



No. 4B

N° 4B

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

First Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Première session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 26 October 1999

Mardi 26 octobre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 October 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 octobre 1999

The House met at 1830.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Further debate.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'd like to advise the House that I will be sharing my time with the member for York North and the member for Peterborough.

Mr Speaker, I'd like to start by congratulating you on your appointment. It's a privilege to have you in the chair.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): Where's the gown?

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, where is the gown, Mr Speaker?

I would like to also congratulate you on your re-election to this House. I know you are as proud to have been re-elected to sit in this House and to serve your riding as I am to serve the people of my riding.

You will be interested to learn that I return to this House with the support of 51% of the decided voters of my riding. That was overwhelming to me on election night. To come from a riding where the populace has been fairly split on election nights in the past and to receive such overwhelming support warms my heart. But it reconfirmed for me the understanding of how inter-linked our provincial government is in the everyday lives of voters, families, friends and loved ones. It's an honour for me to take my place in this House again, Mr Speaker. I want it to be known to you that I look forward to standing in this place with the intent of using every ounce of positive energy I possess to do the best job I possibly can for the constituents of my riding.

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: It's bad enough to be heckled by the members of the opposition, but to be heckled by my own colleagues?

I want to also congratulate the opposition parties for the calibre of candidates they had in the last election campaign in my riding. The candidates represented their views very well, but the fact is that more voters suppor-

ted my views and the views and policies of our party than supported the views and policies of all of the other candidates combined. I received more voter support than any candidate before. For this I am truly thankful and I do want to extend my thanks to all the members of my riding.

But I also want to take the opportunity to thank the Leader of the Opposition and the former Liberal health critic, who came into my riding during the election campaign. Why do I want to thank them? I want to thank them because without them my job of getting re-elected would have been much harder.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Now you're getting into the real stuff.

Mr Wettlaufer: Now I'm getting into the real stuff. You've got it.

I would like to advise the former Liberal health critic, for instance, that he divided the professional health care workers in my riding into two groups. One group is still laughing over the level of amateurism that he presented during the election campaign—I can't even read this; I've got prompt notes here and I can't even read them—and also the number of inaccuracies he presented during the campaign. But he also had another level of professional health care critics who are shaking their heads in bewilderment at some of the statements he made.

Now, I can't say in this House, Mr Speaker, that he deliberately distorted the facts. I can't say that. You know that I can't say that. You would make me withdraw it if I said it. However, the members of the professional health care community told me many times, over and over again, that they could not get over what they thought were distortions. So it's with great relish that I thank—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: I didn't say it.

It's with great relish that I thank the former Liberal health critic, but I also want to thank the Liberal leader. He came into the riding—

Mr Morley Kells (Etobicoke-Lakeshore): How many times?

Mr Wettlaufer: Let's not worry about how many times he came into the riding. After the first time he came into the riding, I'm sure he was very embarrassed. You see, he had set up a media event with one of the local hospitals, with local nurses, and he had all these cameras trained on him as he came in. I remember watching this on TV. He was walking up the aisle and he walked into the room in which were to be assembled

hundreds of people. Imagine his embarrassment. No one was there. The room was empty.

You know that I am a very compassionate, sympathetic person, and I felt for him. I felt very dearly for him. But that really helped me get re-elected, so I do thank him. What I couldn't get over was that nobody from his own party, from his own Liberal association, was there. All I could say was that that pointed out the dismal failure that was the Liberals' health policy during the election campaign, and leading up to the election campaign, for that matter.

You see, when I got elected in 1995, it was my number one priority to improve the health care system in our riding, a riding which had been totally neglected by the two previous governments. It is not neglected any more.

Since the election campaign, the Leader of the Opposition has appointed a member of his party to shadow my riding and to shadow the Cambridge riding, represented by Mr Martiniuk. Do you know that this member of the Liberal Party admitted to the media that he knew nothing about my riding? That is arrogance. That is the height of arrogance. The Leader of the Opposition, who has accused us of being arrogant, appoints a member of his own caucus to shadow a riding which is extremely well served, and his own member admits that he knows nothing about my riding. Imagine the effrontery to the people of my riding, a riding that I enjoy representing, a riding whose citizens I love.

In all fairness to the voters in my riding, the failure of the Liberals' policy when they were in power—let's just look at what they didn't do. They didn't do anything with cardiac care. They didn't do anything with cancer care. They didn't do anything with an MRI. They didn't do anything with long-term-care beds. They didn't do anything with any psychiatric beds. Absolutely nothing.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Well, we're not in government.

1840

Mr Wettlaufer: You were in government for five years and you did nothing. Oh, I'm sorry, you did do something. You had 33 tax increases. I forgot about that: 33 tax increases. How could I possibly forget that?

We haven't had 33 tax increases; our government has had 99 tax decreases. We have a bolstered economy, and what is that economy doing? Tax decreases are boosting the economy of this province. We have the best economy in all of the G7. We have improved trade, and what is that doing? It means more jobs. It means more revenue for the province, and what does more revenue do? Revenue means that we can spend more money on health care, we can spend more money on cardiac care, we can spend more money on cancer facilities, on MRI, on long-term care, on psychiatric beds.

The quality of services in my riding in health care, which was allowed for deteriorate for 10 years, is now on the upswing. I thank my colleagues for their assistance in this: Gerry Martiniuk, the member for Cambridge, and

Elizabeth Witmer, the Minister of Health and member for Kitchener-Waterloo riding.

The standard of the declining facilities in our region prompted one prominent physician in 1994 to say that the hospital emergency wards in our hospitals in the region of Waterloo were equivalent to Third World standards. He said that prior to our coming into power. Imagine, a community that is so important, a community that has a GDP equivalent to the province of New Brunswick, a \$14-billion GDP, and we had emergency wards equivalent to Third World standards during the terms of the Liberal and the NDP governments. Well, we don't any more. It was incomprehensible then, and now we have an admirable record of achievement.

Mr Speaker, I wonder if you can remember. Remember I said the Liberals increased taxes? Do you remember how many times I said? Was it 10 times? No. Was it 20 times? No. Was it 30 times? Believe it or not, no, it wasn't. It was more than 30 times. It was 33 times. Keep that in mind. The Liberal government, between 1985 and 1990, raised taxes 33 times. That was even more than the NDP government.

Did the Liberal Party run on that kind of platform? Did they run on, "Vote for us and we'll increase your taxes 33 times"? No, they didn't do that, but they inflicted it on Ontario. What a travesty.

Then along came the NDP. They increased taxes 32 times. Do you remember that, Mr Speaker? I know you remember that—32 times. Oh, did we ever have a great economy when the NDP was in power. Didn't we have a great economy? Yeah, we sure did. Boy, what a recession we had. Jobs went down like that.

What has happened under our government? Jobs have gone up: 517,000 net new jobs. Keep that figure in mind, because that's going to come up time and time again over the next month. After next month I'll bet you that number will have increased too.

What has happened as a result of that? We have a good economy. We have citizens with hope. Do you know, as a result of that the Premier today announced that we'll have a taxpayer protection act? I know that the people of my riding have great hopes that the taxpayer protection act will be passed into law by Christmas. I have every confidence that our government is going to pass that legislation.

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): The Liberals will support it.

Mr Wettlaufer: One of my colleagues—I didn't see which one—said, "The Liberals will support it." I don't believe for a minute that the Liberals will support it, because they will not accept the fact that governments cannot increase taxes without going to the public. They will not accept the fact that you just can't keep pouring taxpayers' money into programs which don't produce anything.

I have to talk about all the things that are happening to health care in my community because I'm very proud of it. We will have a cardiac care centre very soon. Grand River Hospital will be breaking ground for the addition

of a new cancer treatment centre. Of course, we have the ICU-CCU units which were opened about 18 months ago, and with the support of this government, we will have 1,700 more long-term care beds in our region—1,700 badly needed long-term care beds. These advances in equipment, facilities and services are the direct result of this government's commitment to improving the health care system in this province.

I can recall very vividly that in 1995 the Liberals campaigned on spending \$17 billion in health care annually. What are we spending now? We're spending \$18.9 billion and that figure is going to go up by 20%. Not a bad record of achievement, I think.

Mr Gerretsen: When will that be?

Mr Wettlaufer: But the job has just begun. We know that. The member from—it used to be Kingston and the Islands—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: It's still Kingston and the Islands. I'm glad to hear that. He says, "When will that be by?" That will be by the year 2004. We will have all those accomplishments in five years.

What would have happened under your government? Ha, ha, ha. Zilch. Nada. They would have done nothing if they had been the government. They would have done absolutely nothing if they had been the government.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to know, is it unparliamentary for a member to refer to another member and then go, "Ha, ha, ha?" That's what I'd like to know.

The Acting Speaker: I don't think you have a point of order.

Mr Wettlaufer: I would like to comment on some of the things we have heard around here. In the last few days we have heard comments about arrogance. What I saw today in the opposition benches was to me a demonstration of arrogance. We had a number of questions from the opposition directed to our cabinet ministers, and when our cabinet ministers attempted to answer the questions, the heckling was so bad from the opposition benches that the Speaker had to stand and call order because he couldn't hear the answers.

That is arrogance. I'm not talking about good-natured heckling, which we know goes on in this House all the time. The Speaker has said that he will accept good-natured heckling. We all do it. This was vicious and arrogant. It was boorish behaviour. It is unbecoming of any elected parliamentarian.

We do not have two sets of books in our government. My recollection is that there were two sets of books in the previous governments. That is arrogance.

Also, the Liberals keep talking about how they introduced a balanced budget. You know, Mr Speaker, that the Ontario auditor in 1990 and also the NDP finance minister, when they came to power in 1990, said that the Liberals did not have a balanced budget. The Liberals keep talking about this balanced budget that they had. I'm sorry. That is arrogance. I could call it distortion of

the facts, but again, if I did that, the Speaker would throw me out of here. So I can't say that.

But also today the Leader of the Opposition stood in his place and talked about how they exert influence, how backbenchers can exert influence. In case he hasn't noticed, for five years our backbenchers have been exerting influence. The fact that he hasn't noticed, the fact that he has sat over there and paid attention only to what he wanted to do is another form of arrogance.

I also think it's a form of arrogance that this Leader of the Opposition demoted the much-revered member from St Catharines, their former House leader, who has done such a good job for so long. I can't believe he would do that. It is totally, totally—

1850

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I just want to tell the member that things aren't as rosy all over as he would like to say. I've known some of his speeches. I've heard them lots of times in committee. There are a few things that he's forgetting about. The reason the economy is going reasonably well in parts of Ontario is the low interest rates and the American economy.

I also want to tell him that some of the municipalities aren't as happy as you might think. In our part of Ontario, a municipality bought a parcel of land, and, because they had no money to upgrade the bridge, they couldn't put it back on the market.

I know there are a lot of issues out there, especially in health care, in hospital amalgamations, and things aren't too rosy there.

If he was in our part of Ontario and heard what the people are saying about this government, the ones that have rural schools with the possibility of closure, they're not that happy either. There is also the downloading of ambulance services on to the municipalities. There are a lot of things to iron out there, as the Minister of Agriculture should know, because I've been corresponding with him from time to time.

I do know another big issue is social housing. It will hit the municipalities shortly. There are a lot of things that aren't answered.

The other thing I wanted to say while I'm up here is that some of the correspondence I've been sending to the different ministers, they're not too swift on getting the answers back. I would like to hear the replies, especially in health care and education and the downloading to municipalities. I'm sure those are going to be big issues, not only now but in the future.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for Kitchener Centre. I think his comments were apropos and on the spot.

I often thought to myself, when hearing the speech today by the leader of the Liberal Party, that he is somewhat unfair in his attack on the government with respect to the positions enunciated and put forward in the last

few months since we've been elected to the government. He was attacking, and I think it was an opportunity for him to express an opinion besides the one that he had, that he enunciated clearly in the election campaign.

I, myself, was caught off guard with this attack. I think at this time maybe it would have been better to enunciate the policies that would be put forward by his Liberal caucus in the next four years. Strangely, as Liberals, they were absent. It's disappointing. We could have talked about the balanced budget and taxpayer protection. I noticed Mr McGuinty took great lengths to sign that same taxpayer protection act during the campaign.

