's rent, this bill takes into consideration the ability of the tenant to pay such a cost.

1420

The member for Burlington has demonstrated that she clearly appreciates the difficulties new tenants experience when moving into a new home or apartment. After providing first and last months' rent, and saddled with additional moving costs and new furniture, oftentimes new tenants cannot afford to provide an additional one half of one month's rent. Bill 145 eliminates these problems by providing relief for new tenants while ensuring coverage for landlords by reducing damage deposits to 25% of one month's rent. This is a reasonable solution.

I would like to add at this point in time that I support this bill. The bill also has the support of the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, and I certainly think the fact that it has been endorsed speaks volumes to the fact that this will, at the end of the day, strengthen the relationship between landlords and tenants.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I have to state at the outset that I have considerable sympathy for small landlords. In fact, as an MPP from the Toronto area, we often deal with small landlords who find themselves with problematic tenants, people who damage properties, people who don't pay their rents, and the whole difficulty they have in removing these tenants who often cause great difficulties in single-family homes, in basement apartments, in very small units with two or three apartment units.

I have considerably less sympathy, though, for large landlords. In my entire time as an MPP and as a mayor, I don't think any large landlord has ever come seeking my assistance. They seem to do very well by themselves.

We were disappointed—because I talked to my caucus about supporting this bill, although we had not actually seen it— in terms of, I thought it was for small landlords. I thought it was for the mom-and-pop operation who could find themselves in considerable difficulty.

I'm not sure that large landlords with thousands and thousands of units need this kind of protection. They have lawyers, they have accountants, they have complete access to the Landlord and Tenant Board. In fact, I have never heard of them seeking such a system.

I looked at the bill with some considerable intent, and I wondered about 25% of the last month's deposit as against—and I tried to put that in terms of what that was going to buy. The average two-bedroom apartment in Toronto—and those are probably the most expensive apartments in all of Ontario—is around \$1,000, and so, at maximum, we would be asking for about \$250, but considerably less in other places in Ontario where the rents are not so high. So what does \$250 buy in terms of protection for a landlord, be it a large one or a small one? That is a very small amount of money. I am not sure it's going to protect landlords very much if considerable damage is done. I do know that if you are a homeowner or apartment renter or in a condo and you were to get in a tradesperson, \$250 would be eaten up with a few hours' work, in work and materials, and I am not convinced that the amount is a correct one that is going to stop damage.

What I am worried about is that it is going to cause a great deal of difficulty between landlords and tenants in terms of, the landlord seems to have most of the authority, as he or she does under the act presently, in terms of what they do. A landlord will be able, as an example, to say, "I am deducting \$125 from your \$250 because the wallpaper is torn." I don't think they'd go that far, but it has not been defined here exactly what the work is, what actually is wear and tear.

I had an opportunity to stare at the ceiling as I was listening to a previous speaker, and I see that there's a tear up there. I have no idea who caused that, but a landlord could say you caused that—

Mr. Frank Klees: It's the Liberals who did that.

Mr. Michael Prue: It's the Liberals who did that.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: The government might say it's Mike Harris; exactly.

I'm not sure, but a landlord can literally say anything; that a person caused wear and tear.

I also have to wonder about the length of time that's involved. Certainly, if you live in an apartment for a number of years, there's going to be more wear and tear. If you have children, there's going to be more wear and tear. If you have a pet, there's going to be more wear and tear. None of this is sort of—can I get my head around it?

There's nothing in the legislation—and I read it over the last two days—to talk about accidents. What if something happens by accident? It wasn't the intention of the tenant to cause the damage. But accidents do happen: dents in walls from moving furniture, a stove fire—all of those things that happen to ordinary people in ordinary

circumstances. Again, I don't know how that is going to find itself within the body of the bill.

I also have to question the whole thing about the Landlord and Tenant Board. Right at current times, if you ask landlords what their number one difficulty is in this whole process of renting apartments, they will tell you it's dealing with the Landlord and Tenant Board. The backlogs are enormous. The backlogs will take months for action to take place. It is a very frustrating experience for landlords as well as tenants. I wonder: Without additional resources—and I don't see any contained within the bill, nor did I expect to see any—when you're now starting to adjudicate upon deposits as well as first and last month's rent, as well as non-payment, as well as noise, as well as damage, as well as all of the other things that are heard, how is this going to impact a board that is absolutely overwhelmed? Without additional resources, at considerable cost to government, that too may be problematic. Perhaps the member from Burlington can deal with that when she gets an opportunity.

You also have the whole problem, as I see it, of a landlord, when a person is moving out after three or four years, walking around the apartment and saying that a couple of the electric plates over the light switches have been broken, or there's damage to the wallpaper, or there's a wall that now needs to be painted, or whatever. "I'm a good landlord, so I'm only going to charge you \$100, and I'm going to retain that." They have the automatic authority to retain that. The tenant then has to go to court. The tenant then has to go, and all that's up for dispute would be that amount of money. Are they going to go to court for it? Are they going to take all that bother? It will be an opportunity for some unscrupulous people to simply take half of the deposit and define the wear and tear in any way they want.

These are all problematic things. I'm not saying that the bill is not a good idea; what I am saying is that it should be more clearly defined. Perhaps the member in her final two minutes can indicate whether she intends to encompass those landlords that look after tens of thousands of units in the same way as a person who has one. If it is, and with all the other things I've outlined, then I think that the bill is not the right one. If it can be remedied, if it can be made to work for landlords and tenants as well, then perhaps I might change my mind. But I leave that to my colleague, and I'm waiting to hear what she has to say on this as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I am pleased to be given an opportunity to speak to Bill 145, an Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, brought here by the member from Burlington. I have to say that I have the utmost respect for my friend from Burlington, who spent a lot of her career in the municipal world, like I have done too.

I am glad to speak to this bill for several reasons. I had the opportunity to serve on the Metro Toronto Housing Authority for many years. I can tell you, from my experience there, the things that happen between land-

lords and tenants. I've also had the opportunity to serve four years on the Social Housing Services Corp., working with the not-for-profit sector landlords and property managers and trying to find remedies for their problems etc.

I have to say that when I first read this bill I had some reluctance in supporting it. The more I delved into it—I certainly have a lot of concerns. But let me state at the outset that, over the years that I've been in public service, I have to say that there are good tenants and bad tenants. There are good landlords and bad landlords. As a government, we are to serve all the people, and we should be looking for a balance when we provide legislation. Any piece of legislation we bring forward should really provide that balance both for landlords and for tenants.

1430

As many of you may remember, I got elected to this Legislature in 2005. I had the opportunity of being in this House when the government actually did the review of the Landlord and Tenant Act, and the Residential Tenancies Act was brought in in 2006 when I was here. I have to say that, from listening to that particular debate, I got a clear indication that the government took a balanced approach, because they had consulted with the stakeholders, both tenants and landlords. There were extensive public hearings, and the act was brought forward. It was well received at that particular time by all in the industry.

I'll just mention some of the changes that were brought about in 2006. Landlords today can negotiate starting rents with new tenants when their unit becomes vacant; that was a major change that allowed landlords to deal with the increasing cost of providing rental units. Rental units that were built after 1991 were exempt from the annual guideline from the government for rent increases.

The interest rate that landlords had to pay on the last month's deposit was a big issue. It was set back then, and the government was being requested by landlords that that should be changed. We responded to that and provided that assistance to landlords, and I believe they were quite pleased that the government did that.

Along with that, the landlords' major concern at the time was they wanted a process that was fast, that was efficient and that could allow them to evict a tenant quickly when there was a problem. I believe that the new Landlord and Tenant Board, through this new piece of legislation, does provide the landlords with that opportunity.

I have to say that when I looked at the bill very carefully, I got concerned. My colleague from Beaches—East York raised the issue about the added costs that the Landlord and Tenant Board would have to, I guess, incur if they were to adjudicate over some new issues.

But let me tell you one thing that I have a real concern about. In the social services sector today, the majority of the clients that are in social housing are on social welfare. We, the government, provide those people with the first and last month's deposit. This would be an increased cost

to provide them with the money for this additional deposit that would be required.

That would mean that this government would have to look for new opportunities for taxation to generate that revenue. I don't believe my colleague on the other side of the House really wants to see this government embark on taxation of the general public to provide this opportunity to protect landlords. I do not believe it's a balanced approach and I do not believe that's what the general taxpayer wants.

What I see here is that we're really punishing good tenants—and the majority are good tenants, because we have a few bad apples. I believe the system today with the Landlord and Tenant Board, and also with the courts, provides the opportunity for landlords to have these types of issues adjudicated well and gives the landlord that proper opportunity to recover any additional costs as a result of damages.

But on top of that, my concern is that the vulnerable in our community would suffer from this particular bill, especially newcomers. Can you imagine being a newcomer in the city of Toronto and being asked for first and last month's rent and also a damage deposit? I would tell you that most people will not be able to afford it.

On top of that, we're trying to attract students to Toronto and to Ontario to go to our universities. Can you imagine a foreign student having to provide first month's rent, last month's rent and a deposit on top of that? We're not making it attractive for them to come to our province.

I don't believe that this is the best approach. There might be some other ways of dealing with this, and I'm happy to listen to other opportunities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak in reply to Bill 145, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. Before I even start, I'd like to commend the member from Burlington for having the tenacity and the wherewithal to draft and present this bill today to the House. It's an issue that I think is province-wide, especially in some of the larger urban areas. It's certainly a concern.

The role of the landlord is often a thankless and underappreciated task, yet over 30% of the population of Ontario relies on landlords to provide quality housing options. However, all too often these rental property owners are left holding the bag after negligent or careless tenants have abandoned properties without addressing damages and their responsibilities as occupants of these properties. If businesses and residential homeowners are required to place a deposit when they rent a tool or a car or something from a rental agency, why, then, is it not acceptable that landlords would also require a damage deposit when they give renters access to a very significant investment, such as their properties? The fair and the balanced approach of the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act creates an incentive for tenants and landlords alike to monitor the conditions and liveability of these rental units.

The collection of damage deposits will help to protect current and future tenants in single- and multi-unit buildings by benchmarking the condition of these units during the creation of rental agreements. Any costs associated with repairs will be quickly accounted for through the damage deposit or be determined to be the responsibility of the property owner. Landlords will have the ability to efficiently repair any damage and place units back on the market faster by reducing extra expenditures and revenue gaps. Landlords will no longer find it necessary to pass the cost of unit maintenance on to other tenants through rate increases.

