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Tuesday 30 November 1999

Mardi 30 novembre 1999

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 30 November 1999

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 30 novembre 1999

The House met at 1848.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet until Thursday, December 23, 1999, at which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House without motion until Monday, April 3, 2000.

I believe that this motion before the House this evening to extend the sittings of this place is in the best interests of the Legislature, is in the best interests of the constituents of this province. We have a number of pieces of legislation that deserve the attention of this House; for example, the police pursuits legislation. We have an important piece of health care legislation yet to be considered, the Supply Act and so on.

I believe that part of making this House work properly is to ensure that the appropriate time is taken by all members of the House to consider the details of legislation, to ensure that it has proper debate, that it is extensively considered by the members of this House. Although I know there may be some concern on the part of some to be able to rise at the appointed time, as would be the normal course of events under our standing orders, it does behoove us to take whatever time is necessary to deal with the legislation that we have committed to as a government. It was in the Blueprint, which was our campaign commitment to the people of this province, where we committed to doing a number of things, not the least of which is to bring in legislation that would deal with issues such as community safety.

We committed to ensuring that we would shore up the ability of our police forces, for example, to deal with matters of community safety. The Solicitor General introduced a very key piece of legislation, the police pursuits act, and that will allow police services throughout this province to deal effectively with those people who choose not to obey the law, who choose for whatever reason to challenge the law and cause a police chase.

It's unfortunate in our time to read about a police chase having taken place, and there are more and more of them. I think the reason for that is that in the past there hasn't been sufficient support by governments of our police officers across this province for doing their job. It

has become acceptable to challenge authority. It has become acceptable to consider the words of a police officer of no greater import than perhaps those of a buddy and, in some cases, it is actually considered sport to challenge the authority whether it be of police officers or of teachers.

I think we have a problem that we have to address as a Legislature. We hear all too often about individuals breaking the law, not thinking twice about doing that, and it's starting at a very young age. In York region we have a young man who at the tender age of 16 was swarmed and beaten by a group of youths in Newmarket and today is still in hospital. We don't know if he will ever recover to his former self. We certainly hope and pray that he does. But we have to ask the question: Why is it that young people are prepared to break the law, to turn to violence and to disrespect another young person's life to the point where they're prepared to actually beat someone to the point where they're on the verge of losing their life?

In York North we also know of the recent tragedy of a young person. We all read about the funeral of this teenaged boy who was beaten to death. Forever, his life has been snuffed out and the life of his family has been changed, of his friends who went through and are going through the trauma of this experience. Why is it that we, in a province that has so many advantages, are experiencing these tragedies? I suggest to you the reason is that at some point along the way we've lost sight of respect for life, we've lost sight of respect for authority. Through this piece of legislation I believe the Solicitor General is sending a clear signal to people across this province that you must obey the law and that there will be serious consequences if you don't.

That is the kind of legislation we will be debating in this place. We will be talking about other legislation that deals with matters of municipal restructuring. One of the commitments that we made as a government is that we would promote more efficient government. You know well that over the years layer upon layer of government and bureaucracy has been allowed to develop. We're spending much more today on government than ever before, but if you ask people if they are getting better service today than they did 20 years ago, they'll say no. The question is, why, then, do we need a multiplicity of politicians, why do we need the layers of bureaucracy? What has happened?

As we experienced in the city of Toronto—an unpopular piece of legislation at the time with many—there

were many who objected to the amalgamation of those very mature cities that were all clustered around the city of Toronto at the time, each of them with their own city hall, each of them their own clusters of councils, and all of the staffing and bureaucracy that surrounds that; different communities with their own fire departments and often confusion about where the boundaries were and who was going to respond to a call. Experience now shows very clearly that to take the initiative of amalgamating those cities into the city of Toronto was the right thing to do. We are getting reports now of millions of dollars of savings as a result of the downsizing of the bureaucracy, and yet there is still a distance to go. We're not done with that yet. I think it's very clear still that there is room for improvement.

I think it behooves any government not to rest until we have done everything possible to make government more efficient, to deliver services at lower cost and to improve service while we're doing that. All of that is possible. We have an experience in Toronto as well as in other municipalities across the province. We've received reports from commissioners for the Ottawa-Carleton area. We've received reports for Sudbury, as well as Haldimand-Norfolk and the Hamilton area. We will be reviewing those reports and we are in the process of discussing those. We'll certainly be coming forward as well with legislation that relates as a response to those reports from those commissioners.

I know that every member of this House wants to have an opportunity to provide their input. Every member of this House will have an opportunity to do that. We believe that it's important that we get on with that work. Particularly with regard to the motion before us, it's important that we allow the opportunity for sufficient debate to take place.

We know that there are municipal elections coming up next year, and this restructuring initiative should be in place in time for those municipal elections. Hopefully, the House will be able to deal with this matter with some diligence and pass the appropriate legislation so that the municipalities will have sufficient time to prepare for that and to deal with those issues.

Today in the House the Minister of Finance gave a report on the status of our economy in Ontario. It's all good news; good news from the standpoint of what it means to men, women, young people and children in the province of Ontario. The growth of jobs, the performance of the economy is second to none. We have never had a better time of productivity in Ontario than we have had over the last five years.

We want to give credit to the Minister of Finance for successive budgets that he brought forward that were difficult budgets. I know that the reaction today from opposition parties was not positive. Frankly, their role is to provide critique, and their role is to point out, perhaps, where we could have done better. Unfortunately, all too often it is criticism without any positive recommendations. What they cannot argue with—and even the leader of the third party in the House this afternoon made

reference to the fact—is that productivity in the car manufacturing sector has outstripped that of the Michigan plants, which are the leaders worldwide in automobile manufacturing.

1900

We at least want to recognize that the leader of the third party knows that the initiatives that have been taken by our government in the economy to create jobs—which, by the way, were created as a result of the tax cut policy of our government, the stimulation that meant to the economy—are good for the people of this province. In his own way, although it was with a great deal of hesitation, I think there was a direct compliment there to our Minister of Finance, to the economic policies of our government over the last few years.

I'm waiting, frankly, for the Leader of the Opposition one of these days to actually take his place in this House and admit that the tax cut policies of our government were the right thing to do. Slowly but surely his federal cousins in Ottawa are coming to that recognition. The Minister of Finance for the federal government in this country is beginning to see that he should be delivering tax cuts to the people of this country. Individual members of the federal caucus are pressuring the finance minister in Ottawa to give tax concessions and tax cuts to the taxpayers of this country. At one point, we even see the Prime Minister admitting that it may be time to provide some tax cuts to Canadians, who are still the most highly taxed taxpayers in the western world. That is shameful, particularly when we have the kind of surpluses that the federal budgets have seen and will continue to see. There shouldn't even be a debate about that.

I know that my colleagues opposite will come back to their mantra that had we not provided the tax cuts, we could have balanced the budget so much earlier. The truth of the matter is that that simply is not the case, because what would not have happened had we done that is the stimulation of the economy, the creation of the jobs, which in turn puts many more people to work who were otherwise reliant on the social services network in our province. The fact that we have close to 500,000 people now working who in 1995 were reliant on welfare surely should have the support of every member of this Legislature regardless of their partisan affiliation, because this is a celebration of the individual. This is a celebration of being able to give hope to people in this province.

I also want to point out to the House today that the initiative of our government to put constraints on spending in every ministry—even in the area of health and education, where we've actually increased spending—asking people to do things in a more efficient way, to actually target spending so that we know that we're spending our dollars in those areas where it is going to be needed and where, dollar for dollar, we are getting return on investment, that initiative allows our finance minister to speak today about the fact that we are very close to balancing the budget. I can tell you that, as he said, by the time his next budget comes forward, we will be

announcing to the people of this province that for the first time in many years we have a balanced budget in this province. That would not have happened had it not been for the economic strategy we launched in 1995. This is not by mistake. It would not have happened had we continued in the tax-and-spend policies of the Liberals and the NDP before us.

I had the privilege of being an observer this past weekend at the Liberal convention where the Leader of the Opposition was reaffirmed as the leader of the Liberal Party. We wish him well in that capacity. It carries with it a great deal of responsibility. We don't take lightly any role that any member in this House plays. Having said that, we don't wish him too well. We know that to play the role of opposition is important. After all, it's Her Majesty's loyal opposition. In that capacity, we look forward to Her Majesty's loyal opposition actually helping this place to develop productive policy that is in the best interests of the taxpayers of this province.