We talked about all the procedures and applications we put forward in education and in health care. They were strangely silent when it came to the campaign with respect to the Liberal position. It was difficult to hear this condemnation, but in efforts, I didn't hear anything that came forward that expressed the point of view that represented your position.

If there was one short-sighted nature that the Liberal caucus offered in the campaign, it was the fact that its policies and initiatives weren't enunciated clearly. It seems to be a point in the throne speech that, if you opposed the throne speech, if you felt there was some kind of unreasonable position to be taken, now's the time to express your point of view on the issues and policies facing the people of Ontario today. Once again, it wasn't there, concluding once again about a Liberal that the best debate a Liberal has is when they're alone.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I listened with great interest to the comments of the member for Kitchener Centre and the Minister of Labour, and I can say that at least the last speech had some insight in it.

I'm glad to hear a five-minute speech, out of 10, based on a self-admiration society that the member built his own riding. It's great to know that he's such a hero and everybody loves him. It's wonderful. I know the Premier is pleased to hear that the reason the member got re-elected was solely due to his own personal popularity and had nothing to do with Mike Harris and the PC platform, though certainly the Premier will take part of that credit.

He talked about arrogance. I think that word was used about 40 times, and I appreciate the fact that the government has picked up what we have talked about in the last few days in this Legislature.

Arrogance is when you promise not to close hospitals and you shut hospitals down. That's arrogance.

Arrogance is when you come out in a campaign and say, "We're not going to cut funding for special education," and you leave kids stranded in the cold and you leave kids out of the classroom. That's arrogance.

Arrogance is when you say you are going to protect the environment and you turn around and cut half the staff and you get rid of most of the regulations. That's arrogance.

Every single aspect of the commitments you talked about to real Ontarians—the Premier likes to use that, unlike unreal Ontarians or plastic Ontarians who don't fit

your little criteria—you've broken those commitments. You've broken the commitment to health care and you've broken the commitment to education, you've broken the commitment to the environment.

At the same time as you continue to give a tax cut to your richest friends, you still continue to beat up on the most vulnerable people in this province. You continue to push the hot buttons of squeegee kids. You continue to push the hot buttons of welfare recipients. All of those hot focus group buttons that you believe will get you votes, regardless of whom it hurts, you continue to push. That's arrogance.

This is only the beginning. I think we're going to see four years of the most arrogant government in the history of this province on that side of the House.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I wanted to add my congratulations to the member for Kitchener Centre on a wonderful exposition of where we stand and what the throne speech was about.

Over the last year, we prepared ourselves for the election that came in early June and we set out the policies that we thought would lead this province on a better trail than it got over the last, lost 10 years of tax, borrow and spend by two different governments.

It's quite refreshing to hear the member for Kitchener Centre lay out the policies and programs for this government over the next three, four or five years and give the people of Ontario the insight they need to see where we're going as a government.

I'm very pleased to be able to get up tonight and congratulate Mr Wettlaufer, the member whose riding adjoins mine. We share some of the same problems, particularly in the areas of health and education.

The Minister of Health has been very active in starting new programs in the city of Stratford, most recently last Friday, and will again a week from Thursday in the town of Listowel open a breast screening treatment centre, the only one this side of Ottawa. We're very pleased that this government shows good leadership in both education and health care.

I wanted to congratulate the member for Kitchener Centre.

1900

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mr Wettlaufer: I would like to thank my colleagues the Minister of Labour and the member from Perth-Middlesex, as well as the members of the opposition, Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, I believe, and Hamilton East for taking part in the debate.

It's a distortion—not intentional, mind you—to say that I'm a hero. I don't claim to be a hero in my riding; I just claim to work hard for the people of my riding, and it's nice to know that they appreciated it.

However, that again may be a sign of arrogance, that they would misinterpret my feelings and what I said. But that doesn't surprise me. We see this arrogant attitude among the opposition constantly.

I look across there. They talked today about the fact that they got 40% support in the last election and how

proud they were of that 40%. They should be proud, Mr Speaker, but think of what they did. They took an issue and they encouraged the populace to vote strategically, thereby almost obliterating a third party. That is arrogance personified. That is an attempt to destroy democracy, if you will. It hurts that they would do this. That is arrogance. It is arrogant opposition.

I would like to point out something—

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): Destroy democracy? How do you destroy democracy? We couldn't destroy democracy if we wanted to.

Mr Wettlaufer: You have done everything you could to destroy it. I love their obsession.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I will be splitting this 20-minute segment of my speaking time with my colleague the member for Hamilton Mountain.

I want to recognize that 10 minutes is not a lot of time to do full justice to this speech from the throne that was presented to us last week. Since my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, whom I am absolutely delighted to welcome into this Legislature, will be making her maiden speech, I want to be sure to leave her lots of time. I'm going to move right on to page 3 of the throne speech, where I think the real thrust of the speech begins.

This is where the government sets out its credo: that "government exists to serve people, not the other way around." I have to admit that so far I would be in full agreement with the sentiment. I even appreciate the story of Mrs Rody that follows, because a woman who successfully raises five children on her own is indeed to be admired. But I find the government's reason for praise somewhat disturbing. Mrs Rody is praised because she asked for no assistance from government. How convenient for the government—a government that has just said it is there to serve the people—that it can dedicate itself to those who make no demands on it. How convenient. These are the people the Harris government wants to hear from, the people, according to the throne speech, who have not been heard enough in the past.

Clearly this is not a government that wants to hear from people who actually do need assistance: parents of kids with special needs, for instance, those who were in the House this afternoon; or people like the 105-year-old senior who was evicted from her nursing home with no place to go; or the 81-year-old whose care needs were ignored until he walked into a police station with obvious evidence of physical abuse; or the disabled who need concrete assistance from government if they are going to be able to participate as this government's ideal, hard-working, taxpaying, law-abiding citizens. Just give the disabled a chance to meet your model of a hard-working citizen.

There are actually a lot of people this government doesn't want to hear from. It certainly didn't want to hear from the thousands of parents and teachers who are protesting cutbacks to education, and they still don't want to hear how disastrous a situation people are facing in classrooms with the new curriculum and no textbooks. In

fact, sometimes the teachers don't even have the curriculum, but the kids are going to be tested on it next May nevertheless.

This government doesn't really want to hear from doctors who are leaving their medical practices and our communities because of the stress of working in critically underserved communities. They certainly don't seem to want to listen to the pleas of foreign-trained doctors who could be working in our communities within a matter of weeks if this government would provide some funding for their Canadian residency training.

They don't want to hear from hospitals that have deficits. They don't want to hear about the waiting lists that are in those hospitals or the bed closures and staff layoffs and even longer waiting lists that will result from this government's intention—a clearly stated intention in the last budget—to take another \$100 million out of hospitals, an intention that was made real just two weeks ago when hospitals with deficits were all sent letters saying: "Get your budgets balanced. Don't come and talk to us about what that's going to mean. Just get your budgets balanced."

The list of people who have tried to talk to this government could be endless. No wonder the government wants to hear from hard-working folks who won't ask it for anything at all.

I'm going to move on quickly to page 4 of the speech. Page 4 is where it talks about the strong economy as a foundation of prosperity. Again, I have no disagreement with this statement, no disagreement when the speech actually says that there is still more to do; my problem is with the definition of what still needs to be done. According to the Harris government, what must be done is to cut more taxes in the name of ever greater competitiveness. There's no sense anywhere in this throne speech that the increased competitiveness has benefited people very unequally in this province, that there is much more to be done to ensure that the benefits of a strong economy are actually felt by Ontario's citizens.

In my home community of Thunder Bay, in 1998, 17,780 people, 14%, were below the poverty line; 28% of our aboriginal population are below the poverty line; 61% of those people living in poverty are women, and the poorest of those women are those who are trying to provide for their children. This government never wants to acknowledge that 50% of those who were affected by the welfare cuts of their last administration were actually children. What's the point, I wonder, of programs, as good as they are, as important as they are, that profess to offer healthy beginnings for newborns and young children if so many of those children will continue their lives living in poverty?

Food bank use is increasing not just in big cities like Toronto but in my home community of Thunder Bay. The Thunder Bay waiting list for affordable housing right now is 1,627 people. The government says: "It's not our responsibility. They're not in the throne speech. That's the responsibility of the municipality now."

Mike Harris likes to brag about the 437,000 fewer people on welfare, even though they have absolutely no idea where these people have actually gone. They certainly haven't gone into failed workfare programs, and it's too late now to have them help pick apples.

We know that some of the people who have left welfare are actually back in school. That's a good thing. It would be an even better thing if they had been helped to get back to school by their own government, because these are the single parents who are trying to get a new start by going to college or university. You'll remember that these are the ones who were kicked off welfare early on. They were told to go and get OSAP: "Go into debt if you want to go back to school and get a new start for you and your family." A lot of the folks who would have liked to go back to college or university didn't get kicked off welfare because they couldn't have survived going into debt on OSAP. It's tough to think about getting into large debts when you're poor, especially if you have children to support at the end of it.

I don't think we should forget the kinds of things this government did in its first mandate. I'm going to run out of time very quickly if I go back too far in remembering not the 10 years before the Harris government took office but the last four that have brought such hardship to so many people in this province.

I'm going to move on to page 5. This is where it says, "All branches of government must treat people fairly and with respect." I thought that sounded suspiciously like something that might approach social justice, a concern for equity even, "fairly and with respect." But then I read on, because what that means is, "To that end, your government will introduce ..." a taxpayers' bill of rights; not a bill of rights for children, not a bill of rights for frail and vulnerable seniors and certainly not a disabled bill of rights, because a commitment to enact for the disabled is now a statement about producing an action plan.

I must leave out much of the rest of the throne speech. I'm going to skip the rest of the pages so I leave my colleague with enough time to say all the things I know she wants to say.

Much of the rest of this throne speech is just about getting tough on people; mandatory drug treatment for people on welfare—forget the evidence that it doesn't work. And don't think about all those with mental illness who are in our jails because there's no place for them to get treatment, or the 50% of children who need mental health services and won't get them.

1910

The throne speech says there will be zero tolerance of welfare fraud, a crackdown on squeegee kids, our jails will be made more secure, and more boot camps will be built despite the evidence of high recidivism rates. But what about "treating people fairly and with respect"? Clearly, this government only meant that to apply to what it refers to at the end of the throne speech as "real people," where it talks about "making life better for real people." Clearly, what they mean by that is making life better for hard-working families that remain their focus.

The others—the children, the disabled, the poor, the frail seniors, the sick, the aboriginals, the immigrants—I guess just aren't real so they can easily be dismissed, unless you believe as we do and as our leader said today, that government should be about improving life for all people. We believe that every citizen in this province is a real person and deserves to be treated with fairness and with respect and to be served by a government that meets the needs and acts for all the citizens of this province.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Mr Speaker, please accept my congratulations on your election to the office of Speaker.

It is a great privilege for me to be part of this Legislative Assembly, even after tonight, and to hold the honourable role as an official opposition member and representative for Hamilton Mountain, as well as Liberal critic for colleges and universities.

I'm very proud to be a Canadian and proud to be a citizen in this great province of Ontario. I'm fortunate to belong to a nation that has welcomed generations of newcomers and offered them the hope and realization of a better life, a nation that has demonstrated leadership in implementing policies and programs that have characterized Canada as a decent, compassionate and caring nation.

My parents came to this province years ago from Greece with a dream for a better life for themselves and for their children. I have never lost sight of their vision: a vision of opportunity, choices, prosperity, peace and harmony; respect for education and for the educated; respect for work and for people who work hard to support their families; compassion and a sense of responsibility for those who are less fortunate than we are. Their vision is an integral part of my belief system, one that guides me every minute of every day.

I have entered the political fold because I am deeply troubled that this same vision of opportunity has been eroded in Ontario, that our children do not have the same educational opportunities and the same excellent health care that I had growing up on Hamilton Mountain, indeed that many more children are living in poverty than years ago.

Violence in our schools and neighbourhoods is a major issue on Hamilton Mountain. As a parent, I find it unacceptable that our neighbourhoods are not safe for our children. I find it unacceptable that 80% of the car thefts on Hamilton Mountain are youth-related and associated with break-and-enter crimes, most of which occur during school hours. Our children will never be safe if our neighbours' children are hungry, neglected and confused.