In addition, the Residential Tenancies Amendment Act will help to modernize Ontario's rental marketplace and create parity with other jurisdictions, such as BC, Saskatchewan and Alberta. This is an important point, as the rental housing market is supported, by and large, by people who are investing in additional properties as a safe and reliable way to create equity for themselves.

Of course, a major consideration to be made before amending the rules surrounding tenancy is how this change will affect the renters themselves. By establishing a limit of 25% of the monthly rent on the amount that the landlords can require as a damage deposit, this bill keeps the cost of damage deposits in Ontario well below the rates that are charged in other provinces.

This bill has the support of the Federation of Rental-housing Providers of Ontario, the Ontario Landlords' Association and numerous independent landlords across the province.

The intent of this bill is to create protections for property owners that are enjoyed by many other business owners in our province. It is a worthwhile bill that deserves careful consideration from all members of this Legislature before being passed and/or moved forward to committee.

I thank you for the opportunity to comment on the bill at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you to the member from Burlington for bringing this forward. I'm so sad I'm not going to be able to support it. It's probably going to be her last bill on second reading debate. I really like her, and I wish her all the best in retirement and thank her for her years and years of service to Ontarians, both at the municipal level and at the provincial level. Thank you very much.

I want to situate this bill in what I think is the real problem: We have a housing crisis in this province. That's the simple reality. We have 50% of our tenants paying more than 50% of their incomes on rent already. And 50% of our tenants—not surprisingly, given the first statistic—are saying that because of that, they are not able to afford some of the necessities of life. We're not talking about the frills; we're talking about the necessities, like food, school supplies etc. That's the reality of being a tenant in the province of Ontario.

The Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, not surprisingly, is uniformly—of course—opposed to this bill or anything like it. I know that in Alberta, where they have a similar piece of legislation in place, it's extremely difficult if not impossible to get that security deposit back from landlords. My friend from Beaches–East York has outlined several of the reasons why that might be. In fact, it is that way in Alberta. That's the reality of the lived experience of this bill put into place in Alberta. In fact, it acts as almost a disincentive for good tenants, because if you're not going to get the deposit back anyway, why keep the place pristine?

1440

Again, this is an issue of size as well. For a small landlord—I have been a small landlord and also a tenant. As a small landlord with only a few units that you're renting, how is that small amount of money really going to compensate you for any serious damage?

However, on the other side, if you're a huge landlord, all of a sudden you have a windfall of equity given to you. I think that's unfair; I think that's just grossly unfair. In a sense, we're looking for balance, but in reality, this isn't a balanced situation. The landlord owns the equity, and very often the tenants are paying off their mortgage. That's not a balanced situation, right out of the gate.

I think we have to be very careful when we're going to target the person who's holding less power in that situation. Certainly, when we look at the overall situation in Ontario and how precarious most people's housing is—remember, we have over 140,000 families waiting on the affordable housing lists in Ontario—then we see the real depth of the problem.

I certainly appreciate the comments all around the circle. There were many good insights made. I hear from the majority of members that this is not something we're going to support, which is not to say that our compassion does not go out to the ma-and-pa landlord who's renting out their basement just to meet their own needs and who suffers as well.

Surely there are other ways, really, of looking at that issue. One of the ways we've suggested, for example, is to take the HST off heating. That would help here, and I think that's a much more direct way, perhaps, of helping those who pay their utilities than this way.

Again, I'm not going to support it. It's difficult enough now for tenants even to get their last month's deposit back. As my friend from Beaches–East York said, sometimes they have to go to court just to get what is their legal due. Often, landlords already withhold it for all sorts of reasons, including damages. They shouldn't do it. Tenants don't know their rights. They don't get it, and they don't have the time or the means to get it either, to go through the various steps that are entailed.

But of course, out of our constituency offices, we've also helped landlords, on the other side, who have problem tenants.

Balance here is to say no to this bill. Balance here is to vote instead for the powerless of the province of Ontario, and those are the tenants who need housing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I think there's a point that has been missed here in the focuses on (a) the protection of tenants and (b) the protection of the housing stock—and those are pivotal in this debate. If we play this chicken-and-egg about if we take a \$250 deposit and the landlord is going to keep half of it or all of it, my big fear is that the landlords that need that money to repair severe damage are going to go out of the business altogether and that rental stock is going to deplete.

I think we have to start planning and getting our minds around it. Is this a baby step forward? Yes, it is, but it's the right step forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Burlington has two minutes for her final response.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I do want to thank my colleagues this afternoon from Etobicoke Centre, Kitchener–Waterloo, Beaches–East York, Scarborough–Rouge River, Parkdale–High Park and Sarnia–Lambton.

It's a difficult issue, it's an important issue and it's as complex as it is simple. It has complexities, but I think those complexities can be worked out and will be worked out. But in its simplicity, it's there to protect rental housing stock and tenants here in Ontario.

I've already mentioned that I hope I get support; I can see I'm not going to. But I want to say that—do you know what?—in other provinces, this program is working. It isn't the big, horrible thing that occurs. It becomes a way of life in rental situations.

If the stock is not protected, neither is the tenant. If the stock is protected, the tenant has a clean, safe place to live.

This bill aims at preventing landlords from increasing rent excessively when a new tenant takes occupancy in events where severe damage has been done. As you know, the landlord can raise the rent much higher than would normally be allowed because of those excessive damages that had to be repaired and the irresponsibility of a previous tenant. It's not intended to pay the entire damage deposit. Two hundred and fifty dollars may not go a long way, but it goes much further than zero goes right now.

It's my hope that the bill would help tenants, that it would help landlords but, most of all, that it would protect our rental housing stock across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time allocated for Ms. Savoline's ballot item has now expired. We'll vote on the matter in about 100 minutes.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the McGuinty government should honour its commitment as set out in the Flow agreement with the federal government, dated March 2, 2007, and “complete the extension of Highway 407 eastward from Brock Road to Highway 35/115 with construction to begin in 2009

and to be completed in 2013, including provisions for a dedicated transit right-of-way.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Elliott moves private member's notice of motion number 65. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The eastward extension of Highway 407 has been the subject of discussion both locally and provincially for number a years, but it wasn't until 2007 that matters really came together, or so we thought at the time.

The agreement among all of the parties culminated in what's known as the Flow agreement, which was a federal-provincial agreement signed on March 2, 2007, that obligated both the federal and provincial governments to do several things with respect to provincial transit and infrastructure.

Among other things, the federal government was obliged to assist in the completion and construction of the subway to York University. In return, the provincial government was to complete the 407 extension eastward to Highway 35/115 by 2013.

I should note at the outset that it was crystal clear, as part of the Flow agreement, that this was to be completed in one phase, not two phases. And as events transpired, that theory has been borne out by the way that the provincial government has acted and with respect to the assessments that were undertaken.

On the strength of the Flow agreement, given the sanctity of that contract, land acquisitions proceeded for the eastward extension, and both local municipalities and the region of Durham began to make their economic plans and projections based on the security of the agreement.

Then, suddenly in June 2010, without any warning or consultation, an announcement was made that the 407 would be built in not one phase but in two phases, with the first phase to end at Simcoe Street, which is in the hamlet of Columbus, part of the city of Oshawa and in the northern part of my riding.

No credible reason was given by the government for this decision, which has essentially destroyed the economic plans for the development of the entire region and which will have a significant impact on the economic growth of southern Ontario.

Certainly a lot of excuses were given. We heard quite a few of them. One was—and we heard this from the Minister of Transportation—that it was always intended for the 407 extension to be built in phases. To that I would say, quite the contrary; the Flow agreement is crystal clear that this extension was to be completed, in its entirety, in one phase by 2013.

We heard from the minister that they really wanted to complete the full extension of the 407, but couldn't because of the economic downturn. To that I would say a few things: One is, where I come from, a deal is a deal is a deal. No one signs an agreement in business or in their personal lives that they don't intend to keep, that they don't have the economic resources to fulfill. They keep

that money aside, knowing that they have to fulfill that obligation.

1450

Secondly, despite the economic downturn, the province is continuing to expect that the federal government will live up to their part of the bargain. If the economic downturn is an excuse for the provincial government, then surely it would be for the federal government, but they are fully prepared to fulfill their part of the bargain.

Thirdly, I would say that since the Flow agreement was signed in March 2007, this government has already spent billions of dollars on some of their other pet projects, including the green energy experiment; the eHealth fiasco, which involved millions of dollars of consultants' contracts; and other so-called priorities there. I think it would behoove us all to remember this when we get closer to the election and we hear this government start promising the sun, the moon and the stars in their bid to get re-elected. Remember, they said there was no money for the 407. If that is the case, there shouldn't be any money for anything else either.

I'd also like to spend a little bit of time speaking about the reason behind the decision to stop Highway 407 prematurely at Simcoe Street. The truth of the matter is that no one knows. I would dare say that the minister really doesn't know why the decision was made to stop this highway at Simcoe Street. There was absolutely no consultation, no discussion, no assessment—absolutely nothing. The decision was abruptly announced last June, just like that. It makes absolutely no sense from an economic perspective, an environmental perspective, or a cultural or social perspective, and it's also going to cause traffic chaos.

On November 23, His Worship John Henry, the mayor of Oshawa, who I'm pleased to say is with us for this discussion this afternoon, met with the Minister of Transportation and made a presentation on behalf of the city of Oshawa, the municipality of Clarington, the township of Scugog, the city of Peterborough and the region of Durham, and asked her to honour the province's commitment to build the Highway 407 extension in one phase to Highways 35 and 115.

I would like to briefly quote from the letter that the mayor sent to the Premier, dated December 8, which summarized this discussion:

“During the meeting, we discussed our extreme disappointment that the parameters for completion of the highway had changed without any communication or input from Durham region and its municipalities or the city of Peterborough.

“Minister Wynne heard that building the extension in phases is not viable and simply not fair to the region of Durham and its municipalities or to the city of Peterborough for the following reasons:

- “—a misleading environmental assessment (EA) process;
- “—significant, unnecessary and unbudgeted road infrastructure expenditures for local municipalities;
- “—imbalanced economic growth; and
- “—negative safety, environmental and cultural impacts.”

Well, notwithstanding these very cogent arguments, the Minister of Transportation insisted that the project would have to be completed in two phases.

I would just like to expand a bit on the reasons that were given by Mayor Henry to the Premier and to the Minister of Transportation about why it didn't make any sense to stop Highway 407 at Simcoe Street. One, of course, is with respect to the environmental assessment process. Simply, the process associated with the environmental assessment did not adequately deal with phasing or allow public or municipal comment on phasing.