One of the things I heard Mr McGuinty say on the weekend was that he was going to launch a policy development process. In speaking with a number of the delegates to the convention, I found out, not surprisingly so, that to this point there really hasn't been a policy development process in the Liberal Party. That probably explains why over the last couple of elections the people have had a clear choice. That clear choice was a policy document, the Common Sense Revolution in 1995 and the Blueprint in this last election, that clearly stated where we as a party stand in terms of our commitment to fiscal responsibility; our commitment to ensuring that the social safety net of this province was strengthened and maintained; that we would ensure services such as health care and education would be approached both on a compassionate level and yet in a fiscally responsible way. That is because for the last number of years we have had a policy development process in place in this province that has drawn on men and women and young people from across this province and drawn them into a process that allows them to bring forward ideas. They were part and parcel of a very dynamic policy development process that resulted in those two election platforms.

When the Leader of the Opposition says, "It's time that, as Liberals, we develop a policy development process," I congratulate him. I do think it would be appropriate for him to do that. I think that may allow him to come into this place and, rather than reduce himself to a smear-campaign type of debate, actually bring forward positive suggestions to this House as to how we can improve legislation. We welcome that.

In fact, the Leader of the Opposition also said in his speech that in the Liberal Party there is no room for the politics of smear. That was refreshing. I'm sure it's refreshing to the rest of the people in my caucus, because since re-election in this place, the politics of smear has basically been the mantra of the Liberal Party, and the Leader of the Opposition has spent most of his time smearing people who sit on the front benches of this government, has had very little to say about policy, very

little to say about how we can improve the quality of life in this place, and has voted against every positive piece of legislation we brought into the House here. He hasn't stood for anything because he hasn't had a policy development process in place in his party which would have allowed him to stand for anything. What he has done, and very effectively, is oppose everything that we have brought forward.

1910

I know that perhaps, with now having been reorganized and settled into a little bit more comfortable position with members of his own caucus, who I know for—and maybe it's just hearsay, but there was a great deal of discontent or unrest—

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Hearsay.

Hon Mr Klees: Hearsay, the member says—about the degree of confidence that members opposite have in Mr McGuinty's leadership. That has all been changed now overnight at this conference in Ottawa. We're quite happy about that, actually; I know that perhaps Mr Cordiano isn't, and maybe one or two others. But you know, what we want to say as a party is that if there is any discontent in the Liberal benches, we welcome—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Klees: Yes, by all means. As long as you're able, as long as you're willing to commit to the values of our party, as long as you're willing to embrace the principles of the Common Sense Revolution and the Blueprint, if you want to consider crossing the floor, you're welcome to do that. I'm sure we can probably find a place to put a couple more seats here. It would help me as well when we have those votes; there's nothing wrong with having one or two more members on our side.

In seriousness, I'm going to wrap up my comments by saying that I'm proud of the policies that we as a government have brought forward over the last number of years. The record speaks for itself. The financial statement given today by Minister Eves is clear evidence of the fact that these policies with a focus on fiscal responsibility work for people in this province. I look forward to hearing from other members who will be sharing this time with me. I really believe that—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Klees: No, I really think that the member for Simcoe North and Mr O'Toole, the member from Durham, as well as Mr Mazzilli will do well to explain to the people in this province why it's important for us to carry on the debate in this House on these very important issues.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to rise this evening to take part in debate on the House calendar motion. I'm pleased to follow the chief government whip's comments. I too would like to congratulate the Leader of the Opposition for a successful weekend in Ottawa.

The House calendar motion will allow the House to continue to meet until Thursday, December 23, and at that time it will allow the Speaker and your branch to

adjourn the House until the spring of 2000. I know we've taken some criticism this past year as a government for a lack of sessional days, but it's incredible, when you compare the last three parliaments. I look at the 34th Parliament led by the Liberal government; it sat 297 sessional days. The 35th Parliament of the New Democratic Party sat 385 days. The 36th Parliament, which was Mike Harris's first government, sat 431 days.

As a new member of the assembly, I've been very impressed with the legislation that our ministers have brought forward since the throne speech on October 21. Our government has introduced legislation that keeps the promises that we made in seeking our second mandate. Just to update the members on some of the key legislation that the citizens of Ontario have seen since the House resumed on October 20th: Bill 7, or the balanced budget act—I know the official opposition supported it and I thank them for that; Bill 8, or the Safe Streets Act, which is still under debate; Bill 14, or the More Tax Cuts for Jobs, Growth and Prosperity Act; and Bill 22, or the Sergeant Rick McDonald Memorial Act.

All of the legislation, including the debate on the throne speech, emphasized the fact that we as a government intend to keep the promises we made in Blueprint, our election platform. We promised the citizens of this great province a safer Ontario while at the same time building an economy that will provide the government with the necessary resources to support the health and education programs that our citizens expect and deserve.

In 1995, our government told the people of Ontario that we would cut taxes to stimulate the economy, create investment and create jobs for the people of our province. When the Mike Harris government came to power in 1995, my colleagues had to deal with a great and serious financial situation. Between 1985 and 1995, the Liberal and the NDP governments raised taxes 65 times with their spend-and-tax fiscal policies. In fact, their careless mismanagement of the taxpayers' money didn't just stop there. Over a million people were on welfare. From January 1990 to September 1995, Ontario lost nearly 50,000 jobs while in the rest of Canada—and they might have been bad days in the rest of Canada as well—they gained over 350,000 jobs. The provincial debt was growing without restraint. The bottom line was that those governments were clearly not up to the job. Why? Because the Liberal and NDP governments were not creating an economic environment that was desperately required to assist the process of job creation.

In 1995, Mike Harris went before the people of this province with a solution—the Common Sense Revolution solution—which was supported by 129 of the 130 PC candidates versus only four Liberals: tax cuts through a Canadian Taxpayers Federation pledge. In fact, Lyn McLeod, who was the leader at the time of the survey, did not sign this pledge, nor did the official opposition's current leader, Mr McGuinty. When Mr McGuinty supported tax cuts during the 1999 election, the irony wasn't lost on the Kenora Daily Miner and News Online when they wrote: "Cynics say Liberal leader Dalton

McGuinty is only backing the legislation now because of political expediency—he sees it as a vote getter. They'd be right again. The Liberals didn't endorse similar legislation in 1995 and skirted the issue in the spring campaign."

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I don't see him addressing the motion, which is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): That is not a point of order. Continue.

Mr Dunlop: Since mid-1995, Ontario's job growth has consistently outperformed that of the rest of the country. Most importantly, the increase has been in the private sector. The jobs have been full-time, and Ontarians of all ages have benefited from the growth.

Mr Speaker, allow me to share with the House how tax cuts have helped the economy and therefore helped promote job creation. Ontario's economy is growing faster than the rest of Canada or any of the G7 industrial nations. Ontario's economy is expected to grow by 5% in 1999, above the 3.7% forecast in May's budget. We're very happy about that. Ontario has gained 615,000 net new jobs since September 1995 and the job growth in 1999 is expected to reach 3.1%. In 1999 so far, retail sales are up 7.3%, housing starts are up 24.3% and exports are up 16.2%.

1920

Let's look at what tax cuts have done to help benefit Ontario business investment. Ontario business investment last year increased to \$38.5 billion. As investment grows in Ontario, so does the ability for firms to increase capacity and boost production. As a result, the following takes place: AstraZeneca is building a manufacturing facility, a \$250-million investment; Owens Corning has announced they will spend \$40 million to upgrade their manufacturing facilities; Lucent Technologies also announced an investment in their facilities of \$50 million. In 1997, Toyota decided to expand their Cambridge plant by \$600 million. It should therefore not come as a surprise to the leader of the third party that Ontario has moved ahead of Michigan in car manufacturing.

It makes it all rather clear that through tax cuts and through greater investment in the province, the following increases in employment would occur. In September of this year, 28,000 jobs were created. That is nothing compared to the 43,600 jobs created in the month of October alone. Since 1995, Ontario has created 615,000 jobs, almost half the new jobs in Canada. Job growth is estimated to be 3.1% in 1999. We are well on our way to meeting our goal of creating 725,000 jobs by the end of next year.

Ontario has taken a leadership position in the fight for job creation, and others would agree. For example, the National Post states: "(Reducing) taxation is a very important part of a productivity agenda because it rewards success. When the people of Canada get more back from what they earn, that will in itself be an incentive, to continue to work hard and be rewarded for that."

Allan Rock, a Liberal MP and Minister of Health, states: "I think it has been clear for some time that the tax burden on Canadians is very heavy.... We have said from the outset that one of our goals is to reduce the tax burden."