I saw these children routinely in my work on Hamilton Mountain and across the region, and as a member of the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police youth crime committee, I know that if something doesn't happen soon, all of our children's futures will be at risk. As a parent and educator, my instinct is to ensure a safe environment for our children. We have the knowledge and

the means to make the necessary changes. It has been proven that for every \$1 that we spend on crime prevention, we save \$7.

I commend the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Police department for its proactive and progressive approaches to addressing youth crime locally. By working with the community, including school boards, car theft by children under 16 has decreased significantly. This progressive department supports the need to tackle the roots of crime—poverty, discrimination, family violence and illiteracy—and the need to improve access to programs that assist families in breaking out of disadvantaged cycles.

As a former small business owner on Hamilton Mountain, I'm appalled at the tax increases in the riding. Many of the small business operators in Limeridge Mall saw increases of 500%. We need to provide the confidence that is necessary for the small business entrepreneurial spirit to thrive in our province once again by communicating and consulting before making decisions.

As a faculty member in the medical program at McMaster University and as a former director at St Peter's hospital, I have witnessed the erosion in our health services and the need to effect change in a sensitive and logical manner. What was the common sense in wanting to close the only geriatric hospital in the region when the demographics clearly show we would need it and more in a few short years? The community won that fight and the decision was reversed, but at great expense, a decision that demoralized an amazingly committed staff and needlessly made our senior citizen patients and their families worry and suffer.

As chief psychologist of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, I have seen the demoralization of our teachers, the insecurity of our students' parents surrounding the debacle around the school closure issue, the impossible timelines for the preparation and implementation of new curriculum and the inflexible funding formula which punishes senior officials and school boards for being flexible and wanting to meet the needs of their students.

We cannot hurriedly implement programs and policies without proof of their effectiveness just because they are politically expedient. It is completely unethical to ignore what research shows us simply because it does not fit a particular educational or political philosophy. I agree completely with the raising of the standards in the public school system, but we do need to ensure that there are sufficient resources to assist the less able and less fortunate to meet those standards.

My children are to this point fortunate. They were born without disabilities and they have resourceful parents who will do their best to help them meet those standards and to succeed in life. There are, however—and some of them were here earlier—23 disabled children in Hamilton who did not attend school until October 18 this year because of a lack of resources. They did not even have the opportunity to attempt to meet these new standards.

The research is clear: When the gap between the educated and the non-educated grows, so do crime and poverty statistics. This debate is over. We have this knowledge. It is therefore immoral for us to allow this to continue. I strongly request that the Minister of Education put an end to this discrimination. Every child who wishes to be in school should be in school. This is Canada; we're better than this.

It is with honour and gratitude that I accepted the role as opposition critic for the ministry responsible for colleges and universities. Our colleges and universities are facing a lengthy list of challenges over the next decade: an enormous increase in student enrolment of over 40%, the need to hire thousands of new faculty, the need to address millions of dollars in deferred maintenance, critical shortages in student housing and an increased demand for student financial assistance, to name just a few.

These challenges follow a period in which this government has cut hundreds of millions of dollars from post-secondary funding, allowed student debt and tuition fees to soar, moved Ontario to second place in the highest tuition cost and last place in per capita provincial spending on post-secondary education. Simply put, our colleges and universities, to use a familiar phrase, are in "a created crisis."

Let me put a human face to these issues. A few years ago Carissa, a constituent of Hamilton Mountain, entered university with the assistance of a government loan and with the confidence that the loan forgiveness program would reduce her projected debt from \$60,000 to \$53,000. Carissa had other challenges in her life, however. Her parents died just before she entered university and she was left without any inheritance and with a much younger stepbrother. She did not give him up to a foster home and she did not seek social assistance. They remained a family.

She asked for and received a loan. In the middle of her studies she needed to accept a bursary from McMaster University and to work a few extra hours at her part-time job to feed herself and her brother—to feed herself and her brother. Carissa thought she was doing the honourable thing, that is until she found out last spring that she no longer qualified for the loan forgiveness program. With tears, she told me if she had known it would be so difficult, she would never have gone to school; she just should have gone on welfare and given up her brother to a foster home. I have heard this from other students as well who have family responsibilities. Don't these constituents qualify for the government's definition of "real people"?

I would like to make a plea to the Premier to contact this amazing young woman, Carissa, to assure her that she did the honourable thing and that as leader of this province he will direct his minister to accept her application for loan forgiveness.

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It is the right and honourable thing to do. It is not an indication of weakness when a leader can say, "A mis-

take has been made, and I will do the right thing and correct the situation." It is a sign of strength to do so. I ask that the Premier show the truly strong leadership that the young people of this province deserve.

In my role as critic for colleges and universities I sincerely hope that I am in the position to applaud this government when it does the right thing, just as I intend to be a thorn in the side of this government on behalf of all the Carissas who are squealing under the policies that have created the situation described. I believe that all of us together can move in a positive direction to regain the vision of prosperity and peace and, in the process, regain our children's confidence for a better future.

The ancient Greeks defined happiness as pursuing one's goals along the lines of excellence. I wish all of us here today continued happiness and look forward to working for the people of Ontario. It will be an honour.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Southwest): I am pleased to join in the debate tonight to respond to the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan and the member for Hamilton Mountain and to welcome the member from Hamilton Mountain to the Legislature. I look forward to working with you.

In both speeches that were given tonight, I was listening. We're talking about the throne speech. The throne speech is very similar to the Blueprint. There's a lot of consistency in our party's platform.

When I listened to the Lieutenant Governor deliver the throne speech last Thursday, October 21, there was talk of tax cuts. We've seen what has happened with tax cuts in this province over the last four years. We've seen 99 tax cuts introduced by this government.

Now, 572,000 net new jobs have been created in this province. That's almost 600,000 new jobs. Those are new jobs that aren't happening just in the ridings of members on this side of the House, but in ridings of the members opposite. They too are seeing what's happening in this province, that more people are working, that almost 600,000 more people are working in our province today than in 1995, and that has had a positive impact.

Also, I thought they might have wanted to talk about the throne speech commitment to increasing health care spending in our province by 20% over the next four years. They conveniently neglected that.

The member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan referred to different pages and she skipped various pages of the throne speech. Those were key pages that would have included references to increased health care spending and to the squeegee kid problem we have here in Toronto. They may not view that as a problem from outside of Toronto, but it is definitely a problem here in the 416 area. I would encourage them to look at the entire throne speech and talk more about tax cuts.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me say how pleased I am to be back here again and see so many familiar faces, although I wish we would be on the other side of the House this time around and have many more familiar faces from our own caucus there.

I would just like to congratulate both the senior member for Thunder Bay and one of our new members from Hamilton Mountain. I think they both spoke extremely eloquently about some of the problems that Ontarians are facing on a day-to-day basis. These are certainly the kinds of stories and the kinds of situations that I hear about and have heard about over the last four years.

I think what it all boils down to is this: This government—even though they say they're not the government in the throne speech, which I thought was one of the more laughable sentences in the whole throne speech, because they've been in power for the last four years and are the people who sowed all this chaos throughout the province and this discontent among a whole bunch of people.

What government should really be all about is: It should level the playing field for people. All government isn't bad. That's the image this government would like to reap, that somehow government is a bad influence in our lives. Government can be a very good and positive influence in our lives, particularly in the two main areas that the provincial government is involved in.

I believe that everyone is entitled to health care when they need it and if they need it, regardless of how much money they have in their pocket, and that everyone ought to be entitled to an education to the best of their abilities, again without any economic constraints. That's what government is all about; that's what these two members advanced. Those are the kinds of issues we'll be addressing over the next four years, and we will hold this government accountable for any and all actions.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): Mr Speaker, I'd like to congratulate you on your appointment and congratulate all the members in our caucus and on the opposition benches. As we've heard from the members from Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Hamilton Mountain, certainly some of the stories from that side are stories of desperate people in trouble, but in our riding certainly what I've heard was 10 years of lost hope for everybody.

When Mike Harris came to power, taxes were cut, and as a result of those tax cuts the economy improved: 570,000 new jobs were created, as we've heard. There are many people across the province who are benefiting from those tax cuts. The opposition refuses to acknowledge any of that, and it has occurred in their ridings.

It's because of those tax cuts that we have safe communities. The member for Hamilton Mountain said they have some strategic initiatives. It's our government that, through the strong tax cuts and growing the economy, funded 1,000 new police officers across the province, therefore reducing the crime in her riding. I certainly will take some credit for that. It's because of that, the growing economy, that we have certainly the infrastructure money for our hospitals. The member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan has benefited directly in her riding because of that strong economy.

If we can just concentrate on creating a good economy for everyone in this province, the members across the floor will also benefit from that. I'm just about running out of time, so I'll time it better next time.

Mr Ruprecht: I listened very carefully to the remarks that were made today by the members from Thunder Bay-Atikokan and Hamilton Mountain and one thing is clear: This throne speech relegates most Ontarians to irrelevancy and in fact pushes some to the sidelines so that they belong to the margins.

Let's see what these members have said. They've said that tuition fees—a simple BA or an undergraduate degree now costs the student between \$7,000 and \$12,000. A professional degree sometimes goes up to the \$30,000 range. That may be OK for some of the rich friends of the government, but it cannot be OK for most Ontarians. I made it my business to check out the prices and tuition fees even of some of the private schools, and guess what? For a simple undergraduate person in one of the private schools the cost is \$28,000 for one year. We're not even talking about Upper Canada College; we're talking about the lower-echelon private schools.

In addition to that we want to talk about access to trades and professions. You've made a promise, my friends. Your promise in 1995 was to create a professional access-to-trades and credential assessment service. Have you done that? The answer is no. We have had the promise by Minister of Citizenship after Minister of Citizenship; the promise has not been kept. Where is the credential assessment service the Premier said in 1995 that he would establish? It isn't there.

Ex-psychiatric patients—the list goes on and on. You haven't done it. Stop relegating a lot of Ontarians to the sidelines and to the margins of society.

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The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs Bountrogianni: As a registered psychologist, I'm very impressed with some of the defence mechanisms across the floor, particularly from the member for Kitchener Centre: very strong projection there. Imagine calling us arrogant when you and your behaviour lately just reek of arrogance.

I would like to clarify something for my fellow new member from London-Fanshawe: The only crime that has decreased on Hamilton Mountain is the crime of car theft under the age of 16 due to a local initiative between school boards and police and has nothing to do with any extra policemen. But if you want to give us 1,000 new police people, we'll take them, Frank.

The Liberal message is a harder message to disseminate when compared to divisive messages. We haven't done a great job in disseminating, but I promise you that will change. In the next four years we'll do a much better job of presenting the Liberal message and exposing the divisive messages from the other two extreme parties.

The Acting Speaker: I just remind the members that you speak through the Speaker to the chamber and that we don't refer to members by their names, their first

names particularly. You refer to the members by their ridings. Further debate?

Mr Stewart: I want to compliment my friend and colleague from Kitchener Centre on what I believe was a very stirring speech. He is a man who is truly committed to his riding and to his constituents, nor does he put people down. To the colleague over there from Hamilton Mountain: I must inform you that I'm not a psychologist. I happen to be a farm boy who represents a rural riding, and I don't put anybody down with my title.

On behalf of my constituents, the city of Peterborough and area, I am very privileged and very honoured to take part in this debate on the throne speech and I will talk about the throne speech, which is a bit unique in this House. It's a great opportunity for me to talk about the goals of that speech that will affect the people of Peterborough and the people of this great province.

This throne speech had a very positive ring to it, positive because once again Ontario has a definite course of action to begin the new millennium. Our course of action, as laid out in the throne speech, will create more jobs, it will help people get off the dependency on social services, and it will create a strong and positive effect and a competitive economy. Services, including health care, children's services and education, will not be compromised.

If we are to continue to have a bright future, if we are to have a growing, strong and prosperous province, then we must have a plan. This government presented a plan to the people of Ontario some four and a half years ago. It was called the Common Sense Revolution. The people accepted that plan and the government followed through: It kept its promises—unique, I believe, in political circles these days and unique in political circles for the last number of years.