In fact, phasing should have been part of the environmental assessment process but was not. The province did not undertake traffic, noise, financial or other impact studies to determine the full impact of dumping Highway 407 traffic directly onto local and regional road networks. If phasing had originally been contemplated, it would have been included in the environmental assessment, but it simply was not.

On the issue of “significant, unnecessary and unbudgeted road infrastructure expenditures for local municipalities,” I would note that the breach of the Flow agreement is going to cost the residents of Durham region and the city of Oshawa approximately \$329 million in unplanned capital roadwork costs plus millions of dollars for ongoing road maintenance. This is not a planned expense. There was no discussion about this; it was simply decreed by the McGuinty government, and taxpayers are expected to pay for it, as they are for all the McGuinty government backtracks—and we've noted a lot of them in recent weeks.

On the issue of “imbalanced economic growth,” the future economic growth of not just Durham region but all of southern Ontario depends upon the full eastward expansion of Highway 407 as soon as possible. Again, I would like to quote from Mayor Henry's letter to the Premier, dated December 8, which states the matter quite succinctly:

“As you are aware, the future prosperity of southern Ontario depends on infrastructure.

“Every year, millions of trucks run along the Highway 401 corridor from Montreal to Windsor, directly through the heart of the GTA. It is so congested that it is often called a ‘linear warehouse’ full of goods destined for millions of consumers worldwide, seven days a week.

“The Toronto Board of Trade estimates that gridlock in the GTA costs the Ontario economy \$6 billion per year in lost production. Also according to the board, GTA residents face the longest commute times worldwide (79 minutes in the GTA compared with 77 minutes and 57 minutes for New York and Los Angeles...).

“As you are aware, between 2005 and 2010, the province conducted an environmental assessment on extending Highway 407 east through Durham region to ... 35/115. The EA documents further support the facts noted above by stating that:

“—International trade and goods movement through Durham region is critical to the greater Toronto area and the greater Golden Horseshoe.

“—Durham region is an eastern gateway for international/national tourist trips.

“—There are existing and anticipated capacity constraints between Durham region and the greater Golden Horseshoe.

“—No alternative exists to Highway 401 for commercial traffic.

“—Congestion on Highway 401 has a large influence on provincial, national and international trade.

“—Current and anticipated congestion levels severely impact existing and future industry, trade, tourism and economic growth.”

It pretty much says it all. We absolutely need this road, and we need it built quickly.

Finally, I would like to note, just on the issue of the safety, environmental and cultural concerns that have not been considered or assessed by the province, that there are an estimated 2,100 cars per hour that are expected to spill off Simcoe Street onto the adjoining secondary roadways. There is prime agricultural land included as part of this mix. It has been farmed for literally hundreds of years, in some cases. None of this has been considered as part of this determination.

Finally, the historic hamlet of Columbus is a vibrant, small community in Ontario. They’ve undergone some recent roadwork in the area, and they have a proud history and a proud community. They weren’t consulted about this, and this is going to have a devastating effect on their community.

Again, none of this was considered. We’re supposed to be nurturing and preserving Ontario’s heritage and culture. In one fell swoop the McGuinty Liberals are walking away from Columbus without a backwards glance.

In conclusion, I’d like to say that all of us at the local, municipal, regional, provincial and federal levels are united in our resolve. It is absolutely essential that we have the Highway 407 extension completed in its entirety to Highway 35/115 without any further delay. We’re going to continue to advocate on behalf of the city of Oshawa, the region of Durham and, indeed, all of southern Ontario to request and actually require the McGuinty government to listen to the concerns of our people and to honour their existing commitment to extend Highway 407 eastward without further delay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Joe Dickson: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, because some of the members are going to various other committee meetings, we’re going to commence with the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. If the member from Brant is back in time he will do his time, and if not, I will pick up the difference. Thank you, Mr. Speaker; with your permission.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Sorry. The way the rules are, for Thursday afternoons anyway, we have to continue in rotation. You’ve just used your rotation, but I will be back to the member very quickly, I would think.

Mr. Michael Prue: But you can’t get up again.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I would only be up once?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Yes. You’re up.

Mr. Joe Dickson: That’s it. I find it unusual that another member from another group was able to speak for an ongoing time frame, but I won’t speak to that at this point in time.

I think I’ll start with: How close are we on the 407 east? I can tell you a number of positive things people may not be familiar with. That is that the request for qualifications, generally known as the RFQ, was submitted and is in the process of being reviewed. That is completely done.

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The Minister of the Environment has approved the environmental assessment for the entire project through to 35/115, which means that the entire corridor of the 407 is protected at this point in time. There is still a federal environmental assessment that lacks approval, but I’m sure that will come.

The 407 east will meet high environmental standards for construction, community consultation and making a provision for a dedicated transit way and an HOV lane, which of course is a special lane carrying two or more people in a vehicle, something that probably should be on the 400 series of highways everywhere.

We continue working with the region of Durham, Oshawa and other municipalities to understand and assess the impact to the local traffic network of the proposed termination of the 407 east extension. I know that Minister Wynne has been in Oshawa meeting with the various mayors, and I attended that particular meeting. I’ve attended other meetings with particular mayors. The minister has also met, on at least one occasion—I think perhaps two—with the chair of Durham region, Chair Anderson.

I should speak to the money that has been invested in our area, and it seems to be taken very lightly. I’m a little taken aback. There is almost the impression that nothing has been done.

I can tell you that in seven years—I’ll just briefly scan through, but you’re going to see very quickly a total of some \$145 million of highway projects in Durham region and another \$66 million worth of projects that are currently under way. I’ll just give you a few of them:

—on 401, where most of them are occurring, it was over \$62 million for the widening of 401 from Harwood to Salem, which was completed in 2005. This was a seven-year project, since the inception of this government;

—\$7.2 million invested in the resurfacing from Stevenson to Salem, and that, of course, goes right up to the Oshawa area;

—\$12.3 million invested in the widening of 401 to 10 lanes from Westney to Salem;

—\$8.2 million invested for resurfacing the eastbound lanes from Brock Road in Pickering;

—\$8.3 million invested for resurfacing from Brock Township 2nd Line to join Highway 7/12, and that, of

course, comes down into the Peterborough-Oshawa-Whitby area.

The projects are many. The continuation goes, and that includes \$65.1 million for a new interchange at Stevenson Road in Oshawa, which is a city that's been referenced a lot today—certainly, they have got the lion's share—and of course a paltry \$1.5 million for signage, which will be completed by 2011.

I can tell you that I had the opportunity to spend a day with Infrastructure Minister Chiarelli in my constituency of Ajax-Pickering. I know that just one of the locations we visited was off 401. It was St. Francis de Sales church, which will become an art auditorium.

Everywhere you turn, there were infrastructure dollars, including transportation—if not particularly transportation—of the improvements going on in our area.

I think I should put a few other things in perspective. There are a couple of issues that are not really raised, but I think it's important that you explain the difference between the three governments and what is actually going on.

I know that in the past, Ontario Tories have opposed municipal infrastructure investments. I don't know if you can say a name or not, Mr. Speaker. If I say a name and it's wrong, I'd be pleased to retract it. It's a quotation, so I presume you give the name to justify the quotation. It was Tim Hudak who said that that was "too much." In fact, in Ontario investments—there was enough. They were saving some 3,000 jobs in Durham.

I can tell you that the opposition party opposed Ontario's partnership with the auto sector as the only subnational government that actually came forward to support the corporation, the men, the women, the workers and the pensioners. Once we proceeded with the United States and the government of Canada putting forth \$4.3 billion, it was a case of a restructuring and a very successful corporation in Oshawa that has just blossomed, and they have done a tremendous job. The workers are back working. There were some 300 more people working than there were two and a half years ago when the recession hit. In fact, not only are they working, but because they're working there is no problem in paying the pensions. It just goes on.

The general picture of the economy, where there are 95% of jobs being recovered in Ontario—a general comparison means in the United States of America only 11% are being returned to work. Certainly one of the great areas that we, the Ontario government, have been able to assist is the city of Oshawa, as well as the entire region of Durham.

I should explain one of the delays in the process. There are a lot of people who think you can just go and complete the entire process at once, but it's important to know that the government would still need another two and a half years to complete land acquisition and a multitude of other criteria to begin phase two. It is appropriate to commence phase one as soon as possible—that's our intent—and it's a commitment of time to continue with phase two to 35/115 prior to the ending of phase one or

as phase one comes to an end, so that it's an homogenized time effort to complete the entire structure through the 35/115 as fast as possible.

I understand the phase, the end of the dialogue, just will not stop. We're doing everything under the sun to make that process go as fast as possible, and it's going to happen. There is a firm commitment there from the minister. There's a firm commitment there from the entire government, and we're on the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's actually shameful to follow the member from Ajax-Pickering, who should be standing up for Durham. We're supposed to be working together. The shamefulness of it. I'm almost—look, I'm going to stick to what—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The work that Christine Elliott has done is remarkable, and it's not finished. When we become government, with the privilege of the people of Ontario, I can assure you we'll have one of the strongest, most effective people at the cabinet table. This is just one more example of paying attention to her constituents, listening and arguing their cases—a duly-trained lawyer. We're so pleased today to have the mayor of the city of Oshawa working as hard, co-operatively, working I believe with Premier McGuinty, if that's what it takes, even though often you can't trust his word.

I think it's time for Durham to be listened to, so what I'm going to do for the limited time I have—rather than argue on points like the member from Ajax-Pickering about who is speaking, how much time and all that, let's talk about 407 for Durham. That's what we are here for today. Don't waste the time twittering about some meaningless commentary on—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The former minister knows what I'm saying. Look, I was expecting you would be standing up in contradiction to the broken promise by the Premier. That's what he should be doing. There is a time to stand up and there's a time to shut up, and he hasn't learned either one.

Anyway, this report—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm trying to get the member from Northumberland to listen up here.

September 28, 2010, recommendations from the regional Durham planning, Mr. Georgieff and Cliff Curtis and the commissioner of finance: This is a considered report on the implications. I'm going to just list in the brief time, because the member from Oshawa is so passionate about this that if I don't give him his fair share of time he'll be just—he'll be exaggerated in his expressions.

1510

Number one: "That the province honour its commitment to deliver the entire Highway 407 east undertaking by providing a definitive schedule for the next procurement process to complete the Highway 407 extension

from Simcoe Street to Highway 35/115, including the east Durham link, such that the time for the entire undertaking is within five years of phase one completion;

“That the province work with the region, area municipalities and other stakeholders through the implementation and design process for the phase one construction to assess traffic”—I’m going to interrupt here a bit.