I think we should spend more time emphasizing what I believe is a lack of leadership on the part of our federal government in Ottawa. As our Minister of Finance stated earlier today: "In an open, global economy, jobs and investment find new homes quickly and easily. High taxes scare away new investment and jobs. They raise the costs of producing goods and services."

The province of Ontario and most of the other provinces have been steadily reducing taxes, but Canadians still face a higher personal income tax than any other nation in the G7. The provinces cannot make Canada competitive on their own. Over 60% of the personal income tax burden is imposed by the federal government. The federal government has to strengthen the national economy by cutting taxes. All of the provincial finance ministers agree that federal tax cuts and immediate, full restoration of Canada health and social transfers should be priorities of the federal government. They have also called for a reduction in job-killing federal employment insurance premiums.

In spite of the fear stories that we hear from our opposition, it is interesting to note that Ottawa has slashed over \$6.2 billion from the Canada health and social transfer levels of 1994 and has restored only \$2 billion to date. Our government not only has absorbed these cuts but in 1999 will spend over \$20.6 billion on health care, the highest total in the history of our province.

I mentioned earlier the grave situation Premier Harris found the books in when he came to power in June 1995: \$11.3 billion was the deficit. The Premier, in the Common Sense Revolution, laid out a five-year plan to eliminate that deficit, and he sold that plan to the citizens of this province. That's why he was elected with a majority government in 1995. I was so pleased to hear the finance minister announce this afternoon that we are exactly on target to reduce the deficit, as planned on a five-year plan, which will be eliminated next year, in the year 2000-01.

Mr Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak here tonight on this House calendar motion this evening.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's a pleasure to rise and speak on the House calendar motion. I can't say that I've ever spoken on a calendar, but this is an important calendar. It's the calendar that drives the government agenda. The government agenda is one of growth.

As I look across, all of the complaints, all of the doom and gloom of the last 15 years we continue to hear, are because they oppose this House calendar motion, because it is a motion of growth, and it is in the best interests of Ontarians for us to hold further debate on key legislation before the House rises for the winter break. The

opposition opposes that. They do not want to hear the debate on that legislation.

This government was elected based on the Blueprint for a better Ontario, and we are proceeding with this mandate. In order to do that, we certainly need the House calendar motion to continue with that.

It's important to go back to the previous governments as they accuse our government of not sitting enough. In the 36th Parliament, we sat for 431 days and yet only passed 114 pieces of legislation. That legislation was important legislation, again legislation of growth and prosperity. It's interesting, if you go back two governments, the NDP and Liberals, one sat for 385 days, less than our government, yet they rammed through 163 pieces of legislation that ran our economy into the ground. By running our economy into the ground, not only were people laid off and there were no jobs, but our health care system essentially was not helping anybody, our education system was not properly funded, community safety—police officers certainly with no training. With a growing economy, we've corrected some of those problems.

We need to go back, in order to appreciate what we're trying to do with this motion, at least to 1990 and see the deficit that was accumulated by the Liberals and David Peterson, who, by the way, was from London. We were assured that we had a balanced budget, yet in the end we found out there was over \$2 billion in deficit; then with an NDP government, almost \$12 billion in deficit. Again, health care deteriorated; no money for hospitals, no money for our education system, no money for community safety.

Because of those essentially mortgaging our future, we were not able to perform all the things we wanted to. If you take a look, a \$12-billion deficit represents a third of the provincial budget. Those two governments in one year overspent one third of the entire provincial budget. How responsible is that? In my riding of London-Fanshawe, I believe the median household income is \$40,000, maybe a little bit more. For a household to spend, say, \$12,000 to \$15,000 more than their income every year—how long is that sustainable? Not very long. As I went to the doors, that's what I heard from these people who had median household incomes of \$42,000. They were saying: "Can we spend \$15,000 more than we make? Yes, maybe for one year, two years, but at some point we have to pay it back." The opposition just doesn't understand that.

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The debate is over. Tax cuts create jobs. I'll tell you why. If you look at all the places in the world, all the different provinces, the ones with lower taxes have the highest growth. However, in this province the opposition still doesn't get it. It's interesting, as we all canvassed through the election and prior to the election, we heard in every household that they were overtaxed. The families in my riding, again, with the median household income of \$40,000 said, "The \$1,000 extra in our pockets we could spend on our children, we could spend on preparing for their education, we could spend on paying

down some family debt.” But all we hear from across the floor is that they could spend it better than the families in my riding that make \$40,000 a year. We disagree with their thinking. We want people to have that money because it’s their money. The Liberals think it belongs to them and not to the taxpayers.

That’s why this House calendar motion that I’m speaking on is important. In order to really comprehend where we’re going, we need to understand what happened in 1995 with the record deficit of \$12 billion. We hear accusations from across the floor that we somehow added \$20 billion to the debt. Let me assure you that in order to cut one third of the provincial budget, essentially we’d have to cut everything. We would have to eliminate health care. That’s what they’re talking about: eliminating health care, eliminating education, eliminating community safety. Mike Harris was not prepared to eliminate any of those things. He was prepared to grow our economy. In order to grow our economy, we had to cut taxes. The Liberals want to add this to the debt. Let me tell you, the federal Liberals not only did not cut taxes and they increased taxes for Ontarians, but they added \$250 billion to the debt.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): What your Mr Mulrone left—

Mr Mazzilli: Now the argument from the member for Kingston and the Islands changes, because he doesn’t like the fact that the federal Liberals added almost half of the nation’s debt in a mere four years—

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): And kept the GST.

Mr Mazzilli: —and kept the GST. That’s the kind of commitment we get from Liberals. Not only do they not decrease taxes, not only do they not eliminate the GST, but they add half the nation’s debt in a short four or five years—unacceptable.

That’s why Mike Harris decided, through consultation with members of the public—because prior to being elected, the one thing I will say about our Premier is that he did not make policy on his own. He consulted with the grass roots. In every corner of the province where he went, he heard that taxes were too high. Whether he went to Sudbury, to Kingston and the Islands or to London, he heard that taxes were too high. It’s logical that once you speak to citizens, once you speak to business owners and once you speak to workers who no longer have a job—the common denominator was that taxes were too high, from all the groups. Obviously he didn’t go looking for a Harvard professor or anything like that; he took his advice from the grass roots. The grass roots told him taxes were too high, so he cut taxes by 30% of the provincial portion of income tax. That is very significant. While he was doing that, the federal government not only increased taxes but also the Canada pension and so on. They continued down their path to destruction.

By reducing those taxes, what essentially happened was a job growth unprecedented in this province. Today, as we heard the finance minister say, there are 650,000 net new full-time jobs in the province—pretty in-

credible—at a rate of growth in Ontario in excess of 5%. Those households in my riding that make the \$42,000 a year are now able to keep 30% more of the provincial portion that we promised during the last mandate, and we’re going to add another 20% income tax cut from this time. So you can see in a short period of time where the provincial portion of income taxes would be cut by 50%.

What other government in this province or in this country has ever thought of doing anything like that? It has not been the Liberals. Not only has it not been the Liberals—they are quite clever, I will say, because they know the tax cuts work. The public in my riding make a \$42,000 median household income—some more, some less—yet the Liberals think that somehow they can take their money. But they continue to talk about tax cuts. Interesting; it must be popular. It must be that people really want tax cuts, or businesses want tax cuts. They don’t want to listen, but they continue talking about it. Just in case it might be popular and they might have to do it, they want to make it sound like it was their idea.

Let me tell you, Jean Chrétien not only opposed tax cuts a number of years ago, downright opposed them—and it’s funny, because Dalton McGuinty continues to oppose them. Dalton McGuinty continues to oppose tax cuts, and not only Dalton but the entire caucus. Every day when we came into this House, after canvassing for more than 30 days through the summer, we were told, “We want taxes to come down; we want spending on health and education,” and here we are almost into December, and the opposition is still opposing tax cuts.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the member is either totally mistaken or he’s got his facts wrong, but he can’t say what he just said. He said that Mr McGuinty is against tax cuts. There is no such thing. It just isn’t true.

The Acting Speaker: That is no point of order.

Mr Mazzilli: Sometimes the truth hurts. You cannot come into the House every day, oppose every tax cut this government has come up with and then somehow stand for tax cuts. It doesn’t work.

It’s interesting, because through the election—

Mr Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

Interjections.

1940

The Acting Speaker: The member does not have a point of order.

Mr Mazzilli: The guy who was talking to the honourable member from across must be the same homeless person that the Prime Minister was speaking to.