Once again this spring we asked the people to look closely at the extension or the second leg of our plan, and that was called the Blueprint. From every corner of my riding of Peterborough, throughout the townships of Ennismore, Smith, North Monaghan, Douro, Dummer, Belmont and Methuen, Otonabee, Asphodel and South Monaghan, to the villages of Lakefield, Norwood and Havelock, to include Curve Lake and Hiawatha First Nation, and finally the city of Peterborough, the Blueprint message was heard.

People in my riding in the tourist industry, in the agriculture community, in small business and industry and in communities throughout our area, heard, listened and accepted. They supported me, they supported the plan, and they gave me the right to represent them in a government dedicated to major change, change this province requires if we and our children are going to continue to grow and prosper. Some of the things that are happening—and that is the kinds of jobs, hope, growth and opportunities—are necessary to build a rewarding and successful life in this province. The Blueprint plan was accepted, and our course for the next four years was defined. It was approved by this province, something that the opposition should remember. The plan was approved

by this province, because that's why we are the government. Confidence and optimism were very clear in my riding, as they have been all over this province.

I would like to publicly thank the residents of Peterborough for bestowing upon me the honour of being their representative in this Ontario government for the second term. It is a position I have educated myself for, and I thank the citizens of the great riding of Peterborough for their continued support.

I would like to congratulate all members for their electoral success on June 3. I'm particularly happy to be joined by old colleagues as well as seven new colleagues. I also want to congratulate members of the cabinet and wish them well in their future endeavours. I look forward to working with all members of this House during the coming years towards the common goal of making Ontario a better and more prosperous place in which to live.

In business, you must have a business plan if you're going to survive and succeed. Government is no different: You can have all the plans in the world, but if you don't follow through with them, of course they will not work nor will the business succeed. The old adage or the old statement of planning your work and working your plan rings loud and clear in this throne speech. There's a lot of hard work ahead. Management of the plan is primary, and yes, there will be some tough decisions to be made if we are to continue to fix government. To assist companies, the Ontario government information centres have been set up across this province. They are supplying one-stop access to information and services. What used to take hours to do can now be done in a matter of minutes.

Over the years Peterborough saw many businesses close due to high tax rates, government red tape and onerous labour legislation. Our government has changed that picture. Now I attend many new business openings and expansions in my riding. Four weeks ago, on a single day, I cut the ribbon on three new businesses. That's the type of confidence that this government in the last four years has given the people of this province. Their confidence is showing. People are showing their confidence in all areas, in all parts of this province. They know that the economy is increasing and improving and they are investing once again in our province. I compliment all businesses who have done that in the last four years, and there have been many.

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Our government is extremely concerned to make sure that every person in Ontario has access to top quality health care. A common problem in the riding of Peterborough and in towns and villages across Ontario is the physician shortage. This throne speech addresses this problem by offering free tuition to students who enter medical school if they agree to locate and practise in underserved areas for five years after graduation.

One of these problem areas is in my riding. The township of Havelock-Bellmont-Methuen is having much the same problem. This area has been designated as an

underserved area and it stands to benefit from this program. The people in that part of my riding will benefit from this program. There are many such similar areas in the Peterborough riding. I'm certain all of us in this House can identify with this ever-so-common problem in ridings throughout this province.

Governments don't create jobs; businesses create jobs. If we are to create new jobs—and I'm talking about jobs in construction, jobs in the agri-food industry, jobs in high technology, jobs in large and small industry and jobs in all the professional areas—then we must continue to create the atmosphere for new foreign and domestic investment.

The atmosphere I'm talking about is created by tax reductions, investment in research and development, partnerships within all sectors, and above all, to promote that consumer confidence I talked about, but also confidence in ourselves. A strong economy through tax reduction equals more new jobs, which equals an increase in revenues, which will allow our government to increase and maintain services for Ontarians.

When I talk about the throne speech addressing the future, let me draw you to a few of the ideas.

Number one in my mind is the SuperBuild Growth Fund. This is a \$20-billion public-private sector partnership that will stimulate our economy as no other fund has done in the last many, many years.

Actually, the past government, prior to our election in 1995, forgot altogether that our infrastructure had to be maintained. They forgot it completely. All you had to do was drive up the 401 or any of the roads in this province 10 years ago, even five or six years ago, and they were filled with nothing but holes. Somebody seemed to think that the infrastructure would go on forever. It won't.

In today's society we must work together. We have to form those public and private sector partnerships with 100% cooperation if we are to renew our network of hospitals, colleges, universities, transit roads and bridges, to name a few. Ladies and gentlemen, standing alone is no longer affordable.

Our record in the area of highway upgrades, as well as funding of municipal roads, is evidence of our commitment to infrastructure programs. You will hear the municipalities in this province talk about the lack of dollars they have received. I suggest to you that most municipalities are paving and fixing roads like they have never done before. In fact, some of them are coming out saying, "Where do we spend the money now?"—money they've saved because of fewer people on social services, money they've saved because of the holiday on OMERS, money they have saved in many other ways. They are completely, I swear, paving their entire municipalities.

We have to be preparing today, I believe, to meet tomorrow's needs. We must be committed to infrastructure programs, and this throne speech says just that.

Research and development is primary if Ontario is to continue to be one of the big players in this world. Here again, if we are to fund these programs and services to

the extent necessary to be a world leader, we must find new and innovative ways.

A good example of this is right in my riding of Peterborough. Trent University has benefited extremely well financially in the last few months. Trent has supplied the professional expertise, professors like Dr Jim Parker and Dr Holger Hintelmann—these individuals are world-class researchers—and private sector companies like Multi Health Services and Ontario Power Generation, in partnership with the provincial government, have supplied the funding. These awards are intended to keep our best and brightest young researchers here in Ontario. Here again the throne speech emphasizes that this is needed and it is very innovative.

Whether it is Trent University in Peterborough or Sir Sandford Fleming College—which, by the way, are in the process of establishing a long-term-care facility in partnership with two other long-term-care facilities in the community. They're also going to introduce a program to educate and train students in long-term care. As well, the residents of Peterborough raised \$2-million-plus for a heart catheter lab at the Peterborough regional hospital.

I want to publicly congratulate Dave Smith and Linda Whetung, the two co-chairs who started this campaign, as well as Dr Bill Hughes, with the support of the community. I remember in the paper a picture of a group of young children who had collected pennies and nickels and dimes and presented them to Dave and Linda as part of that fundraising program. The city, the county and the entire riding, as well as others, got behind this project—again cooperation, partnerships, to move this province ahead. In the particular case I mentioned with the cath lab, government is funding the operation, so they are very much a part of this relationship as well.

The agri-food industry is an extremely important part of the fabric of this province. It represents an area that I believe in the past has been somewhat forgotten. Here again the throne speech emphasizes how critical agriculture is to the province's economy. Annually, \$25 billion is contributed and, more importantly, it employs some 640,000 Ontario men and women. Our government has supported and will continue to support our farms and our farm families.

Again, through research funding, a highly respected agricultural college, inspection programs and water quality programs, our agri-food community will contribute to an Ontario that is ready to meet the future. It is another example of partnerships that must make sure everybody is treated fairly throughout the province. Our agri-food industry will be treated fairly by our government. This is not happening at the federal level.

Interjections.

Mr Stewart: Ontario farmers are getting the short end of the stick. You know it and you don't do anything about it as far as talking to your federal colleagues—again passing the buck.

High taxes, improperly managed revenues, runaway deficits and debt, and budgets not balanced on a yearly basis have to be things of the past. There's only one tax-

payer, and he or she must be treated fairly, respectfully and honestly. They must have a say in how we manage this government, their government. Their approval or disapproval must be on an ongoing basis. The throne speech addressed this very critical issue.

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The government will, as promised, introduce a taxpayer protection and a balanced budget act. No longer will government decide on a whim to increase taxes or spread revenues with little or no concern about the impact it might have on Ontarians. The budget, as this government promised, will be balanced in the year 2000-01, and the proposed balanced budget act will make sure it stays balanced. I believe these two bills are self-explanatory. They are very much the same as Sweden's TEL, or taxes/expenditures limitations, legislation. How novel to do that. We must treat Ontarians fairly and with the utmost respect, but I can assure you that respect must also be earned.

Governments in the past in this province and throughout this country have campaigned on one set of promises and, once elected, have implemented something totally different. Mike Harris has proven that he keeps his promises. The hard work of fixing government and making lasting change continues.

I, along with other members, applaud the Premier for maintaining his commitment to the people of Ontario, who are looking for a government with the courage to bring about real change and to continue that change.

Ontario is poised to meet the challenges of the future. This throne speech does just that. It focuses on making life better in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): To the member for Peterborough, I find interesting the selective nature with which he discusses the promises and how promises are kept. My constituency office has had literally hundreds of people come there. I'm suggesting to you that the promises of better health and better education are not the case, along with a number of other services. Maybe in the eyes of this government these aren't real people, and maybe it's only real people who are going to have promises kept.

I wonder as well when we talk about hospital care and quality health care and then we look at the tremendous deficits that are carried by hospitals. We talk about the fact that these hospitals have to balance their budgets, yet how do they balance a budget when hospitals are not in the business of turning a profit? Therefore, hospitals have no alternative but to continue cutting their services.

The other issue I find interesting is that we talk about the economy, an economy that has a lot of growth, and this growth of course is all due to tax cuts, according to the honourable member. Instead, tax cutting before you balance a budget is like playing Russian roulette with sustaining the well-being of economic growth. We all know that. Economists all know that. An economic boom normally translates into the well-being of all of the citizens of this province. Unfortunately, we don't have

better services in this province when it comes to health care, education and the environment, so that economic boom isn't translating into the well-being of the citizens.

Government has a role. It has to be run in a business-like way, but it is not a business and it should not be a business. A government is in place to meet the needs of the people.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'd just like to congratulate the member for Peterborough on his re-election. He's one of the hardest-working MPPs we have in this House.

The goals of the throne speech that I want to address and that were set out by my friend are certainly the tax cuts. Tax cuts have proven they're the boon of this economy. We have seen tremendous job growth. The member for Peterborough talks about Peterborough in terms of job growth. I would relate it to the growth that has happened also in Barrie, Innisfil and Bradford, a tremendous growth in business, and it's because of the tax cuts and because of the policies of this government that has been created.

You also look for a strong economy in terms of being able to provide the health care services, the education and the social programs. You need a strong economy to be able to provide those services, and the Blueprint that's set out with respect to our throne speech is right on track.

What we have here is tremendous investment for my riding, for example, in school construction. We have in excess of 20 schools being constructed at this point in time. We also have a tremendous growth in health care, a brand new hospital, Royal Victoria Hospital, a tremendous addition to the York County Hospital. We also have additional investments in our riding in kidney dialysis.

Just the other day I was at an opening of a new nursing home with long-term care beds, Woods Park Care Centre, with the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, one of the first homes that have been built with respect to provincial standards. It's a tremendous building and is designed to help our seniors in terms of the health care needs they have.

The investments that we're making with respect to the result of our strong economy bode well. I would say the throne speech approach that we're taking here, not only with the SuperBuild Growth Fund, is going to have a tremendous impact on our infrastructure. We need that because the federal government has done nothing in that area and they have no plan.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and congratulations. It's nice to see you in the chair.

I wanted to comment on the speech of my colleague from Peterborough. He mentioned accountability, of course, in his speech tonight, but he forgot to talk about the accountability of cabinet ministers and he forgot to talk about the four weeks that Mr Gilchrist remained in cabinet while under police investigation. That is not accountability; that is arrogance.

This government talks a good game about protecting taxpayers. This government talks about protecting tax-

payers, but let's look and see what they've done since the election on June 3. Since the election, they've increased the size of cabinet by 25%. This is the gang that was going to protect us. This is the gang that's going to manage our finances more effectively—25%.

And look at this: We've got twice as many whiz kids as we used to have. They doubled the size of the Premier's office. Did they announce that in a flurry of rhetorical eloquence here in the Legislature? Oh, no. That was all slipped in.

Mrs McLeod: And all that advertising.

Mr Duncan: Advertising comes in handy too in these things.