There was a report issued—I don’t have it with me today—prior to the decision, I believe, in June. That report gave advice to the minister. The advice was on not completing it and/or completing parts of it—the east link was dropped. That report, paid for by the government, was to legitimize their decision not to complete it. How cynical; without even having the courtesy and respect to talk to the mayor of Oshawa, the regional chair. It saddens me that the government acts so magnanimous, like everything should have a rose attached to it, and yet behind closed doors they’re scheming and designing to do the very opposite.

It’s almost like when the now-Premier was running in 2003. He was leaning up against a lamppost, and he said, “I won’t raise your taxes, but I won’t lower them either.” The very first thing he did was raise them. It’s that cynicism—and the forgiveness, that the media overlooks this. This is one more glaring example that affects the people in Columbus, in Oshawa, in Port Perry, in Clarington. It’s unbelievable, the lack of respect for people who have, in good faith, participated in the environmental assessment process. They participated openly, the staff, the citizens, the technical people—all to be laughed at, sneered at. Just the arrogance of it all. It saddens me that we have come to this low point.

I thank the member from Whitby–Oshawa for bringing it up respectfully. I’m a bit more jagged, and I know that. But it is frustrating to have to work alongside someone in co-operation and then to be ignored. I know that’s how the mayor of Oshawa feels. He’s now going to other communities to get the resolutions of council. I commend him for his work, as well as Christine, and Jerry Ouellette. I wish that the minister would listen, and I can only pray that that will happen.

Thank you, and I’m going to share my time with the member from Oshawa.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I’m rising in support of the motion put forward by the member from Whitby–Oshawa. I am rising in support because it seems to me that this is an idea whose time has come.

Now, many New Democrats will not support the building of highways. We prefer rail, we prefer public transit, we prefer a whole bunch of other modes of transportation for moving goods and services around because, by far and away, they’re cheaper. We support the movement of large things by water whenever possible, through the Great Lakes and shipping across to the United States. It can be done much cheaper on a per-cost basis if you do it by water or by rail.

But there is a time, when it comes, when it is absolutely essential to look at highways. We all know, those of us who live in the greater Toronto area, that gridlock is probably one of the single greatest phenomena hurting us, as a commuting public but also as a trading public. Getting goods and services across boundaries and across borders and from one municipality to another, you need a good system. If you don’t have the rail, if you don’t have the other infrastructure, if you’re relying on trucks, primarily, to move those, you have to have a highway system that works. We are losing—and it is estimated; I’m not the estimator, but I have read it many times—about \$6 billion of productivity per year in moving goods and services around the GTA because of congestion.

Now, along comes the idea of building the 407. I think the 407 being built was a pretty good idea in its day. I think it was—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You guys built it.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes. It was a good idea, and everybody universally agrees it was a good idea. What was a bad idea was selling it. That was a pretty bad idea, letting someone else make the profits; selling it for \$3 billion. It’s estimated today to be worth more than \$10 billion, so that was not a very good sale. And it wasn’t a very good idea to foist the fees upon ordinary people who are forced to use that because they need to move themselves and their goods and services faster than the 401 will allow.

I would hope that when it is built—and to the proponent who is bringing the motion forward, please don’t sell that portion if you ever find yourself in government. Don’t sell it again. If I’m to stand here and say that, yes, I think it should be built, it’s on the premise that it will be in public hands, it will be for the benefit of people, we will have a regulation as to how much the fees are going to be, and that if there are any profits accruing, they accrue back to the people of Ontario who built it, who put up the money and who went through all of the political difficulties and the construction difficulties to have it done.

Having said that, we are concerned that the government is now attempting to phase this in. We want to know the cost to the region of the phase-in. We have seen some numbers that have been presented by the municipalities, by the region of Durham, and this is going to cost hundreds of millions of dollars more to phase it in than to build it all in one go. If it is going to cost a lot more of taxpayers’ money, please take the cheaper route—which is why I am supporting this. I think it’s going to save a lot of money if we build it all at once, and the building of the 407, although it was in three phases, is testament to that. It was planned, it was built in very short order, and it was done at a reasonable cost using public dollars.

I’m also very concerned about the Simcoe exit. Whenever you build a short length of highway and you have an exit where it terminates, a lot of cars terminate there because they have nowhere else to go. Drive down

the Allen expressway in Toronto and find out, when it stops all of a sudden at Eglinton Avenue, how many cars are waiting to get off at Eglinton Avenue—or they have to get off at Lawrence. How many try to get off a little bit earlier? You have hundreds or perhaps thousands of cars in a lineup to get off, and the gridlock, the spewing of pollution, and all the other things that happen. I don't want that to happen on Simcoe Street in Oshawa, and I am sure that the good people of Oshawa don't want that to happen either. So, please, if you're building it in one phase, make sure the phase is beyond that. Make sure the phase where you're putting people off is not in the middle of the downtown core of a vibrant city, because that is not the appropriate thing to do.

I also want to ask the government, if you're not supporting this, to think about the cost to the municipality to fix that exit road or the exit roads that are contained within the first phase. They're going to have to fix them all up, spend a lot of money so that they can handle, as I've heard, up to 2,100 cars an hour, and then when the final phase is built and the cars don't come off there, they'll be left with throwaway infrastructure which serves very little purpose. There are not going to be 2,100 cars per hour getting off at Simcoe Street. It's not going to happen, and yet they're going to have to spend money they don't have to build an infrastructure which is literally throwaway. Don't do that either.

Every day somebody stands in this House and says we are in a recession—every day the opposition says it; every day the government says it—and that we need to create jobs. I have to ask this government, what is wrong with creating the jobs that are necessary to build this all at once? Why is it necessary to phase it?

I heard my colleague talk about how they haven't bought all the properties yet. Well, perhaps, but you can start building it. It's like the railway a hundred and whatever years ago. They built it and they kept going and going and going until it was gone and done. They started at two ends. There was only one thing to join. Luckily, they joined right there in the Kootenay Pass. You can build a highway the same way.

1520

You can build it in three or four or five sections and have it all come together. I swear it won't even be out half an inch. The engineers are that good—or should I say a centimetre, Mr. Speaker? I think I should say centimetre, because the pages wouldn't understand what half an inch is, and rightly so.

I think we also have to think about, if we don't do it all at once, the pollution that is going to come down on the people of Oshawa when all the cars are sitting there idling. All the pollution—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, no, you're sitting there and you can't get off. You've got an exit, but you can't get off. You've been in those places, I'm sure. You've been in them. We've all been in them. I'm in them almost every day when I come to work. The cars can't get off.

They can't get around the corner. There are too many people at the lights. They can't get off.

For every one of those cars that sits there, not going anywhere or going at a very slow rate, the pollution is enormous. The mileage that the cars get is way down. The amount of gasoline or diesel fuel that is burned is way up—the pollution for literally nothing unfolds where it happens. If it's right there in downtown Oshawa on Simcoe Street, the people who live around there are not going to be hugely impressed.

There are, of course, the other issues. Does the region of Durham want this? I have yet to have a single person from Durham tell me they don't. I get letters; even though I don't represent the area, I get letters. I get phone calls. We get emails asking what we're going to do about this. I have yet to have a single letter, email or anything from anyone saying, "Don't build this." What I do have is mayors and regional chairs, councils, chambers of commerce—I even have hockey teams—phoning me and telling me that they need this. So I think if the people are united that they need and want it, if the people are united that the time has come to build it, all there has to be is a will to do it.

This is going to provide some considerable economic development for the region. When you can move the goods and services, I am confident that industry will want to locate there. There is no worse place for an industry to locate than in a place that is not accessible. There is no worse place to be than where they can't move those goods and services. That's why the factories in Ontario are all along the 401 corridor. That's why they can be all along the 407 corridor, the 404 corridor and the 400 corridor. That's why they're there. They're there because that makes economic sense for them to move the goods and services.

I know that each one of those municipalities has an official plan. Each one of them has site-specific zoning that will allow for the development. They are looking forward to it. They have all of the infrastructure in place that will facilitate a boom. All they need is the highway to go with it.

If it's going to be built, then build it. If it's going to happen in five or 10 years and it can happen now, why not now? That's the whole purpose of this motion: If you're going to do it anyway, then do it now.

One of the best letters I got from anyone came from the riding of Peterborough. A person from Peterborough wrote to me and said that they really, really wanted this. This wasn't traditionally where I would have expected to get the letter, because this is going to be towards the terminus. This was a person from Peterborough who explained how it was going to help that municipality, the workforce in that municipality, the building of infrastructure in that municipality and how they so desperately wanted it. So I was glad, when I saw the list of those municipalities on board, to see that Peterborough too was on board.

This is a pretty simple issue. It's an issue that I hope members in the government party will support, although I

do have my doubts, having heard but one speaker. But I hope they will support it and recognize it's not enough to say that you've made some improvements on the 401. It's not enough to say that you've gone to a church location as a historical site. What is needed is what was promised, what was agreed upon and what the people of the region so desperately want.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'm pleased to stand up and speak to this bill. Our party knows how important the 407 east extension is to the communities of Durham—I'm a representative of Brock township in Durham—how important it is to Peterborough and how important it is to the city of Kawartha Lakes. We remain committed to building that highway out. The property is being acquired along the way. We see the buildings boarded up along Highway 115.

But projects of this size are complex and require to be built in stages as they go along. If we look at this highway as it gets built out—and I drive it regularly. If it gets built from where it currently ends at Brock in Pickering and goes to Lakeridge Road, there's going to be traffic. Do we keep that section closed until it's finished all the way to the 115? As that highway progresses across Durham region, there's going to be places where it's going to stop and traffic is going to spill off. Once the north-south extension is completed, we're going to have a lot of traffic diverted down to Highway 401 because we'll have a Toronto bypass project.

I'm a little offended by the member from Oshawa—Whitby, who talked about our government's spending on pet projects. I'd like to talk about one of those pet projects that we spent money on: \$4.3 billion to assist General Motors so they didn't close. It was referred to by the Progressive Conservative Party as corporate welfare. What we did was we preserved that company staying in Durham region. We preserved the jobs that were available in that region. It also affected jobs in my area. We had many pensioners in my area who came into my office saying that they needed the support. We stepped up to the plate and delivered on that. To refer to that as a pet project is insulting.

We are proceeding with the construction of this. It's going to make a big difference to the jobs that are available. Going forward, it's going to create the jobs in the area.