Taxes have come down in Ontario. They have come down by 30% in the first four years.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Davenport will please take his seat.

Point of order, member for Davenport.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, we didn’t come here to hear personal attacks on other members. I would personally ask that he withdraw that comment immediately.

The Acting Speaker: There was nothing offensive in what the member said.

Member for London-Fanshawe.

Mr Mazzilli: I'm very happy on your ruling that we are here having a debate on a time motion that is very important—

Interjection: Calendar.

Mr Mazzilli: Calendar. I'm not normally accustomed to speaking to a calendar, as I said before, but this is an important calendar. It's a calendar that will put forward a government agenda of growth. As we heard the finance minister say today, 650,000 net new jobs, a growth of over 5%. Not only in my riding but as you look through statistics, there are families in this province making less than \$40,000 median household income. When you have these families in certain ridings making a median household income of less than \$40,000 and you have the Liberals of the day wanting to tax them some more, it shocks me. Who do they represent?

With the economic statement that we heard today from the finance minister, I'm convinced that for the people I represent in London-Fanshawe, because of the growth—do you know that the General Motors plant in London cannot keep up? We are having such a difficult time in filling the jobs at that plant, machinists and so on, again because of a strong economy. It's because of plants like General Motors, 3M, the Robert Gordon Co, some of the small enterprises in my riding, it's because of those things that we're able to sustain health care, health care not only in the province but in my riding.

I'd like to share my time with the member for Durham.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's the efficient use of time really that this particular bill is about. It's the House calendar motion, which is all about time. Clearly I will exhaust this portion but, with your permission, I would like to speak a little bit longer in the next portion, if that's permissible. Otherwise, I'll relinquish my time now.

On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to clarify if I'm allowed to speak. If you could check with the table, am I allowed to speak after our time of four minutes has been exhausted?

The Acting Speaker: No, you're not. Once you speak for the next four minutes or so, that's it.

Mr Mazzilli: I was under the impression that I was able to share my time. If not, I will continue with the debate.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member is allowed to share his time, but if he's not choosing at this time to share his time with the member for Durham, he can finish and then the member for Durham can speak later.

Mr Mazzilli: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I apologize for the error in procedure.

Back to the calendar motion, there are many pieces of legislation that we as a government felt were important. It's not us who felt those things were important; it's the people of Ontario.

One piece of legislation, named after Sergeant Rick McDonald, has to do with police pursuits. This is an area where the federal Liberals have really dropped the ball, when it comes to a motor vehicle used in a criminal act. When a motor vehicle is used in a criminal act, it certainly falls under the Criminal Code. What we find is that the federal Liberals just have not taken any leadership as far as sentencing and penalties. In light of them not doing anything, we will.

We're proposing an act that's tough on people who flee from police, with increased penalties and increased suspensions. In the area where one flees and causes serious bodily harm or death, we're proposing a suspension of 10 years or a life suspension. It's this type of legislation that we heard about from the grassroots. They wanted us to go in this direction. But in order to do that, we also need to complement our police services. That's why we have put through our last mandate of hiring 1,000 new police officers in the province of Ontario. Let me give you a comparison to that.

The federal Liberals spent almost \$200 million registering shotguns in this province. They're registering shotguns. Gun control has existed in this province since the 1930s. The Liberals certainly didn't come up with it. Handguns in the province of Ontario have always been registered. What do the federal Liberals do? "Well, let's register the farmer's shotgun. That's going to prevent crime." They certainly don't understand crime: \$200 million on registering shotguns.

Assuming governments had no end to their resource base, possibly that would be a good idea. But in the real world, people need to prioritize things. So do we register shotguns or long rifles that are owned by hunters and farmers? In some cases these are people who need these as tools of their trade—some farmer in the middle of nowhere. Essentially the federal Liberals are saying, "We'll spend \$200 million registering your shotgun." You know what the equivalent of that is? Two thousand new police officers in Canada.

It's interesting. They talk about the chiefs. The chiefs are not accountable to taxpayers. It's government that needs to prioritize things.

Interjections.

Mr Mazzilli: No. I've talked to the chiefs about it. They don't have to justify spending in any way. It is governments that have to take control.

So the question becomes, for \$200 million, do we register long rifles or do we hire police officers? The federal Liberals took the easy way out. They're going to register long rifles.

I know our government would have hired another 2,000 police officers, because if you want to target crime, you have to target the criminals. That's what we understand, and we will be doing that. We will be targeting criminals.

What I hear from across the floor from the Liberals is that they came up with all kinds of education campaigns. They were going to educate everybody. But you know what? As that happened, crime still went up. You know

why it went up? It was a good education initiative, but the people they were educating weren't committing crimes. Can you imagine? How could one ever prevent crime if you weren't targeting the criminals? Our children weren't committing crime. We can certainly say that they were receiving an education under the Liberals on crime, but they were not the ones. We will target criminals in our government.

1950

Mr Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to join this debate. I always find it very interesting that the only thing the members on the other side can talk about is to attack the members in the opposition or to attack the federal government. What I would like to talk about is how their policies in effect have attacked the more vulnerable people in our society.

But before doing that, let's just return to the calendar motion, which is really what this is all about. I think the people of Ontario ought to understand that a legislative calendar is put together every year by the Clerk's office, in accordance with the rules, which basically allows the Legislature to sit for about 13 to 14 weeks in the spring and early summer and for 13 or 14 weeks in the fall. You could say that means that by this time, taking the election out of it, we should have sat for at least 20 to 25 weeks this year. Of course, you and I know, Mr Speaker, that we sat for exactly seven days in April and May of this year, and since that time we have sat—I believe this is our fourth week.

So I say to the government, if you had all of this legislation that you wanted to pass, why didn't you call the Legislature back after the election in June of this year? Why didn't you call us back in September? Why didn't you call us back in early October? Why didn't we sit for at least another seven or eight weeks in the spring?

We will come back every day of the year to discuss the issues that are important to the people of Ontario, provided that each and every day we have a question period. Question period is the only time when the opposition gets the opportunity to hold the government of the day accountable for its actions. It's the time in our democratic system when we can ask questions of the government ministers, in the hope that they will give us an answer to some of the questions.

Of course, for anybody who has seen the question period routine here over the last four to five years, there are a lot of good questions being asked but there are almost no answers given by the government of the day.

The other amazing thing that's happened, and which shows you the total anti-democratic mood of this government, is the fact that we are now in evening sessions. Evening sessions are regarded as another sessional day. The average person might think, "What difference does it make?" The difference that it makes is that a sessional day should have a question period attached to it. By us sitting every night, in effect the government gets two sessional days but we only get one question period. That is important if we want the democratic process, the parliamentary process that has been around in the

Commonwealth countries for at least the last six or seven centuries, to operate effectively. You have systematically attacked the democratic process that has taken place in this province over the last 150 years by the draconian rule changes that have been introduced just within the last two to three years.

Interjections.

Mr Gerretsen: Speaker, I'm prepared to go on but there seem to be a number of other discussions.

The Acting Speaker: Order. If the member for Davenport wants to have a conversation with the Minister of Transportation, they should go outside the House. We're trying to hear from the member for Kingston and the Islands on this important piece of business.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

So let's get it straight. We will sit every day of the year, if you want us to, as long as you give us a question period every sessional day, which means a question period in the afternoon and a question period in the evening, because we want to hold you accountable for some of the dreadful actions that you've taken.

I see the Minister of Transportation with a very big smile on his face. I would hope that he has read the recommendations that are contained in the Provincial Auditor's report, in which the Provincial Auditor clearly states that all the outsourcing that was supposed to save all of us, the taxpayers of Ontario, a lot of money—because we were going to lay off our own MTO employees and they were going to all outsource—is in fact costing us more money. That is a stunning indictment.

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): No, it's not.

Mr Gerretsen: I will tell you something, sir. If I have to take the difference between your word or the Provincial Auditor's word, I will take the Provincial Auditor's word every day of the year, because this man knows what he's talking about. He has investigated your department and he's come to that conclusion, that in effect it is costing the taxpayers of this province money with all the outsourcing.

Hon Mr Turnbull: A lot of poppycock.

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, yes, we'll see about that. We will see about that.