What did they do? What else did these great defenders of taxpayers do? They increased their political staff's salaries by 30%. Did they do that with a big announcement out in the aisle? No, no, no. They slipped it in by way of regulation some time in midsummer.

This is the government of working people and of democracy, yet this House has sat only seven days this year. That's not democracy. That's not accountability. That's outright arrogance. You won't face the House. You won't face the people.

Nurses—they talk about hiring nurses. We have the fewest per capita anywhere. This isn't a government of accountability. It's a government of arrogance.

2000

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): First of all, let me congratulate our member from Hamilton Mountain. She spoke very well, even though the content was a little bit unsure, but she spoke well.

On the speech from the member from Peterborough, over the summer I had an opportunity to talk to many, many MLAs from different countries who visited here. One of the things, as I was explaining to them, was that the membership size in the House has been reduced from 130 to 103. They just could not believe it. They said: "What good fiscal management. Everywhere else in the world, the government size increases. How could you do that?"

I laid it down to my colleagues and my government and to Premier Mike Harris, who have set this great progress and the agenda in which we are on the right track.

Most of us, as the member for Hamilton Mountain mentioned, were all immigrants at some point in time. Most of us come here for the betterment of our families, future hopes for the kids and the education.

About 10 years ago, many people came to me and said: "Rami, are we doing the right thing? Are we in the right place?" They had lost hope and they had lost total opportunity. Since 1995 when we were elected, under the leadership of Premier Harris we have changed the course. The lost hope, we have brought it back to hope and prosperity. I'm very happy to be part of that government, and I intend to work very hard, as the member from Peterborough is doing and all of this caucus is doing.

Mr Stewart: I want to thank my two colleagues, first my old compatriot from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and

new compatriot from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Both of these gentlemen are businesspeople who know that the economy has been turned around and that we have to continue to do more.

I have to kind of chuckle to myself about the Liberals. The Liberals have a new word. It appears that you must have gone to school over the last six or eight months. For the last four years, every other word was "draconian." I can't even pronounce it, and I should be able to, because I heard it so darn much. This year, it's "arrogance." When I listen to the comments and the attitude over there, you should look it up and find out what the word "arrogance" means and do it while looking in the mirror.

I hear today of the member from Windsor-St Clair, who is suggesting that everything should be status quo. I don't know whether he has ever been in business or not, but I have. When I wanted to improve my business or expand my business, I hired staff. It seemed to worked fairly well, because that business grew and it became more and more profitable. I do not believe in the status quo. I never have. Unfortunately, that's probably why we are the government and you are the opposition.

I've made the comment that Ontario is poised to meet some great challenges in the future. Let me say that those challenges will be tough. We have to prepare to act and we have to prepare to react. I believe that if we focus on the things that we have talked about in the throne speech, we'll have a great Ontario.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I'm pleased to join the throne speech debate tonight and to tell you in advance I'll be splitting this time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

I want to say at the outset that it's a pleasure for me to join the members of the 37th assembly and to thank the voters of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke for their renewed vote of confidence in me on June 3. We had a good campaign in the Ottawa Valley, and I was honoured, as always, to have very good opponents. Many in this House will remember Leo Jordan, the former Progressive Conservative member from Lanark-Renfrew. Leo was a redoubtable opponent for the now and the then government. He and Gerry Boyer of the NDP, and Thane Heins, the independent, were very good and vigorous opponents. We had a vigorous and positive ventilation of the issues in the 28-day campaign, and there is no question that for the people of my part of eastern Ontario, the main issues in the campaign were health care, education and highways, and in particular, Highway 17. I was glad to hear the previous speaker, Mr Stewart from Peterborough, address his views on highway policy.

I just simply want to make the point that there is no more important transportation priority for the nearly 100,000 people whom I represent in Renfrew county and in the district of Nipissing than the improvement of Highway 17 through the upper Ottawa Valley. I must say that one of the most memorable days of my public life will be that day—I think it was June 1—when we were gathered together in the driving rain in Arnprior, in the best tradition of Maurice Duplessis, to await the arrival of the

minister of highways, who was inbound from Brampton or wherever, to tell us with all of the wonderful pre-election-day code what would happen if certain things happened on June 3. I must say the now Minister of the Environment, the then Minister of Transportation, under the circumstances played the game as best he could. I want to say, quite frankly I don't know who was responsible for that. I think I know from eight campaigns the pressures of pre-election-day politics, but I don't think I will ever experience quite the humiliation that I felt for the entire political class as we were gathered in the pouring rain at the junction of 17 and old Highway 29, just south of the town of Arnprior. Those people who drove by us that day must have wondered what kind of Martian personalities were there for what kind of purpose.

But I can tell you what the people of Renfrew, Lanark and Carleton counties heard that day. They heard a commitment from all of us that we were going to be as good and as true as our word and that we were going to, on a priority basis, accelerate the four-laning of Highway 17 westward from its current terminus down near Antrim and that we were going to make other improvements to that very important provincial highway in eastern Ontario.

I stand here tonight on behalf of Liberal, Conservative, New Democratic and independent voters in my county and in my district and I say to Her Majesty's provincial government that the people expect that those solemn promises made by all of us, including the now Minister of the Environment, about the improvements to that highway are going to be made, they're going to be made on a timely and a priority basis, and we are not going to be hearing evasive answers about why and how it can't be done.

I want to say to the member from Peterborough that I certainly understand the work that's being done on highways, and I think we're all pleased. I note again that this year in gasoline tax revenues alone we will take in over \$2.1 billion, and according to the latest data from the Ministry of Finance we will spend not more than 40% of that on highway improvements. Now, I appreciate the work that's being done, but I say again that the motoring public, particularly people—

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Talk about the federal gas tax and how much we get back from that.

Mr Conway: If Mr Runciman wants to go to Ottawa to make the claim against the dominion government he's free to do so. He ran, like the rest of us, for this place. I make the point that we will levy and collect \$2.1 billion worth of gasoline tax revenues this year, and that money was intended to go to highway improvement. We are spending, according to the Canadian Automobile Association, not more than 40 cents of that dollar collected for the purpose intended.

I say for myself in this talk about tax cuts, as someone who lives in rural Ontario, if the provincial governments of whatever stripe don't want to spend the gas tax

revenues for the purpose intended, that's one tax I want cut back. If you're only going to spend \$700 million or \$800 million or \$900 million on highway improvements, then don't be taxing the people, particularly of rural and northern Ontario, through their gasoline taxes for general government programs.

I repeat: It is an unfair burden on rural and northern people that they should be paying through gasoline taxes for general government programs.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): What did you do with the money when you were in for three short years?

Mr Conway: Spend the money, I say to the very vociferous member from Shallow Lake or wherever in Grey county, that you're collecting—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order, member from Owen Sound-Grey.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: I want my time.

The Acting Speaker: Yes. Stop the clock.

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Mr Conway: It is suggested about monies. Well, I have been reading the annual report of the Ministry of Finance. We have a government that is drunk with money: \$3 billion extra again last year over the budgetary expectation, and I might note, expenditures up \$1.3 billion in the pre-election year.

Mr Murdoch: Health care.

Mr Conway: Oh, he says "Health care." Let me say that for the second or third year this government has taken in billions of dollars beyond the budget plan. I note that last year, according to the document just—

Mr Murdoch: Did you spend any money or not tell us about it?

Mr Conway: I am not going to talk over that, Mr Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr Conway: Well, I was here earlier when most members weren't. We got quite a little lecture from the Minister of Labour and the Premier about parliamentary protocol. I was impressed. For those of you who weren't here, you might want to read the Hansard. I'm simply making the point, because "decorum" appears to be the buzzword. Well, I will be as decorous as my friend from Grey, perhaps a bit better.

The point I want to make is that in the Ministry of Finance annual report we are told that last year, fiscal 1998-99, revenues over \$3 billion above the plan, spending \$1.3 billion above the plan. So don't talk to me about who's got how much money. It is a very happy time, and you won the election. I applaud you for that. You won it fair and square. I'm a democrat and I want to say that I've won elections and I've lost elections. June 3, the verdict was clear.

But the people of Renfrew heard some promises around highway improvement, and I'm going to be here for the next four years to remind the treasury bench of those promises.

Hon Mr Runciman: Where's Leo?

Mr Conway: My good friend from Montague has been summoned to the Elysian Fields of post-political retirement, and he is going to graze on that happy grass with a couple of my good Liberal friends. I see a lot of expectant faces across the way, wondering, "Will the phone ring for me should that day ever occur?"

A couple of other things—health care. I'm glad the Minister of Health is here tonight, a person for whom I have a very high regard, but the health care issues in the Ottawa Valley remain the number one priority. This government ordered the closure of the Pembroke Civic Hospital three years ago. At that time the experts told us that we could do all the renovations at the remaining hospital for \$5 million. Politicians weren't going to be allowed those decisions. That was going to be made by the commission under the authority of the provincial government. The cost was estimated at \$5 million. Do you know what that cost is today, three years later? It's \$24 million. I have some very real sympathy for my constituents who are awaiting those renovations, because they are going to be absolutely central to the delivery of improved health care. I've got some real sympathy for the Minister of Health, because if it's happening in Pembroke, where we had a hospital close, I ask myself, what's happening in Sarnia, in Toronto, in Hamilton, in Thunder Bay, in Sudbury? But let me repeat, that hospital was closed in Pembroke three years ago on the analysis that said all the renovations could be done at the remaining hospital for \$5 million. Three years later, that \$5 million is now estimated to be \$24 million, and we don't have a shovel in the ground.

Health care, whether it's improved hospital services, the need for rural doctors—we've got communities like Cobden that are desperately seeking ways of replacing their long-time general practitioner, who has retired.

These issues and collateral issues like education, the fact that I have the largest county and a public school board in it—if you can believe, Renfrew county, 3,000 square miles, and I've got a public school board that does not qualify for the rural and remote grant formula under the new funding formula, while North Bay and Parry Sound and Hastings and Haliburton-Victoria do?

The people of Renfrew, the public school supporters of Renfrew, rightly expect that that formula is going to be amended and the largest county is going to be made eligible for the rural and remote funding formula. With that, I turn to my colleague from Kingston.

Mr Gerretsen: It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Renfrew North because you can be sure that every member in the House is awake and listening attentively to everything that he has to say.

Let me start off by also thanking the people of my riding for re-electing me on June 3. The people of Kingston and the Islands have always been good to me over the years and I will certainly try to continue to represent them in the best way I know how.

When you listen to a throne speech, you always try to find something positive in that speech that in effect will unite people together. I think it is very important for a

government, regardless of its political stripe, after an election to try to bring people together and to govern and to speak to people collectively across this province. I think that's the one area where this throne speech has utterly failed.

The one area that I would like to address myself to is the last couple of lines in the second-last paragraph in which the throne speech says that they will continue the revolution but they "do not view themselves as 'government,'" that they "came to fix government." I find that very difficult to understand, because I can tell you, you ask the people who have been hurt by this government over the last four years in one way or another whether or not they regard the Conservative Party that's been in power for the last four years as government.

Tell that to the social service recipients who lost 20% of their transfer payments early on, back in 1995. Tell that to the disabled community who expected this government, after the Premier gave a promise in 1995, to come up with a meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act. Ask them if they have in effect received that kind of treatment in the act that was passed earlier this year, because the answer will be a resounding no.

Tell that to every hospital board and every hospital administrator or anyone who has had anything to do with a hospital over the last three or four years, with longer waiting lists, with deficits. I think just about every hospital in this province currently runs at a deficit situation. Ask them who the government has been over the last four years and they will quickly tell you that.

Tell that to the university and college students whose tuition fees have gone up by more than 40% over the last four years. Ask them if they know which party has been the government over the last four years or who the government is.

Tell that to the municipal taxpayers who in many cases, even as late as this year, right now, are still getting tax bills that deal with the taxation year 1998: corrections, amendments that have been issued because of the seven different property tax bills they brought forward last year and the year before, and they bungled it every time. Ask them who the government is and they will tell you who that is.

The one area that I always find interesting is that this group of people like to think of themselves as being the business party, the party in power that is going to look after the affairs of the province of Ontario in a business-like fashion. That's the way they pride themselves. They talk about the strength of the economy, and the economy is better off than it was five years ago; I'll grant you that. But there's much more to it than that.