I'd just like to read something that pertains to this: "Toronto, February 17, 2011: 407 International Inc. announced today revenues of \$624.3 million for the year ended December 31, 2010, compared to \$560.0 million in 2009"—an increase of \$64.3 million that should have flowed to the provincial treasury, but it flows to Spain.

I agree that this highway should be completed as quickly as possible, and I think we're doing it in a responsible way.

Let's talk about the real reason for this motion. The members of the Progressive Conservative Party are concerned that our government has stepped up to the

plate. We've said we're going to build this highway. We supported General Motors; they didn't support that. We stepped up and we're announcing and doing the work that's moving this project forward. I'm pleased to be a part of a government that has taken this effort in moving forward. I will not support this motion because we're already building the highway.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak, although I must say that I'm completely disappointed in the government's position. I would like to mention something that the member from Thornhill once upon a time said in this Legislature that went over somewhat with humour, and I'll try to inject a little bit of it before I get a little bit more serious: "I don't know what they're smoking," but he wants some of it. What's taken place here and some of the statements are completely avoiding the real issue, which is finishing the 407 and the impacts it's going to have in Oshawa and the community.

The member from Beaches—East York spoke about getting a letter from Peterborough, and I can fully understand why he would get letters from Peterborough, simply because the number two employer in Peterborough is General Motors in Oshawa. Our position and my position have been very clear and straightforward on that issue and what's taking place, and I don't deviate from that; all you have to do is take a look.

I have to congratulate the hard work of Mayor Henry and the council that's taking place in the RAMP it up! campaign. All you have to do is look at the Oshawa website and you'll see exactly what has taken place, from the petitions—the almost 5,000 petitions that were presented in the House today—to going to the various councils and getting support, through Vaughan, St. Catharines and all over Peterborough and other parts of the province, because they are starting to realize the impact of gridlock in the province of Ontario and what this will mean by stopping it at Simcoe Street.

Quite frankly, I think a lot of people need to understand what the real issue is here when we hear about so many side issues that the government has tried to project to deflect the real discussion that we're trying to have, and that is the impact that it's going to have on our community in Oshawa. Should this move forward and end at Simcoe Street, you'll find that the 2,100 vehicles per hour projected to end at that particular site will now flow on to—guess what?—Simcoe Street and the surrounding areas.

1530

Most people may not realize that there is a substantial amount of funds already invested in upgrades on the roads in Columbus as well as Simcoe Street, with all the new construction of housing straight south of that. If all of a sudden you add an additional 2,100 vehicles per hour that were never anticipated to flow there, they have to go somewhere. They're either going north to Port Perry and through that community—the new mayor, Chuck

Mercier, has supported the position of not ending it there—or they're going south and flowing down Taunton Road and then along Taunton Road, eventually coming out at 35/115, and that's where the dilemma comes forward.

I'm not sure if people understand that one improperly loaded transport truck equates to 100,000 vehicles' wear on roads. If you get one improperly loaded truck—quite frankly, the trucking industry is a great industry and they do a great job out there, but we've got different standards and sometimes you get load shifts and things like that, and lo and behold, one vehicle can equate to 100,000 vehicles' impact on that one road. That's what we're talking about, and not only that, but the new housing development.

Yes, the 407 is going to be the largest economic stimulus in the region of Durham, and we need it to go through. But we need to take into consideration what took place in the past. There wasn't any consideration. It was an announcement made by the member from Peterborough. That press release took place, and that's how people from my community of Oshawa and the member from Whitby–Oshawa's community and the member from Durham's community found out that it was ending there.

The difficulty is the impact on the rates. Families in Oshawa are going to have to pay more, and families in the region of Durham are going to have to pay more. For example, the direct impact as it relates to its ending at Simcoe Street means \$75 million more in taxation required to be put into that particular site, which means an 8% rate increase on the taxpayers in Oshawa. Look at what has happened here in Toronto, where Mayor Ford has now moved down to a zero tax increase because people are paying enough. Our great Mayor Henry has got it down to a 0.7% tax increase, because we realize that people have reached pretty much a limit on everything that has taken place.

Not only that, but if you take the 8% that is being considered it would have to be increased by the city of Oshawa, what about the region of Durham? You're looking at an additional \$230 million, which equates to a 10% tax increase: an 18% tax increase to these individuals to cover a road because it's going to end at Simcoe Street as opposed to where the original agreement was moving forward to.

These are the sorts of things that have to be taken into consideration and weren't.

For those who don't realize it, I was the parliamentary assistant for transportation in 1995 with Al Palladini, bless his soul, and I dealt with Don Cousens on the very same issue in Markham, when the highway was to end at 48. The end-of-line gridlock was going to cause a huge concern to Markham. The end result was that we were able to come together, we worked together as a team—that's what this is all about, working together in the best interests of the people of the province of Ontario—and moved it to a less impacting area, being Brock Road in Pickering. Yes, there was a financial impact on the

region, but we agreed and we sat down and dealt with it. And we dealt with Gary Herrema, who was the regional chair at that time, bless his soul, and then Jim Witty, in order to get it to that point, in order to alleviate the end-of-line gridlock that was going to occur in Markham. It's not going to happen here.

Some of the other difficulties—I've taken a different approach. I've actually gone out and met with land-owners along the line. Leslie, a resident of Oshawa, tells me that he and his brothers have not even been approached regarding acquisition of property. Yet the member from Ajax–Pickering specifically stated that it was going to take two and a half years of acquisitions. Well, if you want it to happen fast, it will happen fast.

Not only that, but it was stated regarding the federal assessment. Quite frankly, when the federal assessment came forward with the extension from 48 to Brock Road, it didn't impact the timelines in any way, shape or form. However, if a government wants to impact it and delay it, that's what will happen. I'm concerned that that may be the end result. We'll blame somebody else as to the reason why.

We need to make sure that the impacts on our community in the city of Oshawa and the region are taken into consideration, making everybody part of the plan and how it's going to take place.

Conlin Road: We understand that upgrades are potentially going in there. Guess what? Those upgrades will need to go all the way past Townline, which is a substantial amount of funds that the province may have to come forward with in order to alleviate the gridlock that's going to impact our community.

Once again, I want to thank the member for Whitby–Oshawa, the member for Durham and the great work that Mayor Henry is doing in bringing to light the impact not only of ending the 407 at Simcoe Street, but also of gridlock in the province of Ontario and what it's costing our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Whitby–Oshawa has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: We have had a pretty vigorous debate this afternoon on this topic, and I would like to thank the members from Ajax–Pickering, Durham, Beaches–East York, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, and Oshawa for their comments.

I really take issue with the comments made by the government members, particularly the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who indicated that he was not going to vote for my resolution because the government was already going to build the road. In my view, this is just a little bit too cute by half, because the fact of the matter is, there is no commitment to complete this road right now. There was a signed agreement with the Flow agreement, which is being reneged upon by this government. They've only agreed to complete this road to Simcoe Street. There is absolutely no commitment with respect to the full extension. We've been waiting for

years, and now we're going to continue to wait for years ahead.

The other point that I think needs to be made is, it's been said that we're being very parochial with this extension in Durham region. In fact, with the Let's Ramp It Up campaign that has been undertaken by Mayor Henry, which he has taken to communities across the province of Ontario, he has received endorsements from many other communities not in Durham region, because they understand how important it is to the economic development of southern Ontario. He has received endorsements from the city of Peterborough, from Vaughan, from St. Catharines, from Markham, and he's continuing to travel the province to bring his message about how important this is.

It's time for Durham region to develop in conjunction with the rest of southern Ontario. We can't do that until 407 is completed to its full extent to Highway 35/115. We need to end the gridlock for families who don't get to spend time together because they're sitting in traffic, polluting the environment, and for businesses that aren't going to locate in an area where they're stuck in traffic, and for just-in-time delivery. That just doesn't work in the province of Ontario.

For all of these reasons, we will continue to call upon the McGuinty government to honour their original commitment and complete this project.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for Mrs. Elliott's ballot item has expired. We'll vote on the matter in about 50 minutes.

RAIL SERVICE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the province embrace electrification as a strategy for powering commuter rail by:

- acknowledging that the Georgetown South corridor be declared a priority corridor for electrification of commuter trains, recognizing its high residential density;
- ensuring that the environmental assessment for electrification become consistent with current timelines of the six-month transit environmental assessment;
- including human health and property impacts in the environmental assessment for electrification;
- completing the electrification of the air-rail link by 2015; and
- calling on all levels of government to partner in funding electrification infrastructure improvements.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Albanese moves private member's notice of motion number 63. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very pleased to rise today to bring attention to the importance of embracing electrification as a safe means of powering commuter trains in this province. With particular resonance in communities and neighbourhoods located along rail corridors, especially along the Georgetown corridor, a highly dense residential corridor, this motion supports and reflects the

concerns of these communities, including those of Weston and Mount Dennis in York South–Weston, all of them concerned about pollution from the expanded rail service planned to start in 2015.

Before I start, I would like to welcome constituents, members of the Clean Train Coalition, the Weston Village Residents' Association, and others who are here today. I welcome them to the Legislature and acknowledge their role in working together with elected representatives to advocate for electrification. Residents truly have played a vital role in advocating for a project that benefits the community, and I would like to thank them for that.

I would also like to acknowledge the advocacy of our local city councillor, Frances Nunziata, and our member of Parliament, Alan Tonks. I also want to thank my executive assistant, Maya Gorham, for her assistance and research.

When I first tabled this motion in December of last year, Metrolinx, the regional transportation agency, was still in the process of completing a comprehensive one-year study on the feasibility of electrification for the entire GO rail system.

Last January 16, the recommendations of the GO electrification study were released. The report found many advantages to electrification and, based on the key findings of the study, concluded that there are important time savings that come from electric locomotives. Over the longest trips, time savings would be between five and 10 minutes per trip. With 60% of GO users travelling on the Georgetown and Lakeshore lines, the report recommended both as priority lines for electrification, with the new air-rail link, which will connect Union Station to Pearson International Airport, as the first phase.

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The air-rail link was recommended as first because:

- (1) The link terminates outside Union Station, thereby removing the need to accommodate electrification within the Union Station train shed;
- (2) Metrolinx also owns portions of the Lakeshore and Georgetown corridors over which the air-rail link will operate, making it easier to carry out the implementation work; and
- (3) Infrastructure improvements are already under way in the Georgetown corridor, including the construction of bridges, grade separations and additional track, all necessary for electrification.