And that is only one area. We could have been discussing, if we had met earlier this year, the problems that have occurred within the MTO. We could have been discussing the problems that have occurred in our health care system. Surely there is nobody in the Legislature who can possibly take comfort in the fact that someone who is diagnosed with cancer and who needs radiation treatment—when radiologists have said, "You've got to have the treatment within four weeks after it's been diagnosed"—that only 32% of the people, fewer than one in three, get the treatment within that period of time. We can have all sorts of answers from the Minister of Health that evade the question completely, but no one here can take any comfort in that. The Minister of Health; the government and the cabinet should be working on those problems to make sure that the people of Ontario get the

health care not only that they've become accustomed to but that we all deserve.

It's very interesting. Earlier today, there was a very interesting article in both the *Toronto Star* and the *Globe and Mail* that dealt with the auto industry. The reason I'm bringing this up again is that we've listened tonight to members talk about how everything is rosy in Ontario. Yes, for a lot of people things are a lot better, and thank goodness jobs have been created. Nobody is going to deny that fact. We want to see people working. People want to work themselves so that it will give them a sense of self-esteem, a sense of self-worth.

Particularly in the auto industry, it's very encouraging to see that we're actually making and producing more autos now than in Michigan and that many of these are exported. Absolutely, that's a wonderful thing. If we could do it with twice the number, so much the better. But what was very interesting is that one of the chief economists, if I can find that article—I think it was a Mr DesRosiers and a Mr Gomes of the Bank of Nova Scotia; they were their automobile specialists—came to the conclusion that one of the reasons cars are being produced in a more cost-efficient manner here in Ontario has a lot to do with health care costs.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Good show.

Mr Gerretsen: I see the minister clapping. Our health care costs are, on the average, \$1,200 cheaper than they are in the States according to this economist. That's why our cars—and of course all of those extra costs are part—

Hon Mr Turnbull: No thanks to the federal government.

Mr Gerretsen: Just a minute now. You can have your say, sir, when you fix the problems within the MTO. But if the health care system is the underpinning of a lot of the things that are happening that are good in industry, why is this government trying to dismantle the publicly accessed health care system that we have here in this province? You're doing that on a day-to-day basis.

Look at your health care restructuring costs. You have allocated something like \$2.1 billion for the building of new hospitals across the province. The Provincial Auditor says you're \$1.8 billion short. You're short that money. That money has to come from somewhere. It has to come from the taxpayers of Ontario. That shows you that the whole health restructuring process was greatly deficient, because that money has to come from somewhere.

2000

Let's talk about some of the other issues. Let's talk about our credit rating in this province. We used to blame Bob Rae when our credit rating went down from an AAA to an AA- credit rating. Do you want to know something? During your tenure over the last five years you have not been able to raise that credit rating by even one point. It's still at exactly the same level, and do you know why? We know why. Because you have allowed the debt of this province to increase from \$88 billion, according to your own financial statement today, to something like

\$120 billion—more than a \$30-billion increase in five years.

As I've stated many times before, the interest cost on that public debt is just increasing all the time. This year it's going to be \$300 million more than last year. It's going to amount to \$9.3 billion, more than the \$7.9 billion that the province pays for all the social services in this province, and that's hard to believe.

The other issue we could have talked about is the doctor shortage issue. I have a file here filled with letters from people, organizations, talking about the fact that people in different communities in our province—and I include Lansdowne, I include many of the rural communities and I include my own community of Kingston—cannot find a family physician. Their own family physician has retired or has gone down south to the United States, and families are literally waiting for two to three years to get a family physician.

What does the minister say about this on an ongoing basis? "Well, it's a distribution problem." Everybody who's knowledgeable in the health care system says that it's more than just a distribution problem; it's a supply problem. That may have started many years ago when I believe under the Rae government the decision was made to in effect lower the number of medical students who would be admitted on a year-to-year basis. I guess we're now reaping the ill results of that, that we simply do not have enough doctors in our system to look after the day-to-day needs, the family medicine needs, of our population.

As my colleague from Davenport said in his private member's bill last Thursday—and everybody voted for his resolution—there are many foreign doctors in this province who are competent, who have our standards. If they don't have the standards of medical care that we expect from people in this province, they shouldn't be practising, but if they do, we should do whatever we can in order to get these people qualified as quickly as possible. They shouldn't have to wait, as one of these foreign doctors told me, a year in order to write this exam. We should go out of our way. Of course, the Minister of Health says: "It's not my problem. Talk to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, talk to the OMA."

I don't care whose problem it is. Work together with all these groups, and let's sort this out and let's get these people qualified as quickly as possible. Let's forget about who's to blame and what happened 10 years ago or 15 years ago. Quite frankly, the people of Ontario aren't interested in that. They want to have the problems that are out there right now in our system dealt with. That's what it's all about.

There's one other issue I very quickly want to mention before I turn it over to one of my colleagues here, and that is that in Kingston right now we have a major problem with the children's aid society and the parent aide program that has operated within the children's aid society for about the last 15 years. This has been a very successful program in which basically individuals act as aides to children who have been taken into care, not from

a formal, social work viewpoint, but to assist the various children who are in care in one way or another.

I have been inundated with letters from not only parent aides but also from individuals who were in care with the children's aid society, who had the benefit of a parent aide at some time in the past, and many other individuals who do not have a direct self-interest in this, who are saying it is crazy, that it doesn't make any sense to have this type of parent aide program cut off. The reason it's cut off, quite frankly, is because the children's aid societies haven't got enough money and they have to choose between various programs. So the board of directors is placed in a heck of a position whereby they have to choose one program over another. I say to the Minister of Community and Social Services, take a look at these programs. If they really make a lot of sense—and they do—and help a lot of people, then why don't we support them financially?

Let me just very quickly read from one letter. It says:

"My mother, a widowed, single parent raising three children on her own, managed both lifestyles somehow."—to be both a parent and a parent aide—"Being a nurturing mother to all of us, and being there for our ups and downs, she also made herself available to the number of families she cared for outside our home. I don't believe any of the families I worked with in child care were offered their social worker's home number for assistance at any hour of the day or night such as my mother has for years. Many times she was called from our home in the middle of the night due to a family 'situation,' and provided care any time of day, any day of the year, at no extra charge to your organization, no time and a half, but just because she was needed. Even on Christmas Day, driving children from one parent to another because there was no transportation available, so the children would have time with both family members! Will the families of Kingston still have this kind of care with what you're proposing?" This is directed to the children's aid society. "I don't see how this and the megaservices the parent aides provide between them can be attained if the program is abolished."

That is just a sample of the many letters I have received on that. I say to the ministry, make sure these kinds of programs are funded. They are very minor investments. Please do not put the children's aid societies to the kinds of drastic choices they have to make. Those are the kinds of programs we should have been talking about and that we should make sure are in place.

I now turn the floor over to the member for Ottawa Centre.

Mr Patten: I must commend my colleague from Kingston and the Islands for his astute observations, as usual.

For those who are checking in this evening as to what's going on in this House, they should know that by and large this is a waste of time. If you ever wanted to talk about a waste of time, this is it. There's a motion here that is required to extend the hours and the time beyond the calendar, which is of course set every year

and every year the government extends the hours, but it has to be debated. It's very difficult to spend too much time on the calendar when one speaks and one has an hour to address it, but that's what happens.

But it does raise a question which I think is important for people listening here tonight or watching the proceedings: Why is it that the government needs to go beyond its own time limit? There are two reasons, I would suggest. One is that it didn't get back to the House early enough. It could have convened the House in September, but no, it waited until the third week of October. Second, it is a weapon that the government uses to squeeze the opposition, to try to wear them down by adding late sessions at night. That's fine, because we won't be worn down. We're prepared to be here until Christmas Eve if it's required. But this is a technique that is used by the government in having changed the rules.

2010

I'll give you an illustration of this. I've experienced this numerous times myself and I've said it before. This Legislature, I'm sad to say, is the least democratic of all jurisdictions in Canada—I've researched this and I'm writing an article on this issue, and I'll be happy to share it with the members across the way and have them challenge what I'm saying—absolutely the most undemocratic Legislature in all jurisdictions in Canada. I'll give you an example.

This afternoon there was a bill in committee, euphemistically called the squeegee kid bill. Of course they talk about the road safety bill. They always have these interesting titles that tend to be the exact opposite of what the intention of the bill is. For those people watching, if you want to know something about how this government operates, it changed the rules of this House drastically, so this afternoon, after having heard 13 witnesses, they gave each party 10 minutes—the government party itself, of course, but the government is introducing the bill—gave the NDP and the Liberal Party 10 minutes each immediately following the testimony to input their amendments. If you ever wanted to see a sham, an abuse, an absolute abuse—that shows no respect for the people who are witnesses. As a member, I must say that in 99% of the cases people give considered thought and usually come in with some very good suggestions as to how a particular bill can be ameliorated. I have great respect for that, and I find it frankly an embarrassment sometimes to see the process aborted at certain stages because of what's called time allocation and closure.