Can you imagine how a fiscally responsible government, as they like to see themselves, could possibly justify to themselves the fact that there's been an extra \$23 billion added on to the public debt? When they took over, this province was in debt in the neighbourhood of \$90 billion. Currently, according to their own figures, it stands at \$114 billion. One of the interesting features that I find about all of that is the fact that with all of the

complaining, the whining that they do about the cost of social services in this province, we spend more in this province on an annual basis on interest on the public debt, in interest payments, than we do on all the social services that the province provides. We spend \$9.1 billion annually on interest on the public debt and \$7.9 billion on all the social services.

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The other thing that's very interesting is, if they were really that interested in a balanced budget, why didn't they balance it this past year or even the year before? If they had waited with their tax cuts until we had a balanced budget, number one, we wouldn't be in debt as we are today—we'd probably be about \$10 billion less in debt than we are today, and in effect we wouldn't have that extra debt to carry with us—but we in effect would also have more money available either for tax cuts or to put in the public debt, to pay down in tax cuts, public debt, or into the many services that we require.

Tell that to the people who are interested in the environment in our province. I think one of the greatest indictments against this government is that, according to the various reports that have come out, we are the jurisdiction that is the second-worst polluter in all of North America. I think we're second to Texas or someplace down south in the United States. That, to my way of thinking, is totally unacceptable.

What have they in effect done? They have fired many of the people who used to work in environmental protection. They're basically relying on self-regulation, and in the meantime the environmental standards of this province have deteriorated to a point where we in this province are the second-worst polluter. That is nothing to be proud of.

I believe this government has failed. It failed in the previous four years. Yes, you have the solid support out there of the same 45% of the people who probably voted for you in 1995. But just remember, once you're in government, you are meant to govern for all the people of Ontario. It is a well-known fact among many communities in our society that you have just basically forgotten and have dropped off the bottom third on the economic scale of things. You simply don't care about their problems. If anything, you like to blame them for the problems they encounter on a day-to-day basis.

I maintain that government can be a good force in people's lives. It can be that great equalizer to give people opportunity when it comes to the educational opportunities they require to reach their maximum potential and also give people much-needed health care that doesn't depend on how much money you have in your pocket, but health care that you need and that you want and that is available for you if you need it and when you need it.

Those are the kinds of issues we will be talking about in the next four years.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to tonight offer congratulations to the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke—a little longer name than the last

time he was here—and the member for Kingston and the Islands. They made some very astute and real observations re the speech from the throne of this government and connected that to some of the promises made during the election and some of the things they had done in the last four years.

Mr Murdoch: Be nice, Tony.

Mr Martin: I'm trying to be nice, Bill. If you'd just slow down here, I might.

There probably aren't two people in this House more qualified to speak about the promises that were made to their particular—

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Is Bill going to take up my time as well as his own?

Interjection.

Mr Martin: "Get used to it," yes.

There probably aren't two people in this House more qualified to speak on how this government and its programs have impacted on the people they represent than the two members who just spoke: the member from Renfrew because of the time that he spent here, and the member for Kingston and the Islands because of the time that he spent as a municipal politician before he came here. They know quite well the promises that were made by this government and some of the money that was doled out before and during the election to make sure the municipalities they represented did not feel the pinch of the reality that's coming at them, what's going to come now. If you look at the program this government has in place and you look at the potential they have to be able to take care of some of the problems that have been created and some of the promises they made, there really is no money.

Yes, the economy has been good for a while and it did generate some revenue, but the government on the other side, the government of Ontario, has given that money away. People will come to realize that in spades over the next couple of months.

Mr Clark: The first two days in the House have been very enlightening for me, to say the very least. I was asked what exactly was happening in the House in the last couple of days and, Mr Speaker, I have to tell you, I described it as being a great debate: It was fact versus fiction; it was rhetoric versus reality.

I think it's very important that everyone know we won the election because of eight very special words: "We did what we said we would do." Those were the eight words that gave us the election. Those were the eight words that gave us the vote of confidence from the people of Ontario.

Our pundits have criticized the throne speech for being nothing new. They said there was nothing new in the throne speech. The reality is we did what the people expected us to do, we did what we said we would do, and God forbid, we actually put in our throne speech our campaign platform. What an incredible revelation, putting your campaign platform into your throne speech. There's nothing new; we know that. We presented to the

people of Ontario what we were going to do, and we're going to do it.

The member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke spoke about decorum. I have to say, Mr Speaker, I have been amazed at what transpired here today. Minister Ecker spoke very clearly about special education and was answering a question, and she was drowned out with ridicule and shouts. Afterwards I met with the parents who came down here to meet with us and they said they couldn't even hear the minister's answer. All they heard was shouting and ridicule. That's not what those people came down here for. They wanted to hear from the minister. They wanted to hear what we were going to do for them and our commitment to those children in special education.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I want to add to what the member from Stoney Creek just said. He quoted eight words that the Premier and others had mentioned, and said they kept those words. I can tell you eight words that were said and they didn't keep this promise. The Premier said, "It is not my plan to close hospitals," and he closed hospitals. So much for, "Words that we say—we keep the promises."

I do want to say that my colleagues from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke and Kingston and the Islands raised some very important issues, as they always do.

On the one about highways, I can appreciate what the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke said because the member for Peterborough in his comments said we don't have to worry about potholes on highways in Ontario any more. No, we don't, because there's such a gridlock out there that the traffic isn't moving and highway potholes don't do the damage they used to do. We've got to get rid of the gridlock in this province.

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: All right. What you're saying is that there's no gridlock. OK, we'll move to safety on highways. We'll come down to my riding, which is partly between the cities of London and Windsor and runs through Essex county, and we'll talk about safety on highways then. There isn't a stretch of highway in Ontario that has a worse death rate than that. Do you know what your Minister of Transportation said? Your Minister of Transportation came down and said it was a pleasant ride. I'd like him to ride back and forth with me week after week and see how pleasant it is. Frankly, it's scary.

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The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was very please to hear the speeches made these people. It's unfortunate there's such a short period of time in which they can make so many points. I was also interested in some of the responses to them. The member for Stoney Creek—I believe that is the riding—I was wondering whether he was speaking about when he was at the Liberal nomination supporting his later opponent, Mr Phillips, when he was talking about these same things, whether he was saying those things then or was it after

opportunity knocked and he decided that he might run for the Progressive Conservative Party?

The word "opportunist" comes to mind, but I'm not the kind of person who's going to use the word "opportunist" to describe a person who goes to the Liberal nomination meeting, supports a person for the nomination, then turns around and runs against the person they run. I wouldn't call that opportunism; there may be others in the House on the government benches who might do so.

I'm surprised that the members—they just didn't have the time—did not mention Dr Beiko in St Catharines, who is concerned about ophthalmologists in St Catharines, because now we have eye patients who are not going to be able to see an ophthalmologist because they have fiddled around with the boundaries for ophthalmologists as it relates to the cap which is placed on their billings. As a result, people with glaucoma, people with diabetes, people with other eye afflictions are not going to be able to see an ophthalmologist unless they're prepared to travel many miles down the highway to another centre. At the same time, when they to the other centre they're going to be taking a space from a person from that centre. I hope this government does not continue to fiddle around with the formula to such an extent that senior citizens and others in a vulnerable position are not adversely impacted. I know my fellow colleagues were concerned about that.

Mr Gerretsen: I'd like to thank the members from St Catharines, Stoney Creek, Sault Ste Marie and Essex, who commented on the speeches of the member from Renfrew and myself.

You know, this highway issue is a very interesting one. Most of the rural politicians that I speak to are very, very concerned with all the roads that have been downloaded particularly to the smaller, rural municipalities. Even if those roads, or many of them, are in a good state of repair right now and even if those municipalities have the financial wherewithal to look after the maintenance of those roads, the question that I have and that they have is, "What is going to happen five or 10 years down the road when many of these roads need to be rebuilt?" It's a foregone conclusion that particularly the smaller municipalities simply will not have the financial ability to reconstruct these roads.

It's interesting that this government seems to take issue with the many different grants and subsidy programs that are around and they've slashed many of them, but what we tend to forget is that many of these programs were started during periods of time when local municipalities simply did not have the financial ability to do a lot of things, such as building roads. What this government has really done is downloaded its responsibility for roads to municipalities. Some of them may be in a good state of repair, but I'll tell you, the chicken are coming home to roost. Maybe three or four or five years down the road when you're no longer in government, another more enlightened government, and hopefully Liberal government, will try to solve those and many of the other

social problems that are being created by this government on a day-to-day basis.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Martin: Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak this evening. I, like so many others who have gotten on their feet here tonight, want to first of all thank the people of Sault Ste Marie for their continued faith in the job that I try to do. I won't for a second suggest that the reason the people of the Soo voted for me was because of a lot of the work and effort that I put in. In Sault Ste Marie, the biggest issue in the election, above all else, was how to get rid of Mike Harris.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, order. I'm having great difficulty hearing the member from Sault Ste Marie. I would very much appreciate if the member for Sault Ste Marie was the only one to be speaking during this next short while.

Mr Martin: I was wondering if maybe the member from Bruce was going to come across the floor and join us over here, if he would do that.

Mr Murdoch: Would you split your time with me?

Mr Martin: Yes, I would. Sure. Come on over, Bill. We'd love to have you.

Anyway, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, in Sault Ste Marie, in the election of 1999, it seemed the biggest issue on the minds of everybody was Mike Harris and his program and the impact that program had on the people who call Sault Ste Marie home.

The reason they voted for me was primarily because they didn't want to vote for anybody who might give Mike Harris another seat in this province, particularly in northern Ontario.

I'm glad to be back here on behalf of the people of my city, to put forth their issues, to speak on their behalf and to challenge the very destructive program this government began some four-plus years ago. Obviously they are going to continue down that road over the next four years, and that's troublesome.

We heard in the speech from the throne this past week much of the same that we heard over the last four years. We heard a lot of blaming. We saw a lot of finger-pointing at people and other levels of government who have done things that are negatively affecting the province. Anything this government sees as a challenge or that is affecting in a negative way the health and well-being of communities of people who live in this province, they have been able to find a way to blame somebody else. As a matter of fact, some of the processes they have set up over the last four years have been set up particularly and directly so that they can lay blame when the whole thing falls apart. Municipalities are beginning to find that out in spades.

I suggest to you that as time unfolds over the next three to four to six months to a year, as they set their budgets for the coming year and the coming few years and they begin to realize that the pot of money that was there before the election to smooth things over for this government so that nobody could point a finger, so that

there were no ripples, so that there was no concern out there, that those pots of money are not going to be there any more and they're going to be on their own.

Things that were funded by senior levels of government, in particular the provincial government, for a long number of years now are going to be funded primarily on the backs of property owners in those communities. As you all know and we all know, property tax is probably the most regressive form of taxation that this province participates in. We will have people on fixed income, we will have seniors, we will have people who are out of work because of the program this government has brought in, people having to work two and three jobs to make ends meet, finding their property tax rising at an exponential rate, a rate they won't be able to afford.

I think finally the proverbial poop will hit the fan and people will at last begin to realize the program that built your government—with your support to some degree; you are one of the people who don't always support the program—have spun and are imposing on the people of this province.

In the speech from the throne we heard a lot of blaming, a lot of finger-pointing, a lot of, "If they'd only done that," or "If they'd done this, things might have been different"—no taking responsibility for those things that are troubling people at the moment.

2040

Another thing we saw in the budget which is in keeping with previous speeches from the throne and statements from this government is the usual list of bad actors. Some of you who are new to the chamber here will eventually come to know that there are—

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Because you come from the communities that you live in and have lived through the four years of this government, you probably will understand that there are groups of people who are causing all the problems. The first group, of course, is the poor.

The first thing this government did—and I'll never forget it, that fateful day in July 1995 when I woke up to hear the news on the radio. I was shocked beyond belief that this government had deemed it necessary, in order to right the finances of the provinces, to take 22.6% away from the most marginalized, the most vulnerable and the poorest in our communities. That was their first action, like the bully walking into the playground and looking around and picking the smallest guy in the yard and laying a beating on him just to set the tone. That's how this government set the tone in their first mandate. The very first thing they chose to do in responding to the faith and the confidence that the electorate of this province put in them was to beat up on the poorest and the most marginalized and the weakest in our society.