These recommendations have particular significance for communities along the Georgetown corridor, a highly dense residential corridor, as I mentioned earlier.

Concerns about the environmental impact of increased rail traffic must be taken into account, and I am pleased that the Metrolinx recommendations gave these important points proper consideration. The report offered more good news, stating that electrifying the two lines could save up to \$18 million annually in operating costs. While initial infrastructure will be costly, the resulting benefit in faster trips and reduced operating costs will greatly complement the objective of getting more people off the

road, relieving traffic congestion and benefiting the regional economy while delivering environmental benefits.

The study also states that electrification will emit less greenhouse gases and would deliver a 94% reduction of GO Transit's future contribution to greenhouse emissions. Furthermore, the cost of electricity is expected to increase at a slower rate than diesel fuel, providing significant cost savings in the long run.

After careful review of the study findings, the board of Metrolinx recommended on January 26 that the province move forward on the electrification of the GO Georgetown and Lakeshore corridors in phases, beginning with the air-rail link. Immediately, the province asked Metrolinx to begin an environmental assessment for an electrified air-rail link. I'm very pleased with this decision because this means that our goal to move forward with electrification has begun, and even the Clean Train Coalition has described this policy shift as a giant step forward.

This decision supports key points outlined in my motion. Having electric trains running through the corridor when the service will be expanded in 2015, however, will elude us. The estimated time frame provided by Metrolinx puts full electrification of the air-rail link seven to nine years from now.

On Friday, February 18, Metrolinx approved a contract to purchase 12 tier 4 diesel engine shuttles for the air-rail link. These are to be the vehicles that will run in time for the Pan Am Games in 2015. These vehicles meet stringent tier 4 emissions standards and are convertible to electric propulsion. Tier 4 standards represent an 80% improvement in quality emissions. My understanding is that because there are no Canadian manufacturers of these highly specialized vehicles, the province is piggybacking on a California procurement and is therefore subject to their timelines. This is also more cost-effective for taxpayers. I'm heartened by the fact that the shuttles are convertible to electrification and pleased to learn that the manufacturer estimates it would take only about two weeks per shuttle to convert.

I want to address now the point in my motion that calls for the completion of the electrification of the air-rail link by 2015. My intention today is to encourage the ministry and Metrolinx to find ways to shorten the timeline for completion of electrification and see electric trains running as soon as possible. One way would be to accelerate the environmental assessment wherever and whenever possible, to expedite the process so that the corridor can be electrified as soon as possible.

I do understand that in some cases consultation with the community may take longer. This is the first time we are going to electrify rail lines in Ontario, and there are bound to be many considerations that will have to be taken into account. The location of power lines and power stations, for example, will need careful review within the community.

We've heard from the experts that electrification takes time and money, so today I call on other levels of government to join us and partner with us in funding the

electrification infrastructure improvements. My federal counterpart, MP Alan Tonks, has tabled a motion in the House of Commons. The motion calls for federal-provincial coordination in support of electrification of urban commuter rails as part of a national transportation strategy.

The province of Ontario is undertaking the largest transit expansion in half a century. Other levels of government are duty-bound to assist in the conversion to electrification, an upgrade to our infrastructure which will benefit the entire regional economy and, at the same time, deliver environmental benefits.

Metrolinx estimates it will take seven to nine years just to electrify the air-rail link, 13 years to reach Oshawa and 17 years to reach Hamilton. The dates reflect three to four years for the environmental assessment and having to locate electrical substations along the tracks. However, I firmly believe that if we continue to push for the required adjustments, electrification of the air-rail link by 2015 is achievable. I continue to advocate for the 2015 date as a target for completion of construction. I believe we can, as a Legislature, set expectations and targets. If we do not, then we are leaving this decision to Metrolinx.

My message to Metrolinx is that they need to work harder, be more efficient and, knowing the importance of electrification to the people living along the corridor, innovate, create and resolve. The year 2015 is still four years away. Ontario has taken a bold step to move to electrification and, to some extent, we are on new ground. While I do not believe we should cut corners, I do think we need to recognize the need to set bold targets to keep our transportation agency and others focused on the important priority of electric trains.

The Georgetown South project and air-rail link project have a long history in the community of York South-Weston. Since I've been elected I've worked, together with the community and at the provincial level, to secure a number of substantial changes to the original GO expansion in the air-rail link proposal and to ensure that we optimize every opportunity. Let's remember that at one point, many years ago, the air-rail link was to fly right through Weston. There have been many important improvements since then.

These improvements mean important investments in our community. We have been able to secure them by working together. On opening day, both GO trains and air-rail link will have a stop in Weston, meaning the trains will travel through Weston at a slower speed and be available for local use. The trains will run under a covered tunnel under two streets in Weston. This will help to reduce noise and vibration and improve safety in this specific area. We will get a new GO air-rail link station, a great benefit for us all.

In conclusion, expanded transit will bring tremendous opportunity, revitalize and increase mobility and accessibility in a community underserved by transit for decades. We will continue to ensure that expanded transit moves forward, not at the expense of the communities along the corridor but to the advantage of these com-

munities. I want to emphasize once more the concerns of all the residents living along the rail corridor, from Weston to Union.

I call on Metrolinx to embark on an aggressive plan to complete electrification as soon as possible, especially now that a most significant study into this matter has been completed.

The first step was embracing electrification; this has been done. The next step is the environmental assessment; this has been launched. I urge Metrolinx to work towards the next step and the next goal, which will see the electrification of infrastructure in priority areas and along the rail track completed by 2015.

I ask all members of this House to support my motion.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

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Mr. Frank Klees: I'm participating in this debate with very mixed feelings. I want to recognize, of course, the member from York–South Weston for her initiative. But as a member of this Legislature who has been following this issue and as the critic for transportation, I also have to view with a great deal of cynicism this resolution.

The reason that I say that is that we have seen this government deal with issues on this very same basis many times far too often, where a member of the government finds that a decision of the government is causing them a great deal of agony within their own constituency because they know that the decision that was being made is contrary to the will of the people who live in that riding. I know that the honourable member has been hearing from her constituents, as have others in this House; Mr. Ruprecht is one of them.

There is no question that in this particular circumstance, we have—I don't doubt at all that the member from York South–Weston is sincere in terms of bringing this forward and calling on Metrolinx to move forward with electrification of this air-rail link—no doubt. But the honourable member is not supported by her government. She is not supported by the Minister of Transportation. She is not supported by her colleagues who, at the end of the day, would have an opportunity—and they'll pass this resolution.

But I say to the honourable member, the issue is not whether this resolution passes; it's whether or not action is taken by the government to actually deal with it. We have a very strong indication already that that is not happening.

I'll give you this example: We have nothing from Metrolinx at this point in time, or the government, other than an undertaking for environmental assessment. That's it.

What we have, however, is a very strong indication from Metrolinx that they are moving ahead, not with electrification at all. They're moving ahead with the purchase of equipment for this air-rail link that involves diesel vehicles. Anyone who is looking at this file and who has followed it at all will know that the decision

around this, first of all, is faulty from an administration standpoint; it demonstrates serious mismanagement of this entire file and total disregard for the appeal for this line to be electrified.

Here's my thought on this. Why? The member might say, "Well, why is this happening?" Here's the reason: Because the government—not Metrolinx—has given an artificial timeline for this air-rail link to be completed, in time for the Pan Am Games 2015.

We've had discussions about the air-rail link for years. I applaud the fact that the decision has been made to move forward. But for the government to put an artificial timeline in place of 2015—it has already written the story because Metrolinx is now saying we can't possibly meet that timeline with an electrification project. There are some of us who question that as well because I do believe it is possible.

Then you have to ask yourself the question, why would they purchase equipment that is diesel equipment if, in fact, they intend to have this as an electrified line? The Minister of Transportation answers, "Well, these are convertible, and we can always have them converted." The fact of the matter is that, first of all, the expense to do that is typical of how this government does its business. On any project, they have yet to demonstrate that they do any kind of long-term planning. Where is the cost-benefit analysis for how they're approaching this project?

The estimates in terms of the additional cost for doing it this way, rather than going with an electrification project from the very beginning, are that the cost can be as much as \$400 million. The member will argue that it will be less than that, but the bottom line is that no one disputes the fact that it will be ultimately much more expensive to go the route that the government is taking now.

Here's what I think is happening today. I don't want to discourage the member, but I have to be truthful. I believe that this bill before us is simply an opportunity for the member to say to her constituents and other Liberal members, "Look, the government passed a resolution that calls for electrification. The election is eight months from now. For the next eight months, we can use this bill"—which will be passed by this Legislature, no doubt—"as evidence that we're on your side." What will happen—

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Sounds very good to me.

Mr. Frank Klees: I know. The member says it sounds good, and Mr. Ruprecht knows well how to deal with these things. No one in this place knows better, whether it's by using a petition or a private member's bill, how to convince his constituents that he's fighting for them.

But here, this is a losing battle, I say to the member from York South–Weston, because the government has already made its mind up.

Here's what should happen: If the minister is serious, the minister should immediately direct Metrolinx not to sign that contract with the Japanese company from whom they're buying those diesel cars; and the minister should

immediately direct Metrolinx to put out a full, open request for proposals for equipment that can, in fact, accommodate from the beginning an electrified line. Why? Because that is the right thing to do; it's the most economical thing to do.

Here's the other thing that the government should immediately do: Pull the plug on this artificial timeline of the Pan Am Games, because what has happened—and by the way, the minister delivered to me a letter from the fairness commission. They wanted to cover their behinds in terms of the question I put to the minister about the fact that the contract for this equipment with the Japanese company is single-sourced, sole-sourced, and didn't have the appropriate process. The Fairness Commissioner said it did, because they went through a process. The Fairness Commissioner, in his letter, says the timeline, the time constraints, really forced Metrolinx to take the position that they did and to use the California open-tender process.

Look, this is a multi-billion dollar project. There is no way that the government should be putting an artificial timeline in place that actually compromises both the project, in terms of its delivery, and the cost.

Dalton McGuinty should stop this. I say to the member from York South–Weston, as much as I appreciate your personal interest in this and what you're trying to do, what this resolution should have said is that this Legislature calls on the government to: (1) remove the artificial timeline; (2) stop this ridiculous bidding process, or this contract, for diesel equipment; and that this project should be revisited and should be constructed as an electrified line, beginning with day one. That's what it should have said. My heart would be in that totally, and I believe that it would have sent the appropriate message not only to the government but also to the constituents of all of these ridings, including Mr. Ruprecht's, that in fact their members are standing with them and aren't simply trying to buy some cover through a private member's resolution. I'm sorry to the member from York South–Weston. I wish I could have been less direct, but that's not my nature.