Now, with any bill the government wants to put through, you'll see this accompanying motion to limit debate, and I call it that: to limit debate. Why should they be afraid to hear from people? Because they want to ram things through. It's unfortunate. Ten minutes: Can you imagine what an embarrassment that is? So what do the opposition parties do? It's a joke, an absolute joke. Amendments have to be in legal terms in order to address the legislation etc. But no, at a certain point the vote must take place. Of course the government has a majority on the committee, and because of that it votes in all its own

sections of the bill and then sends it back to the House, and as a majority government they can pass it.

But what does that do? It makes this place a mockery and it provides for cynicism on all sides of the House. Even some of the backbenchers are cynical about the process. Some of them even come to us because we're critics of various ministries, and they ask, "What's going on here?" We focus on a particular ministry, as we share it with other members of our caucus, and we get to analyze what's going on, we get to see what's happening, we see who they're speaking with etc. We do an analysis, and we're usually fairly good at predicting the sorts of things that might occur.

I want to point out that that's what this is all about: the ability of the government to have two days in one. I think there was a commercial on Certs or something at one time—two mints in one, or whatever it was. Well, two days is only three hours for each portion: three hours in the afternoon, three hours in the evening. They call them days. They want to accumulate all these particular days because it will look good at the end of the year, when they may be vulnerable for having rammed through things, to say: "Oh, look at this. We sat so many days."

They count on the public being ignorant about the rules of procedures, and generally they're probably right. Many people don't understand how this place works. They'd better start taking a second look at it, because they're getting inferior legislation because of it. I don't care of what stripe the members are. Every single member ran, put their name on the line, and was voted in to represent a certain number of people from Ontario. Once that happens, this place is to respect each member's opportunity to share the views of those people from that part of Ontario.

The most discouraging experience of my political life is the nature of the rule changes that have taken place by virtue of this government. I'm ashamed to say it when I meet other representatives from other parts of Canada. It is an embarrassment, a total embarrassment.

There's a bill coming forward to talk about restructuring in four different regions, actually affecting five different parts of Ontario. They will try to put all this in one bill. They'll laugh and say, "Boy, this will make it tough for the opposition." It sure will, because one may like a good chunk of it, which should be separated.

Historically, the bills for regional legislation have always been separate. Then you could look at Ottawa-Carleton on its own, for instance. I generally support the commissioner's recommendation. I have a few ideas for some amendments. That's fine. But say I don't agree with something somewhere else, or some of my colleagues don't agree with another part. They might not allow the members from Ottawa-Carleton to move ahead with something that's fine and deal with these things separately.

They're going to try to ram this through. I ask the people tonight, you watch this closely. They'll try to ram this stuff through very quickly. And you know what? They've created the kinds of rules that enable them to do

so. But will it serve Ontarians well? We shall see, because in many instances what happened was—how many times did the tax bills have to return? Nine times, in some instances, and they still don't have it right, because they wanted to move it through extremely quickly.

On that, I will share my time with the member from Davenport, who would also like to make some comments.

Mr Ruprecht: I appreciate the discussion and the comments that were made by our member from Ottawa Centre because he is always very illustrated and makes some very good points.

But there's one thing we want to make sure today that we all understand. That is, I've recently found out that the Conservatives, within the party—this discussion took place within the party and within caucus, and it was a very pointed discussion. Do you know what it was? I want the people of Ontario to know. The discussion was: "How do we get this economy going and in what way do we start cutting? Do we start cutting the deficit, the debt or the taxes?" In other words, "Do we pay off the debt or the deficit, or do we give a tax break to those who are in the highest bracket of taxpaying citizens?" That discussion went on for a long time because they didn't know which was the best way to go. Finally, they came to a conclusion and said, "What we're going to do—"

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure the honourable member would want to withdraw his comments. I can tell you that what he is saying is absolutely untrue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): That is not a point of order, chief government whip.

Mr Ruprecht: This is really interesting. Let me ask this question. The honourable member might just have to look over here on this side. Do you mean to tell me that the Conservative government and the members sitting here did not have a discussion on how best to start the Ontario economy, which was down? Is that what you're intending to tell me tonight? Of course that's not true. You did have such a discussion, and I'll tell you some more details—

Hon Mr Klees: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: A point of order? Under what standing order?

Hon Mr Klees: I would ask for unanimous consent to be able to reply to the member's question.

The Acting Speaker: I heard some noes.

Mr Ruprecht: I can't believe what I just heard. I mean, this is incredible. Here is a member of the Conservative Party actually standing up and saying he didn't have a discussion about how to best start the Ontario economy, which was down. Can you imagine? That's just incredible. All he has to do is look over here and he'll even see some of the ministers laughing.

We all know that you had this discussion. In fact, do you want to know something interesting? We had this discussion. We had to discuss how best to pay off the debt, which is outrageous. Let me tell you something

else. I'm just wondering how many Ontarians would know today what our debt really is. Do you know what our debt is? Over \$100 billion. That's outrageous, and you should have started to pay that debt off. You didn't. You made a decision. You had a choice, and what did you choose? You chose to pay off your friends. That's what you did. You paid off your friends. And you know something? You're still paying them off today. I want Ontario to know that you're still paying off your friends today.

2020

Oh, yes, I see what you're waving around there. At any time, I would be ready to compare the blue book to the red book. I'm prepared at any time to have that discussion in this House.

I think it's outright outrageous that this government has not seen fit to start paying off our debt, which is in the neighbourhood of over \$100 billion. Do you want to know what's outrageous? That's outrageous, and I'll tell you what's more outrageous: The budget of the Ministry of Citizenship could be paid off every year, because in terms of interest alone, we are paying more than \$10 billion on this debt on a yearly basis. Do you want to know how to save money? Do you want to know how to start the Ontario economy? Pay off this debt. That's what you should do.

You had a choice. You have a choice even to this minute. You could stand up today, as minister—and there are a number of ministers here today, which I'm delighted to see. One of them, of course, said that we never had this discussion, that we never discussed how to fix the Ontario economy. I find that simply funny and I find it almost—I won't say the word "deceitful." No, I won't say that, but I find that very strange.

Let's make it clear. Our debt right now is over \$100 billion, and our deficit is right here. The deficit is clear. Do you know what the deficit is? It's \$2.6 billion. That's the deficit.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and the Islands.

Mr Ruprecht: At the same time, I remind you that you chose to go with a tax break, this tax break that you've introduced and that you are continuing to use. You are now going to say to Ontario people, "The tax break is going to save you more money." You're going to say that the tax break is going to save more jobs. That is your mantra.

Today there was another press release that has just come out. Would you believe this? Another press release, repeated ad nauseam on the other side. Do you know what this press release says? Tax cuts and more jobs. We know—we have figures; we have the facts—that this did not create more jobs for the Ontario economy. We know what creates jobs for the Ontario economy. First of all, it's the tide that raises all the ships, and it comes from the south. That's what raised the Ontario economy. Our auto sector, that's what raised the Ontario economy, and our ability to compete, but certainly it was not your tax

break. I stand here fully knowing that it was not the case. The fact is not that the tax break creates jobs; what creates jobs is our economic proficiency.

I am delighted to be able to give you just one example. If you want to take the red book and compare it to the blue book—you made certain promises. One of the important promises this government made was to say to us, "If you have a degree from another country"—

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: In fact, you said it. You made the promise here in 1996. She made the promise. Do you want me to quote back to you what you said? You've got the guts right now to sign your Christmas cards. I know what you're doing, you're signing the cards.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I know it's late, but if you could address your comments through the Speaker, it would be very beneficial.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, I apologize. What I meant to say simply is that the member is looking down and signing something. I'm not sure exactly what she is signing, but she's signing.

Ms Mushinski: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask that you request the honourable member to please withdraw those comments.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, I had withdrawn that comment.

The Acting Speaker: I don't know which comments you wish withdrawn, but I think—

Interjection: The last 20 minutes. It's all hogwash.

Ms Mushinski: All of them would be greatly appreciated.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: I can't hear the member, chief government whip.

Ms Mushinski: Apparently I have had some difficulty hearing his words, because I think he was mumbling them, so if he did withdraw them, I apologize. But I would appreciate his being on record as withdrawing all of his comments.

Mr Ruprecht: I withdrew that.

The Acting Speaker: Fine.