Well, they found a new group in this speech from the throne. We heard about it, building up to the speech from the throne, and there it was: squeegee kids, the bane of our existence, squeegee kids, the group of people who are going to tear the fabric of our society completely apart: "Boy, we're going to go after them. We're going to get

them and we're going to do the same thing to them that we did to the poor of this province. We're going to make them pay because they have caused us all the problems."

Interjection: Talk to the guy on your left, Tony.

Mr Martin: No, Bill isn't quite so tied in to the ideology and the program. Bill, I don't think, drank the Kool-Aid quite as readily and as much as some of the others did.

Let me read for you what the Church Council on Justice and Corrections says about your program for squeegee kids. They say:

"The Ontario government's 'law-and-order' crack-down on squeegee persons and panhandlers is a recipe for more crime, more fears and less safe places to live, because it further divides communities and people into 'us and them' worlds."

This is in keeping with the pattern that this government has developed over four years where it concerned education, where it concerned health care, where it concerned people in communities trying to put programs together, where it concerned the poor, where it concerned workers and unions. It's always setting up a scenario of "us" and "them" and then scapegoating "them."

"These people who already likely have a housing problem, an education problem, perhaps an addictions problem, now will have a justice problem.

"We believe that nuisance laws which criminalize what some perceive to be annoying actions are not a meaningful, effective response at all. We do not want to discount those citizens who are bothered by panhandling or squeegeeing, but their presence points to deeper social ills that must be addressed by government"—but this government doesn't want to go deep; this government is on the surface trying to find easy answers to very difficult and complex questions—"deeper social ills that must be addressed by government, churches and all citizens. Making our communities healthier is a surer path to safety.

"Our 25 years of experience with the criminal justice system makes it clear that courts and jail are the last place to deal with these social issues. Our justice system already is overcrowded and backlogged with too many cases. We are wasting precious and scarce dollars there that should be reinvested in social spending."

Mr Murdoch: Who said that again? You've got to tell them.

Mr Martin: The Church Council on Justice and Corrections, Bill.

"We want to be clear that we believe panhandlers and squeegee people are members of our society and our communities, and our equal. While we expect their and everyone's behaviour to be responsible and respectful of others, we wonder what taking their livelihood away from them does to make our streets any safer."

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Are any of you over there listening to this? I know Bill is.

"It begs other questions. Why pick on the panhandlers or squeegee kids and not, as others have pointed out,

supertime telephone solicitors, who seem to irritate many more Ontario residents?" You'd agree with that, Bill.

Mr Murdoch: Sure, I agree with that.

Mr Martin: You're having supper; the phone rings and somebody wants to sell you something. We should maybe put them in jail. What do you think?

Mr Murdoch: We should check them out, anyway.

Mr Martin: Check them out, anyway. Give them a justice problem.

"We need to think through our choices about what and who we deem to be criminal, and why, and what this says about our treatment of those different than the majority.

"We invite citizens, churches and politicians to remember that street people and others marginalized need, like the rest of us, to be wanted. We need again and again to make choices to care about all people, and especially those treated as outcasts whose actions are deemed annoying and intrusive by some. The real problems need to be addressed. And churches will have to do their part too in dealing with these pressing issues."

In my conversations with some of the churches that operate in my community of Sault Ste Marie, they're starting to come apart at the seams too, because it seems that every time there's a problem that this government doesn't want to deal with, they push it on to community groups and churches. The churches can only do so much. They only have so much energy and so many resources.

That's the group that's targeted this time. I said in the speech from the throne that we had a year or two ago that this government took unions and criminals and the poor and put them in a bag and shook 'em up and then rolled them out and nobody knew who was what any more. This is what you're doing again. You're taking another group and you're throwing them in the bag and you're doing the same thing. It doesn't lend to good community development. As this group has said, the Church Council on Justice and Corrections, you're going to create more problems than you're solving by taking this approach to squeegee kids. But your approach to squeegee kids is not dissimilar to the approach you're taking to so many other groups in this province. I suggest that we will all reap the negative reward that's not too far down the road.

The other thing we heard in the budget was a great deal of hoopla and bombast and "Aren't we great?" about the economy and how wonderfully the economy is doing and how we're all so much better off under this new regime. I have to tell you, the same as I told you before we went to the electorate, that there is, building in this province, a disease among workers out there that isn't healthy any more. Yes, there are a lot of jobs for people, particularly in the greater Toronto area. I know people who have two or three of them each because it's taking two or three jobs for all of them now, it seems, to pay for the things that they used to be able to pay for with one job four or five years ago—all part-time, all contract, no more confidence any more that they'll have a job down the line. So these people are going to stop, slowly but

surely, investing in things, and the economy will grind to a halt.

Mr Mazzilli: That's because of your friend Bob.

Mr Martin: Well, if you think this is just me talking about, for example, the standard of living of a whole lot of people actually going down in this province and you're wondering why, I'd suggest that you take a look at an article that was written in the Toronto Star this weekend by David Crane. He says that Roger Martin, dean of the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management, "calculates that if Canada had retained its ranking of third place in the world in per capita gross domestic product, where we were in 1990, instead of falling to ninth spot now, a typical family of four today could have the equivalent of a free car or bigger house."

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What he's saying is that contrary to the picture that this government would have us believe is actually unfolding out there and contrary to some of the predictions of some of the financial planners who want us to invest in their particular fund or business opportunity, the economy of this province, even though it may in the statistics sheets and the Bay Street analysis present as being very positive and exciting, in fact isn't. We're falling further and further behind the rest of the world because we have nothing new to offer.

He's saying here that the problem with the Canadian and Ontario economy is that it is a "me too" economy: The Americans are always ahead of us, Europe is always ahead of us, and we're trying to copy them.

The only way that we are able to make our corporations more profitable is to lay off more people. Every time you turn around, another banking institution or big corporation is looking at how they expand the bottom line. They can't come up with anything more creative because this government is not giving them any help, not showing any leadership, not bringing people together around the challenges of the day like previous governments have done. This government's only program for economic growth and development is this stupid tax cut that is sucking money out of the system and shipping it across the river, shipping it south of the border into the coffers of the robber barons who live in places like New York and London and Tokyo. That's what's happening. Our communities are beginning to come apart at the seams. People are becoming uneasy about their future, and there is no leadership coming from this government around some of those so very important questions.

This is nowhere more important than in northern Ontario, which used to be the engine that drove the economy of Ontario and Canada. This government seems to forget that, for the longest time, resource-based industry has been the bread and butter of our economy.

You're out there grasping at straws, looking at what the Americans are doing, looking at what the Europeans are doing, trying to copy them. In the meantime, we're falling further and further behind when in fact we should be looking for ways to add value to what we do best, which is to harness the resource that is out there, that is

us, and find new ways to develop product and intelligence from that and begin to sell that on the world market. But you don't understand that.

In wrapping up—I'm sorry, Bill, I got carried away and I don't have any time to leave to you; maybe another night—I want to say that some of the challenges that face Sault Ste Marie and northern Ontario, besides the economy, are in the areas of health care, education and the environment.

Interjection: And roads.

Mr Martin: And roads. We need you there giving leadership. We need you there with your resources. We need you there pulling people together around those questions and working with us. Alas, if the track record of the last four years is all that we have to look at and to give us any hope, well, there is no hope, because the speech from the throne that we heard last week did not address any of those very difficult, problematic areas.

I encourage you to go back to the drawing board and find some other way of doing business, because the way you're doing it now is not improving our lot in life.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): It's really quite interesting to be back here. I would like to congratulate all the folks who came through the electoral wars. I hope you have a good four years.

I can't help but hasten back to some of the remarks of the member for Sault Ste Marie etc, because I know the new ridings have about 14 different names on them. It seems that the member from the Soo is still caught back in the 1950s. It's true that northern Ontario's economy reflected a commodity-based economy back in the 1950s and 1960s, and it still has some relevance, but you have to look at the specifics of the value added on that the member wishes us to talk about. But we never hear very much in terms of what would be specific economic development strategies that the member opposite is always advocating we ought to acquire from them.

If I recall, when I got here in 1995 we had a real mess to clean up. You talk about the loss of hope, the loss of economic opportunity. We had hit the very bottom, the total loss of hope of economic opportunity, in 1995. Don't listen to what I have to say. All you had to do was go out and talk to people: taxi drivers at Toronto International, people in this area, people in northern Ontario. Even the member knows that a lot of tourism comes from the Agawa Canyon. People going up there came back with stories of doom and gloom.

I don't think the member has much to recommend in the way of leadership when it comes to the mess we've just started to clean up. We have a long way to go yet.

Thank you very much.

Mr Bradley: I enjoyed the speech of the member for Sault Ste Marie. I know he probably experiences, as we experience in the Niagara region, the situation now of hospital deficits. Before the election, of course, there was all kinds of talk about the money that would be flowing into health care. Some of the Tories who sit on hospital boards were cheering about this and some of the local people were quite happy, except now they're finding out

that they are incurring deficits because of underfunding by the provincial government.

How are they going to deal with those deficits? By further cutting services to patients. Talk to virtually anybody now. If you were in hospital a dozen years ago and if you're in hospital now, there's a substantial difference. The services are not there because there isn't the necessary funding for the hospitals. Yes, they've got their tax cuts, so if they want to take the extra trip over to Spain—the rich people, Conrad Black, somebody like that, take that trip to Spain—or buy a luxury item, they can do it. But basic hospital care has eroded. I don't think there is anybody who in all honesty would challenge that.

Now our hospitals are going to be asked to cut back further the services they provide to people in our communities because they're not going to get the money from this government to run those hospitals now that the election is over.

I mention ophthalmologists. People in the Niagara region now are going to have to head over to Hamilton—these are often elderly people when you're talking about some of these eye problems—because after the election they put the cap back on the ophthalmologists in our area and said, “Why don't we just increase the territory and then we can put that cap on legitimately?”

The people who are going to be adversely impacted are not rich people who can afford to go somewhere and pay themselves. They are people who do not have the wherewithal to do so and are going to be adversely impacted.

The Acting Speaker: Member from Bruce-Grey.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I thought you were on the other side of the House.

Mr Murdoch: Well, I was for a while.

Mr Speaker, it is hard to talk about compassion when you listen to the member for Sault Ste Marie. He has more compassion for his area than almost any of the members in here. He does talk so well and he does represent his area so well, but unfortunately he's in the wrong century, I think.

He's worried. Doom and gloom, he says. No, no, you've got it wrong over there. Things are picking up. I know they are in Sault Ste Marie too. You're doing wonderfully up there and they're doing fine. But you've got to look at the point where this whole mess started. It started back about 14 years ago when the people elected a Liberal government.

They said: “Now let's spend; we've got tons of money. Let's spend all the money we can. Let's get this province into a debt position.” That's what they wanted to do, and they started spending. Then all of a sudden they said: “Let's marry the NDP guys. Let's get married with those guys,” and they formed a little coalition. “Now we can really spend lots of money. We won't fix any services; we won't fix any roads.” The member from Kingston talked about roads. They won't fix any of these roads. “We're not going to fix anything. Let's just spend money and everybody will love us.”

You saw what happened. Everybody didn't love them. Then the people thought, "Let's try these NDP guys," and then what did we get? Oh, boy, more spending and more spending and nothing fixed. This is the problem.

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You listen to the Liberals go on and say, "You know, service isn't good any more." Medicine has changed, guys. You've got to get into the 1990s here. You're still back in the 1970s, for God's sake. Let's get into real time. Let's get into real life here.

Things are doing really well in Ontario, but the mess that we picked up, as they talk—Jeez, \$10 billion a year you were spending that we didn't have. How long would anybody stay in government with that? It sure showed in how long you guys stayed. They sure kicked you out pretty fast.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I feel compelled to comment on comments made by the former two members, the members for Etobicoke North and Bruce-Grey, who referred to the mess they had to clean up, the mess from 14 years ago.

I think it's important to remind the members of the government that the last Liberal government in this province was the last government to balance the budget. That's the kind of mess I could only hope to clean up after this government.