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I'm going to vote for this resolution because I believe that, in principle, the intent is right, but I tell you, this will have no effect on what the government is going to do. That's the unfortunate side. If we can all convince the Premier and the minister to put an end to this fiasco and save not only multi-millions of dollars, because the project is being mismanaged, but also address the health and environmental issues that are very clearly on the table and that need to be addressed if this is going to be done right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: There are some days you've got to really love this place. This is one of those days.

I grew up in an NDP/Tory household. I don't know whether it was my uncle the Tory or my father, who was an NDP member, who said it, but he said, "If you ask a

Liberal whether they have principles, they'll tell you, 'Of course, we have principles, and if you don't like those, we've got some others.'" I grew up with that. It's not mine, so don't blame me. It's either my father or my uncle. I like to think better of my friends across the aisle. I really, really do.

But here we have an instance where you've got the government clearly buying diesel trains, and you've got a member clearly calling for electrification now. Something's got to give. Right? You can't stand in two places at the same time. It just isn't physically possible.

By the way, most of what I'm going to say is because of the Ontario Clean Train Coalition. I want to thank them for being here, and I'm going to mention them by name at the end of my remarks.

Timeline: You know just yesterday Delhi cut the ribbon on an air-rail link. Their air-rail link is, of course, electric. Like every other major city in the world, it's electric. Guess how fast they did it? Do you hazard a guess, member from Davenport, member from York South–Weston? How fast did they build an electric air-rail link in Delhi? Twenty-seven months.

I think we can agree that we don't need an environmental assessment to show that electric is better. Come on, folks. Every other major centre in the world doesn't invest in diesel, invests only in electric. Why is that? Why do we have to study this for years to discover what everybody else already knows and, as my friend from Newmarket–Aurora pointed out, spend all sorts of taxpayers' money—waste all sorts of taxpayers' money—on doing a job twice that could be done once and well.

Let me tell you that it's going to go rumbling through the member from York South–Weston's riding, my riding, the member for Davenport's riding and others'. It's going to rumble through there. It's not going to be carrying people, working families who have to get from one place to another. It's going to be carrying a handful of wealthy tourists who are going to pay—guess what? This is what they're going to pay for a fare. Not \$4 like they do in Vancouver, not \$4 on their air-rail link. No, no, no.

We are told not the exact amount, but if the members had been—and I wish they had been at the Metrolinx meeting. To stand up for your community, you should go to these meetings. You should go to the clean train demonstrations. I haven't made them all, but I've made some of them. Then you would have these facts at your fingertips.

Here's one of them: They're saying that the fares will be competitive with taxi or limo fares to downtown Toronto. A taxi fare to Union Station is \$53; a limo is \$58. GO Train—guess what? It's \$5.55. The TTC is \$2.50. Compare this with Vancouver at \$4. We're going to be shuttling in luxury cars a handful of tourists—even the athletes aren't taking these—from the airport. And what are we doing? Why the rush? For the Pan Am Games, for two weeks of supposedly green games—not so green.

To the issue of diesel: Is there such a thing as clean diesel? Absolutely not; that's an oxymoron. It's certainly moronic. There is no such thing as clean diesel. In fact, nowhere in the world does this supposed tier 4 diesel exist—nowhere. This is an experiment. Even the gentleman who put forward the proposal at the Metrolinx meeting admitted that, "Well, if we can't convert them, if it doesn't work out, because after all it's an experiment, we can always shuttle them off. We'll use them as diesel trains somewhere else." There's not even a commitment to convert these trains, not even from the board of Metrolinx. There's not a commitment to convert them. In fact, he's already suggesting that won't happen; they'll just be used as diesel trains and moved somewhere else.

The extra rail: \$400 million. This is absurd. By the way, I say there's no clean diesel. It's like talking about clean coal. That's sort of an analogy. And coal is a good analogy. This government has been promising to phase out the coal-fired plants since they were elected in 2003, and every time they talk about it we get a new date. Guess what? The same thing is going to happen with electric trains, and is happening with electric trains. And guess what? Coal usage is up 28% since this government took office—up 28%. Are we going to see the same thing with diesel? Of course we are. They're going to rush through these neighbourhoods, polluting up to 300,000 residents who live near the tracks—30,000 children.

The Toronto District School Board has passed a resolution against diesel trains. They're getting diesel trains. That's what was agreed to be bought. I was at the meeting, I was there. That's exactly what they said.

For those who are watching at home, so they know what's going on here, the member from York South-Weston has introduced a resolution. Well, it's a non-binding resolution. It's a private member's non-binding resolution. It's a nice thing to do, but it ain't gonna stop the McGuinty government—or Metrolinx or anybody—from buying diesel trains. It's a nice thing to do. It's a gesture. I don't want to be cynical either. I think it's wonderful.

Thank God for the Ontario Clean Train Coalition that got us to this point where at least she feels she has to stand up and make a nice gesture in this regard. Really, thank God for all the citizens who have been so active around this issue. We've had thousands and thousands of petitions read into this chamber about this issue. Of course this is going to be an election issue up and down the tracks. We will make it so. Everyone who cares about the environment, everybody who cares about this issue will make it an election issue.

So it's not enough just to say, "Well, by 2050," because we heard the promises about coal. What was the first date? By 2007 all the coal-fired plants would be closed. Now it's 2014. Guess what? That's conveniently after the next election. I wouldn't even put it past this government to promise that they will electrify by 2015. Who's going to hold them to it? That promise means nothing if they're signing on the line to buy diesel right now.

The first thing that has to happen, the first thing we've got to guarantee from Metrolinx about, is that they will not buy these trains, end of story. They will not buy these trains. That's the very first thing. Then we'll entertain some promises about what they might buy. But we're not going to see that.

There was, of course, the statement, "We've been waiting forever for this air-rail link." To me, let's wait another few years and get it right, if we do it all. Also, there are other ways of moving people from the airport to downtown Toronto. It's sad.

Will it cost more? Of course it will. The cost of converting vehicles we guess at about \$1 million to \$2 million per vehicle. So, there you go. That extra track, as I said: \$400 million to install, mostly because of a new tunnel needed on the 401. And of course, this is another point that needs to be made: These diesel vehicles will pollute more than the cars they replace, because they're not really replacing cars; they're adding travel. They're adding tourist travel from the airport to downtown. That's what they're doing, really. And of course, they're only carrying a few passengers per car.

1610

The very fact that we're discussing this is laughable. There's a wonderful letter to an editor that talked about being in Finland. I've been in Sweden—anybody who's travelled anywhere. In Finland, they actually found this laughable, that the Ontario Legislature was discussing investing in diesel. I mean, this is so behind the times. This is absurd. This is beyond penny-wise and pound foolish.

I have to say that if the McGuinty government, the cabinet—we know all the decisions come out of the corner office; we're not naive on this side of the floor—really valued the seats in York South-Weston and Davenport enough, if they really valued their members from those ridings, then they would also step up and make these promises.

After all, the member from Oakville is in the House this afternoon. The member from Oakville: \$1 billion, maybe, they invested to get the gas plant out of his riding because—now, he had Erin Brockovich. Maybe we need Erin Brockovich to come in on the clean train issue. Maybe then Mr. McGuinty, our Premier, will step and up save these, too. Is that what it takes? We're not talking about a dime here, and you got \$1 billion.

All we're asking here, at the end of the day, is to do the same thing: the environmentally wise thing, the fiscally responsible thing and, of course, the absolutely popular thing, because you're looking at people who live along that rail corridor who are going to wake up in 2015 and see these trains rushing past their windows. They're not going to be pleased.

What this government is trying to do is to push that off as far into the future as possible and pretend that maybe someday, if we get very lucky, electrification will happen, but not now. Pie in the sky, but no pie now. Well, you know what? That's not good enough. We want and the people of our ridings want absolute guarantees

that the sale will not go through. We want absolute guarantees that nothing but electric will be bought. We want to see it passed by the Metrolinx board.

I've only got about a minute left, so I just want to wrap up by thanking some very key people who are here. First of all, from the Clean Train Coalition, we have Mike Sullivan, Rick Ciccarelli, Laura Alderson, Elaine Flis, Tony Turrittin, Greg Gormick and Mr. Mulally—first name?

Interruption.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Bill. And from Community Air, Barry Lipton. Thank you so much for being here, for witnessing this, for all your incredible work. You have really stood up for all the residents of our community, and we in this Legislature thank you for that.

Now we turn to the government. Yes, of course, we'll support this motion. We support motherhood and apple pie too, I would say to the members from Davenport and York South–Weston. But you know what? We want the apple pie now. Right? No buys for diesel. No buys at all for diesel: not four, not 12, not 18, not one. Not one diesel train do we want running through our communities, and nothing else will satisfy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to speak in support of the motion by my colleague the MPP for York South–Weston.

You might ask, "Why does the MPP from Guelph care about this particular issue?" Of course, the answer is that the Georgetown South line eventually ends up in Guelph and then Kitchener. This is my GO train to connect to downtown Toronto, so this is actually an issue we care about.

If you are going to get from downtown Toronto to Kitchener and Guelph on a train, you would find that the ownership of the tracks is very complicated. You start out downtown, here at Union Station, on tracks that belong to GO. Then, as you get farther out, you're on tracks that belong to CN. And then as you get farther out west of Georgetown, you're on tracks which originally belonged to CN but which are now leased forever to something called the Goderich Exeter Railway. The Goderich Exeter Railway belongs to an American rail line, so any approvals to talk about anything with them have to ultimately come out of the States.

So it's a very complicated issue if you want to do an EA all the way to Guelph. To get an EA for diesel from Georgetown to Kitchener actually took two years. In order to get an agreement for the city of Guelph to build a transit hub to take GO trains, city buses and Greyhounds all in one hub next to the tracks, it took 12 months. That's just next to the tracks; it took 12 months. In order to do an EA on the whole line, it would take forever.