Mr Ruprecht: But you know, Mr Speaker, I resent that this member said "hogwash." It's quite clear what he says over here. I'm supposed to sign some Christmas cards too, but I'm not going to do that right now, because I'm going to wait for a while.

The Acting Speaker: Through the Speaker, please.

Mr Ruprecht: Yes, Mr Speaker. Sorry about that.

Any time I hear government members yelling and screaming like they are today, there's only one reason for it, and that is because they are upset. They are upset because we're saying something that is absolutely true, and that is, you had a choice to make and you made the wrong choice. In fact, on this side we're convinced you're continuing to make the wrong choice, because you're not paying off our debt, which is in the neighbourhood of \$100 billion. You are not doing that, and I know that some of you on the government side know that's a mistake and you should have done it already,

because it's costing us over 10 billion bucks just in interest payments. That's one of the reasons our rating has not gone up.

The members for Kingston and the Islands and Ottawa Centre indicated it before, but I think it's worthwhile to ensure that the point comes across loud and clear, that here we have a government that says, "We know how to fix the economy and we are good managers of Ontario's money." If you are good managers of Ontario's money, then how come both our members said earlier that the financial rating has not gone up over five years. Do you know why it hasn't gone up? It's not because we're saying it hasn't gone up. No. It's because the financial sector, Moody's, New York, Chicago, all those financial markets are saying to us that you haven't fixed the economy. The reason you haven't fixed it is easy to understand. What we see in Ontario is clearly an artificial movement of our economy. It's an artificial movement.

Let me simply say this specifically in response to your comment. We would give you credit if that rating were to go up again, AAA+. But is that going to happen in the near future? It can never happen, and do you know why it cannot happen? It's simple. Because the tax breaks are not creating the jobs. The tax breaks are not paying off the debt. The only way the rating is going to go up is if we fix the debt.

Here you're telling me today in this wonderful press release and in this wonderful book, and more paper and more paper, that the deficit now is \$2.6 billion. You haven't even kept your promise that you were going to reduce the deficit in four years. That was the promise you made. Five years are up. You've been in office for five years and it's still \$2.6 billion. Have you fixed that? No. You're saying you'll fix it in another year. Let's take another year.

Let me ask you members a question before you get even more excited, and that is, when are you going to start paying off our debt? We have a plan. Our plan is clear. Our plan has been proceeding quite well, but you haven't done that. You haven't paid one cent on the debt. Have you paid one cent on the debt? Have you done that? No. But our leader, Dalton McGuinty, was clear about what he was going to do. The Liberals were clear about what they were going to do: 50-50 was our decision; 50-50 was our promise. But you said you're going to fix it. We're saying today, what is the answer to the debt? You can laugh and you can scream and you can be upset all you want, but give me an answer, please. When are you going to start paying off the debt? I still haven't found the answer to that.

2030

Interjection: We've already started.

Mr Ruprecht: Where is it?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Read the statement.

Mr Ruprecht: Right, read the statement. I've got the statement right here, and it's still right now \$2.6 billion. That's the truth. When you finally start paying off the

debt, we can afford as Ontarians to do something about the homeless crisis.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: Have you done something about it? You have to make a fundamental decision. You are, today, at the crossroads of another decision to make, and that is, are you going to take this seriously or are you going to take people more seriously? That's what you have to do. You have to make a decision. It's an easy decision for us to make. We put people first.

By putting people first, we have a decision to make too, and we made the decision and you have voted for it. But the minister gets up, and what does she say? She leaves the backbenchers out to dry for voting for my resolution on Thursday. Then the two speakers who spoke against it finally got up and decided to walk out before the vote took place and leave all of you people to vote for the resolution. I've never seen that before.

Talking about an autocratic government, the member for Ottawa Centre said it very clearly. He said, "This is the most autocratic government in the history of Ontario."

Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: There they go again, because I know there's another nerve we've hit. I have never seen this in the history of the province of Ontario. The minister sends two speakers out to speak against the resolution on access to trades and professions by foreign-trained professionals. Then the two speakers that she told to speak against it get up and walk out, and the rest of the Conservative Party votes in favour of this resolution.

Talk about games, I've never seen a game like this, and you, Minister, are partly responsible for this game plan. You're playing games with the people of Ontario—that's what you're doing—and we're not letting you get away with it. I'm speaking here tonight and I'm telling you that the people know what games you're playing in this House. Not only are you cutting off debate, but you're also playing games, and we're going to tell the people of Ontario. These games may be OK for one day, these games may be OK for two days, but in the end, the day of reckoning is coming to you as well, and that is when the question is going to be asked: Did the Conservatives start paying off that debt which is going to take us, down the road, not to economic eureka but to economic destruction? That's precisely the major point that I want to get across today.

You are not doing something for the people, because if you were, you would do something about access to trades and professions. The reason we brought out a policy—you always say, "These guys don't have any policies." Our policy is clear.

We would have been much ahead in terms of the crisis with the doctors in Ontario, the crisis with veterinarians, because you don't have enough veterinarians in Ontario. They're not there. You have many problems: the crisis of homelessness, the crisis of tenants. You have lots of things to fix, but you're not really fixing them. Your ideology has to be changed. There has to be a paradigm

shift taking place, and that shift has to be more towards people and less towards tax credits. There simply has to be a shift of paradigms.

We're saying this today to the people of Ontario: I am proud that you supported the resolution to have foreign-trained professionals enter the professions as soon as possible, maintaining the high standards. I am proud you did that, and I will not forget that. I want to give you full credit for that. But now we've got to take the next step.

Mr Mazzilli: Pay off the debt.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: Of course we have to pay off the debt. I'm happy that the member from Scarborough is finally looking up again and she's discussing things, as she has in the past, and we've got this great relationship going, but I want to tell you something. She had promised us in 1996 that we would have an credential assessment service. The credential assessment service is still not in existence today, and she said that. After that, we had another minister saying—

Mr Brad Clark (Stoney Creek): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent of the House that we send a letter to the federal government that all of us demand the \$4.2 billion in transfer payments for health and social services that we're owed. We'd like to make something productive out of tonight, so let's have unanimous consent that we ask for the \$4.2 billion to be returned—

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would request unanimous consent so that the member for Stoney Creek can advise us as to what his position is with respect to the Hamilton-Wentworth restructuring.

The Acting Speaker: Do we have unanimous consent? No. The member for Davenport.

Mr Ruprecht: Here we are, another classic example—

Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, I wish you would create some order here, because this shouting and screaming is not getting us anywhere. It's very simple. When the Conservatives do not have an answer, what do they do? They blame the federal government. They've got to blame somebody.

Interjections.

Mr Ruprecht: I'll tell you something. Why don't you look at something on your desk right now? What's on your desk right now is a decision that you've got to make, and you're not making the right decision. You keep making the decision that the tax cut is going to create a wonderful Ontario. I am telling you, there is so much hate out there against this government. There is so much pain and suffering out there.

Let's just think about what you've created here. You've created hundreds of demonstrations. You've created people going out with signs on the street because you're not listening to the people. You are not listening. You haven't listened to the people of Ontario. You're

forcing them out. They can't get your ear. When they call the Office of the Premier, they get an answering service.

Interjection.

Mr Ruprecht: No, when they call—let me tell you what is very interesting. What we want you to do is to start listening. We want you to be kinder and gentler, that's true. As Dalton McGuinty said—and after talking tonight I agree with him. I was thinking at one time that maybe, just maybe, there can be a kinder and gentler Mike Harris. But I know now. As our leader Dalton McGuinty said earlier, can there be a kinder and gentler chainsaw? No. Chainsaw Mike is continuing to wreak havoc in the city of Toronto and other places.

Look at what happened in terms of the education institutions in Toronto and our schools. Look at that. Because of the funding formula the Conservatives have created in Toronto, you are directly responsible for shutting down schools. You know that. You're shutting down schools. The Toronto school board made a decision not too long ago to close 10 schools. You know what? In December—in other words, within 14 days—the Toronto school board has to make another decision. Do you know what the decision is going to be? Which 10 schools? There will be more. Last year 10, this year 10 and next year 10. On what basis? On the basis of a funding formula which has been unfair and unjust, because what it did not take into account is that our schools are more than simply educational institutions; they are the heart of our community. Our schools are the heart of our community, and you are starting to cut. You're cutting the heart of our community. That's what you are doing. You are cutting the heart of our community.