However, when I was campaigning, let me tell you—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Bruce-Grey, the member for St Catharines.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I sense I've struck a sensitive chord. How interesting. With regard to cleaning up a mess, I think it would be worthwhile to reflect a little bit on the state of affairs in which we find ourselves in this province.

What about hospital deficits? What about the pitiable and embarrassing environmental record that we have as a province? What about special-needs students bereft of services they need so they can learn and achieve to their fullest potential? What about the safety of seniors? What about the promises you made to persons with disabilities? You talk about a mess. I think you've got quite a mess to clean up.

Mr Martin: I want to thank the members for Etobicoke North, St Catharines, Bruce-Grey and Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for their participation in the debate this evening.

The member for Etobicoke North is asking for some suggestions. Let me give you just a couple while I'm at it.

On the economy: The economy of the north continues to struggle, and Sault Ste Marie in particular. Government needs to give leadership and take action, just as we did when we confronted the challenge of Algoma Steel, St Marys Paper, the ACR and Spruce Falls Power and Paper. All over northern Ontario in the early 1990s the government was there giving leadership, putting resources in and restructuring those industries so that they are

making money today. That's the kind of leadership you can give.

On health care: The health care system in the north is still a mess and immediate action is required. Just one small suggestion on the mess that health care is in in northern Ontario: Put some more money into the northern Ontario health travel grant, because you are shipping people to and fro. We had a child in Sault Ste Marie break his leg. He had to be flown to Timmins. Do you know how far Timmins is? Do you know how far that is from home? His father had to take two days off work and his mother had to travel with him.

Interjections.

Mr Martin: Do you think this is funny? Do you think it's funny if your kid breaks his leg and has to travel as far as Timmins to get the damn thing fixed, Bill? That's the problem with your government. You think all of this is funny. It's not funny to the families that have children who are sick and need hospitalization and health care and they can't afford it because they have to travel to Toronto or Timmins or Sudbury to get it.

On education: The predicted closure of schools is now a near reality. Small communities will be hurt the most by the loss of these significant resources, and you're doing it to all of those communities and those people. You'll pay for it sooner or later; it will all come around. It does.

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know we're talking about some historical context in debate. There's one point that was left out, that the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is the first Liberal elected there since Confederation, and I think she deserves a lot of credit for that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): It is my pleasure to rise in the House this evening to reply to the speech from the throne of Thursday, October 21.

As Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor noted last week, the speech from the throne traditionally opens each parliamentary session as a symbol in our democratic system. It also provides a valuable opportunity for the government to present its plans and priorities for the coming session of the Legislature to all members of the House and, via our free press, to the Ontario public.

In 1995 the people of Ontario placed their faith in us to bring about major change. Last spring we gained their confidence again because voters realized that there was much more to be done. In last Thursday's throne speech the public saw that we remain committed to bringing about real change so that we can achieve our goal of making Ontario the world's leading jurisdiction. There were many things that were touched on in the throne speech, and I'd like to begin by highlighting a few of those.

For many people in Ontario the first one had to be the commitment to increased health care funding by 20%. We had established ourselves in the previous Legislature as one who lived up to those expectations. We had created an historic level of health care funding and in this

term we have committed to increasing that by 20%. We also recognize that there are many other areas, such as things like the need for organ donations, to be increased. Our plan is to double those donations, and here we have the leadership provided by Don Cherry.

In areas such as welfare we have recognized, as all studies show, that it is impossible for someone who has a drug problem to keep a job. An opportunity to provide drug rehabilitation, then, is a gateway for welfare recipients to make that much-needed change. In the same way, there are studies which demonstrate how important it is to provide literacy opportunities for these people as well.

There are many groundbreaking areas in the throne speech, but one that stands out for me is that which deals with the initiative regarding early childhood development. I'm very pleased that York region has been designated as one of the five areas for this pilot project.

It's clear that we have to provide updated food safety standards and inspection programs from the farm to the plate, and certainly we have the commitment in our ministry to do that.

We also have a SWAT team organized for enforcement in the environment.

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Another area that is highlighted is the question of a task force to look at long-term competitiveness. We recognize how important it is for continued sustained growth within our province, and this requires the work of a great many people to provide input and give us opinion on this.

We have introduced and announced today the advanced usage of the Internet and the commitment of both private sector and the province to provide this. I'm very pleased to see that communities in my riding of York North are included in that framework that has been announced.

Taxpayer protection and balanced budget legislation appeared in the throne speech and, as we all know, was introduced here in the House today.

There are many things that are included in the throne speech, but I would like to talk about a few of those priorities and programs that are outlined in the speech that I know incur much interest and support from the voters in my riding of York North. These included programs that have created secure, high-paying jobs in technology, construction and in companies that have newly invested in Ontario and jobs that allow welfare recipients to put their lives back on track.

I know that opposition members find it difficult to accept the government's job creation success, but it's hard to argue with the record. We know that the private sector is the engine of new job growth in Ontario, but it can't function effectively when government gets in the way. That's why we have reduced business and personal taxes, eliminated the paper nightmare and cut red tape. In fact, in the throne speech is a commitment for a permanent watchdog with regard to red tape. The result is that in our first mandate this government created over half a million new jobs in Ontario, and that's just the beginning.

Our economy is stronger in 1999 compared to 1995. New home construction is up, business investment is up, consumer spending is up and job creation is up. Average after-tax family income is nearly at its 1989 pre-recessional level. In York region alone we have an unemployment rate of a low 5.3%. I really want to emphasize that because when we came to office we were looking at a number of 9%. I'm very proud of the fact that we can stand up and say that in York region we have 5.3%. For York North residents, competitiveness spells obtaining and keeping good jobs, protecting their standard of living and improving their quality of life.

I recently had the pleasure of attending the official opening of Schleese Saddlery in Holland Landing. Schleese Saddlery is an excellent example of the kind of growth a business can have in Ontario. In 1986 it began in a 10-square-foot room and today it has provided more than a dozen jobs. It has a very active apprenticeship program and it has a worldwide clientele. It shares in that \$1-billion North American horse saddlery market today.

But despite all this good news, there is more work to be done. Government must provide the tools to help businesses prosper. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade is working with other ministries to establish a private sector task force to recommend the best way for Ontario to create jobs, remain competitive and promote high-technology development. We are taking the advice of experts in order to examine the complex issues surrounding job creation and promoting high-tech development.

Government has a role to play in promoting a climate for growth in our economy. This requires an investment, and we have taken up this challenge. The \$20-billion public-private SuperBuild Growth Fund will renew Ontario's infrastructure. This includes technology links, hospitals, highways, transit and education institutions. I think it is important to see that it is those underpinnings that allow people to move forward in building their own businesses. They must have those infrastructure investments.

We have also asked Dr Heather Munroe-Blum of the University of Toronto to look at ways to foster a culture of innovation in all sectors of the Ontario economy. The key to prosperity is innovation. We all know about reinventing yourself; otherwise, you get left behind.

Recognizing that small business is a key player in economic growth, we have established a network of small business self-help enterprise centres to foster their growth and development. These offices act as the resource centre for any small business person in need of advice on how to establish or grow their business. We know that 80% of all jobs are created by small and medium business. This is certainly demonstrated by the kind of confidence that the Conference Board of Canada has stated: "Clearly the Ontario economy is presently the strongest among the provinces."

Education and health care services are part of that package that provides for the quality of life that we all enjoy. It seems to me, speaking as a former teacher, that previous to 1995 we had a very costly but not particularly

effective education system. It has been the goal of this government, and I would say the success of this government, to examine those issues through the creation of a funding formula and a rigorous curriculum.

I would like to say, for instance, in the area of the funding formula, that it has given communities like mine the resources to build new schools in a timely fashion. Many of us remember and recognize the overcrowding and the whole issue of portables. These are a legacy of the old system. We are able then to see that in places like York North there is a flexible funding system in place which allows the boards to be able to meet those needs.

At this point I would want to single out for praise the York Region District School Board, whose review by the Education Improvement Commission was released today. To quote the chair of the review team: "The York region board is a well run, sophisticated organization with strong leadership. It has a clear understanding of the challenges it faces, such as rapid growth and social and economic diversity." I would like to add my voice in recognizing the York Region District School Board for having such a clear focus on the needs of students.

Our stronger economy, along with the money we saved by eliminating waste in the system, allowed the government to increase the amount of money spent in the classroom. Our education funding plan guarantees increased classroom dollars to match increases in enrolments, with no cuts to education. This school year, 1999-2000, funding will be \$575 million higher than in 1997. Our top priority remains ensuring that we have a strong economy to support a strong education system and making sure that education dollars are spent in the classrooms, where children need them most.

In York North we want our students to have a quality education that's based on higher standards, that gives them the knowledge and skills they'll need to achieve their full potential. Yet parents have told us that their children weren't doing well in important subjects such as math and English. That is why the Ministry of Education introduced rigorous province-wide standards in our high schools, including a standard curriculum, province-wide literacy testing, mandatory community involvement and more emphasis on the compulsory courses.

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The ministry will build on that progress by developing and introducing province-wide student tests on core subjects tied to the new curriculum in every grade. These tests will give parents and teachers clear, easy-to-understand information on how well our students are learning.

In York North we also believe that every Ontario student with good grades should have the chance to attend college or university. To ensure that our young people will have the best foundation possible for tackling the challenges of the next millennium, the Ministry of Education is implementing a clear plan to raise our high school standards. Our balanced approach to governing focuses both on assistance to students and on keeping the economy strong. We need a strong economy to support our colleges and universities and to provide job opportunities after graduation. Already, we are seeing these

major investments being made to our universities. We need properly trained workers to fill those jobs. Plainly and simply, without this approach Ontario will not prosper. History shows this to be true.

Government spending on OSAP has increased by 33% since 1995. Among the next steps will be the introduction of four-year, full-tuition, aiming-for-the-top scholarships to be awarded annually to the top 10,000 high school graduates.

Ontario has the best universities in the country. Maclean's magazine has noted that Ontario has three of the five top medical doctoral universities in Canada, three of the five top comprehensive universities and two of the five top primarily undergraduate universities.

Next I would like to speak for a few moments about health care which, as I already pointed out, received comment in the throne speech with regard to increased funding. Certainly everyone in my riding firmly believes that universal health care is a right of every Ontarian. Making sure every person in Ontario has access to top-quality health care is our most urgent concern. Our government is fully committed to the principles of the Canada Health Act, including universal access to a publicly funded system. That is why in the throne speech we have committed to increase funding by at least 20%. Again, our plan for a stronger economy will allow us to pay for the top quality, publicly funded health care the people of Ontario expect.

Heart disease is a major concern of everyone across the province and it is a growing disease among women. Already, the Ministry of Health has put more than \$97 million into cardiac care. As a result, waiting times are down, with a 35% increase in cardiac procedures since 1995.

In response to the unprecedented growth in York region, our government has committed \$63 million to the expansion of York County Hospital by making it a cardiac care centre, providing a new MRI unit and 1,500 new long-term-care beds for York region. This will go a long way to improving health care access for our residents.

Women have distinct health care needs which the health care system must recognize. In recognition of the health needs of women, the Ministry of Health has expanded breast cancer screening dramatically. The ministry has put in place a guaranteed 60-hour stay in hospital for women and children after childbirth and has also brought together some of the most influential women in Ontario to advise on how we can do better.

In my riding I recently had the pleasure of opening the Oasis day program at Hospice Newmarket, funded by the Ministry of Health. One cannot overestimate how important such a care facility and its outstanding volunteers are to our local community.

Finally, in looking at the initiative of this government with regard to health care, I would like to comment on the opportunity provided by this government with regard to free tuition for medical students who practise in underserved areas. I have communities in York North which are going to benefit from this.

As outlined in the throne speech, we have a vision for the future. We have a plan for hard-working families who deserve much more. Not only are people with good jobs better able to meet their families' needs, they also help to keep our economy strong by spending and investing more money. Our government is building a strong economy which will create the jobs which will give us the resources to provide the services we all want.

Our vision is for government to provide a framework to ensure a brighter future that will result in an Ontario that is the best place in the world to live, work and raise a family.

The Acting Speaker: It now being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2126.

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