So I am absolutely delighted that our colleague the Minister of Transportation, Kathleen Wynne, has chosen to initially focus on the piece that can actually be done quickly, which is the air-rail link from downtown to

Pearson, and that she has ordered the EA to go ahead on the piece that can go quickly, because dragging us into it, the people out in Guelph and Kitchener, would just slow things down for the people who live in Davenport and York South–Weston. So the route that we are taking is going to get electrification there much more quickly, and I'm delighted to know that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: First, let me assure everyone that this is a very reasonable position to take, and I'm not quite as cynical as the member from Newmarket–Aurora, because he stands up in the House and—just remember what happened in the Junction triangle, where the trains are going through. It was the Conservative government that we had to push into changing pollution laws, because the Junction triangle at that time, about 15 years ago, was one of the most polluted areas in all of Canada. I know I went through there. We had petitions going through there, we had marches going through there and we convinced your former leader—in fact, Andrew Brandt, whom I respect a great deal; he was the Minister of the Environment at that time. We had to drag him into the 20th century, as you are trying to do today, in a way, and say, "Look, these environmental laws have to change."

Now, the member from Newmarket–Aurora is standing up today and saying he's going to support the petition, in a sort of cynical manner. We will applaud you when you vote for it, and we will also certainly applaud that member from Parkdale–High Park, because in her eloquent remarks she says why, in fact, we should go for electrification very quickly. Now let me tell her and everyone in this House, I can't think of one member who would not want to go for electrification immediately, right now. But remember this, on the opposition side you are unfortunately not responsible for the budget. I mean, by now there's got to be a reasonable way to look at this and to say what we should do now, almost immediately.

Now, I'm not as cynical as the opposition, who are saying, "This is just a ruse to get over the election." That's essentially what you're saying, and that's not really reasonable. That's somewhat unreasonable to say. The reasonable thing to say is simply this: We have a problem here, yes, and we tried to electrify, and there are many reasons. Of course I know one of the members of the Clean Train Coalition, and he's done a great job, no doubt about it, and we thank him for it. But that is the way democracy works, isn't it? What's wrong?

First of all, the government has made a decision because we wanted the Pan Am Games. You supported them. The opposition supported them. We all supported the Pan Am Games. Okay? One of the parts of the Pan Am Games was that we get a train that runs from the airport quickly into Union Station, no doubt about that. But how do we go about doing that? Okay, fine. We made a commitment, but now let's look at what we've done here.

First of all, I try to remind all of you that we're trying to get people out of their cars. Yes or no? That's our

objective. If you went to the pumps this morning, what did you pay for a gallon of gas or a litre of gas? Imagine. A litre of gas today is what? It's \$1.20. Wow. Wouldn't that convince me to take the air-rail link from Union Station over to the airport? Of course it would, and the other way around as well, because it gets more expensive. That doesn't necessarily mean that tickets will get more expensive, although I agree with you in a way—it's too high. Of course it's a bit too high, but it's a reasonable step to take. It's not unreasonable, especially as we heard today. There were so many points being made and so many points being raised.

Now, let me tell you this, especially all the people who are listening to this debate: It is true that all construction that they're doing right now includes a built-in electrification infrastructure, such as bridges to meet the height requirements, track spacing, signal systems, and on and on it goes. In other words, are we doing something about electrification now, or is this just a government piece of propaganda? No, we are. That's what the engineers are doing. It's not into the future; we're doing it now. We're electrifying—we're doing the preparations in terms of ensuring that electrification can take place in stages, and that's reasonable.

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Now, Metrolinx, the Premier and our government made a commitment, and the commitment is we will electrify. What should we electrify first? All of us agree the first part of electrification should be the air-rail link, no doubt about it, so let's move in that direction. But why not electrify the other parts as well? Of course, but let's look at the studies. What do the studies say? I think its going to cost us \$1.8 billion—that's the latest figure that I have here—to electrify not just the air-rail link but also the Georgetown corridor, which is important, and the Lakeshore line. That has to be our priority.

How do we go about doing that? What is the most reasonable way to do it? First, you ensure that all the construction includes this built-in electrification infrastructure; that's the first thing. Have we done that? Are we kidding here? No, we have done that. They're doing that at this very point.

What's the second point I want to bring up? That is this: How does a government begin to open the process of ensuring that the right decisions are made? Okay, it's a democratic process. You bring out a policy, and you let the people then respond to it.

This is what the Clean Train Coalition has done and many others, for that matter. I have a whole list of people who have said, "Okay, let's electrify." We agree with electrification. For instance, it says here as you said earlier, member from Parkdale–High Park, the Toronto District School Board has said electrification works. Toronto's medical officer of health: "It's important." Toronto city council has said it's important. Of course, the Clean Air Coalition which is present today: "It's important." The environmental organizations, the Toronto Environmental Alliance, the Canadian Environmental Law Association: "Sure."

But in addition, let me also indicate this: It is also the responsibility of the city to come to the table. What about the federal government? Some of the tracks are really the responsibility of the federal government as well. Where are they? Has Mr. Klees—who has said he's going to support this resolution, and we'll thank him for it—indicated at all that maybe the federal government should come in on this as well and come in and help us with a few dollars and cents? No, not one word indicating that the federal government also has a responsibility here. Not one word. Well, they deserve to come in, too. Why shouldn't they pay as well? It helps all of the residents.

Now, what made this government think about electrification? One, look at this here: There are 300,000 men, women and children living within one kilometre of the track. That's true. I myself went close to the tracks many times, and even though the new report says the impact of pollution is minimal, well, to me that's a doubtful statement, quite honestly. It's doubtful because if you go down there living close to the track, once a week you go down and run your fingers across one of the banisters, the balconies, then go like this, you'll see right away there's much more pollution, much more dust, much more dust particles on your finger than if you would go to Rosedale, where trains don't run by. Yet we hear that this report says it's minimal. Well, it might be minimal to them, but it certainly wouldn't be minimal to the people who have to live near the tracks.

Secondly, what about this business—but I digress. Let me first of all continue and say when the residents are saying to us, "Look, you've got to do this quicker," we say, "Okay, why?" Well here it is. We're going to have 464 diesel trains running daily. This will make it the busiest diesel rail corridor on the planet. Obviously, Mr. Premier, government members, come on now, guys, women and men over here, make a change. I mean come on; something's got to give. Let's go for electrification quicker than before.

Applause.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Well, thank you.

We're doing that. We're taking the step in the right direction. Wouldn't you agree with that? Is this government not taking a step in the right direction with this resolution? Has Metrolinx not made a commitment? Let's not be cynical. Has the government not made a commitment that we want to electrify? Are we not moving in the right direction? Yes, and that's why it is reasonable to take one step—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The member for York South–Weston has two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I want to thank the members for Newmarket–Aurora and Parkdale–High Park, the member from Guelph and obviously the member from Davenport, who shared a lot of my same concerns in their debate.

I want to comment on some of the points that were made. For example, the member for Newmarket–Aurora

said that this was probably a losing battle. Well, I do not share his cynicism, Tony; just like you, I don't share that.

In my maiden speech I remember I was advocating for a stop in Weston, and at that time, no one thought that we would get a commitment from the government, so I don't share that cynicism. I think that if we work together, if we make a commitment together as a Legislature, we can set the expectations and we can set the standards and lay down the timeline. I think we can still do it. We're still four years away, and yes, this is to encourage the ministry to direct Metrolinx in order to adapt to those timelines.

Another point that was made was that this is a nice gesture, but that's what we do as MPPs. That's how we encourage the government and the ministries to make our point about what the concerns in our constituency are. This is what we do. The opposition especially knows well what the point of motions and resolutions is. That's what it is. So you know that well.

Why do we need to study this? It's a shared freight and passenger line, which is different from other parts of the world, and we are here debating this because our constituents are concerned about their health and about the property impacts. That's very important—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The time provided for private members' public business is now expired. It's time to vote.

We'll first deal with ballot item number 61, standing in the name of Mrs. Savoline.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT
(DAMAGE DEPOSITS), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION
(DÉPÔTS POUR DOMMAGES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Savoline has moved second reading of Bill 145, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. 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 will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members after we vote on the next two ballot items.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 62.

Mrs. Elliott has moved private members' notice of motion number 65. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard some nos.

All those in favourite of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members after we deal with the next ballot item.

RAIL SERVICE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 63. Mrs. Albanese has moved private members' notice of motion number 63. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1629 to 1634.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT
(DAMAGE DEPOSITS), 2011

LOI DE 2011 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR
LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION
(DÉPÔTS POUR DOMMAGES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Savoline has moved second reading of Bill 145, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
Elliott, Christine	O'Toole, John	
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	DiNovo, Cheri	Prue, Michael
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Best, Margaret	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Moridi, Reza	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dhillon, Vic	Pendergast, Leeanna	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Phillips, Gerry	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 7; the nays are 26.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll open the doors for 30 seconds.

HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Elliott has moved private member's notice of motion number 65.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
DiNovo, Cheri	Klees, Frank	Prue, Michael
Elliott, Christine	O'Toole, John	Savoline, Joyce

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Phillips, Gerry
Arthurs, Wayne	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Qaadri, Shafiq
Balkissoon, Bas	Jaczek, Helena	Rinaldi, Lou

Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Johnson, Rick	Ruprecht, Tony
Best, Margaret	Kular, Kuldip	Sandals, Liz
Cansfield, Donna H.	Levac, Dave	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Moridi, Reza	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Pendergast, Leeanna	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 9; the nays are 23.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Orders of the day.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Phillips has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1639.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
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Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
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Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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, P.C., Hon. / L'hon. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	
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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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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie

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Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
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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) Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Kenora–Rainy River 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 civiles et de l'Immigration
Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina Cambridge London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales

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Murdoch, Bill (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R (LIB)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Ramal, Khalil (LIB) Ramsay, David (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) Sandals, Liz (LIB) Savoline, Joyce (PC) Sergio, Mario (LIB) Shurman, Peter (PC) Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord London–Fanshawe Timiskaming–Cochrane Northumberland–Quinte West Davenport Guelph Burlington York West / York-Ouest Thornhill Nipissing	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Sorbara, Greg (LIB) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Sterling, Norman W. (PC) Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Vaughan Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Carleton–Mississippi Mills Toronto–Danforth	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail 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
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Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Kim Craitor, Bob Delaney
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Reza Moridi, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Joe Dickson
Sylvia Jones, Amrit Mangat
Norm Miller, Yasir Naqvi
Michael Prue, Mario Sergio
Maria Van Bommel
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France Gélinas, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Peter Shurman, Norman W. Sterling
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craitor
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qaadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Select Committee on the proposed transaction of the TMX
Group and the London Stock Exchange Group / Comité
spécial sur la transaction proposée entre le Groupe TMX et le
London Stock Exchange Group**

Chair / Président: Gerry Phillips
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Frank Klees
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Gilles Bisson, Michael A. Brown
Frank Klees, Gerry Phillips
Peter Shurman, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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