2040

Do you think there is just one Conservative who will say, "Maybe we should have thought about this in terms of the funding formula"? Maybe there would be some Toronto PC members who would have had a second thought: "Maybe we should change the funding formula, because the funding formula is cutting the heart of our institutions, cutting at the heart of the schools, cutting at the heart of the kids." Did you think about that? Some of you might have, but you were persuaded the wrong way. You had a choice. The choice was simple: Change the formula or close the schools. That was the choice, and what did you decide? I don't know whether out of arrogance or whether out of misfortune or whether simply out of ignorance you made a choice not to change the funding formula. It was directly related to this formula that you forced the school board to close 10 schools last year, 10 schools this year, 10 schools next year.

I'm not sure where it's going to stop. We want you to stop. What would it take, for the hundreds of thousands of parents in Toronto and the hundreds of thousands of kids in the schools in Toronto, to make you listen? What would it take? You're forcing out the kids, forcing out the parents and teachers, forcing them out on to the streets with signs, saying: "Mike Harris, listen up. Mike Harris, please wait. Don't close our schools, because they're more than educational institutions."

There's music and there's a library. These schools have parks and recreation programs. These schools have other purposes as well. I am very disappointed at what's taking place.

I could of course go on and give you many examples, many more examples of the choices you have taken which were wrong, but because of the time, I'm now giving my colleague a chance to address the people of Ontario and the House.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I'm delighted to join the debate, albeit for a few minutes, on this calendar motion, which is practically an extension to keep on working. If the government wants to keep on working, it has to come to the House and ask for permission. But we are happy to discuss the issue, and of course here we are.

It's not the first time that the government has done this. Not only have they introduced the so-called calendar motion, but they have introduced a motion to curtail the debate in the House, which is curtailing the democratic process, and not only of the members elected. Every time the government does that, they curtail the rights of the people out there who elected all the members of this House to speak on their behalf. That is most unfortunate, that the government does not recognize this particular privilege we should allow the people on the outside.

But of course the government has their agenda, and that's fine. They won the election. They have the majority. But it's not fair that they try to shove down the people's throats their agenda, right or wrong.

We have seen it time and time again. Just recently, a couple of weeks ago, I believe, or last week, we discussed the so-called balanced budget legislation and referendum. Big deal. I mean, it's five years on the books since Mr Harris came into power that they said, "We are going to do that." Do you know what's so sad about it? That they did all the dirty work, all the cuts that are affecting the people now. It's affecting the people of Ontario. And do you know what is disturbing? The cuts they have made are cutting the heart of the poorest people in our society, and those members don't realize that. They do not realize that.

Back on January 14 of this year, the final report, the Anne Golden report, had 105 recommendations on how to deal with the homeless. What did this government do? Absolutely nothing, just passed the buck to the federal government: "Let the federal people do it." We are back in the same situation that two rights don't make a wrong.

Interjections.

Mrs Bountrogianni: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Mr Clark just asked me where my principles are. I have been pretty polite all evening. I think he should retract those comments. I have principles, sir.

Mr Clark: Speaker, the statement I made was a generic statement to the entire bunch. They refused to ask for \$4.2 billion back from the federal government, so I asked them, "Where are your principles?" They're asking—

The Acting Speaker: No, no, no. We're not going to do this. Either withdraw your comments—which I didn't

hear, so if you had something to withdraw, I didn't hear. I'm sorry, member for Hamilton Mountain.

Mr Sergio: Mr Speaker, can we reset the clock so I can have the couple of minutes?

Let me continue what I was saying before. This government keeps on saying, "We are not the government; we are here to fix the government." Well, for heaven's sake, if they are here to fix the government, they are responsible to all the people who can't speak for themselves, who can't be in this House to voice their concerns day in and day out. They are supposed to be speaking for the seniors, who day in and day out have to decide if they're going to be spending money on co-op medicines, user fees. They've got to pay rent, they've got to buy food, or they've got to buy the extra medicine. It's this government that should be speaking on behalf of the 200,000 kids who are owed money, and this government is not doing their share. It is this particular government that is causing our students to hit the streets because they can't afford the tuition fees. Those are the things that the government should heed.

But above all, I have no idea how they cannot pay heed to the report issued last week by Mr Peters. That was a very damning report, and they think, "We're going to do more, more cuts." My goodness, they have been terrible administrators of the funds of the taxpayers of Ontario. What did they do with it? They are saying they are spending more money. Well, it's not showing. The health care system is in terrible shape. The education system is in terrible shape. So where is the money being spent? Where is it going?

I am glad there are a few members here, including one of the ministers. They had an opportunity. They missed a wonderful opportunity. They could have balanced the books two years ago, ahead of any other province in Canada, they could have left every hospital open and they could have left every school open if they hadn't proceeded with that silly promise of a tax cut.

Instead, what have we left? We have left the people of Ontario with an additional \$21.8 billion of debt. What this relates to is \$9.2 billion in interest payments to service their debt. I don't have to tell you, Mr Speaker, or tell Mr Harris or Mr Eves or the members of the government what we could do with \$9.2 billion a year. We could keep every hospital and every school open, build housing for the homeless, without any additional funds. But these people here, this Premier, this government, are so bent on keeping a promise to keep the people on Bay Street happy, the ones who are giving millions to their election coffers, that they forget about the rest of the people of Ontario. It is most unfortunate.

It is unfortunate that they are the government and they can proceed with this type of legislation, without taking into consideration how to take care of the less fortunate. Really, if they are not the government but the ones who came to fix the government, that's what they should be fixing. That's sad.

Mr Speaker, I have about four minutes. I appreciate the time you have allowed me, and I appreciate the

members of the House who have been so good in listening to my remarks.

2050

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): It has been an interesting evening.

Just before I get into some of the remarks I wanted to make with regard to the calendar motion, which of course opens up a whole flood of things—in fact, as anybody watching can see, under this kind of motion pretty much anything is up for debate because you can tie anything to the fact that you're talking about the time we sit here. Therefore, anything we do here, or if it relates to anything we do here, is fair game.

Before I move into some of those things, I just want to respond to a couple of the comments that were made by previous speakers, and I want to begin with my colleague directly across from me, one of the new members, from London-Fanshawe. I want to say this much: I give him full marks for the fact that probably 90% of his speech was his words. Obviously he had notes—don't we all—but he was not reading verbatim word for word something that was spun out of the backroom, and I give him credit for that. It takes a little bit of courage on the back benches, because one little slip and you're in trouble with somebody. Been there, done that, and got the T-shirt. I understand. Of course, we do razz some of your other colleagues who don't feel quite as confident. I don't mean to put anyone down in terms of their speaking abilities, but I do think it says a lot about you in terms of the comfort level you have with how you feel and think about things, as much as I might disagree, and I respect you for that.

Having said that, in terms of content, when you went off on to this stuff about the gun control thing, I think you lost a whole lot of us, especially when you started talking about the fact that obviously anybody who disagrees with you—I'm paraphrasing—doesn't know anything about crime, doesn't know what they're talking about.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: That was certainly the impression you left. It's what you implied. When I pointed out to you that the OACP, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, has taken the position that the federal gun control legislation, which I take quite a bit of pride in, having worked with the then justice minister, Allan Rock, when I was the Solicitor General of Ontario in developing—and I stand behind it 100%. I'm glad they're doing it. I think you ought to maybe meet with Toronto chief designate, the former chief from your immediate area, Julian Fantino.

Mr Mazzilli: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Ontario chiefs of police—

The Acting Speaker: What's the point of order?

Mr Mazzilli: —have to decide on what he expects from the province and—

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: Look, I tried to be nice, but if you want to play that way, the fact of the matter is that on the issue of whether or not there ought to be the kind of registry that's in place, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, and as far as I know the Canadian association, has said they think this is the right thing to do in terms of public safety. Believe me, if their position were the other way around, every one of these backbenchers would be echoing those comments, but in this case they can't. Most of them are wise enough to sort of stay away from where the chiefs are, but this honourable member waded right into it. I wrote down the quote, and I know my colleague from Hamilton Mountain jotted down the same one. He said, "Police chiefs are not accountable."

I want to tell you that in our police system, yes, they are. They are accountable to the police services board, which is appointed by the province and municipalities, and there is a direct accountability. I want to tell you that everything that happens on our streets at the end of the day is accountable by the police chief, and she or he is accountable to that police services board. So to suggest and leave the impression that the police chiefs somehow have done something irresponsible, because they aren't accountable, in my opinion, shows that you, sir, are the one who doesn't know what you are talking about. The reason the chiefs are onside with this policy is not because they're a bunch of left-wingers; it's because when they look at this from the issue of public safety, they realize that the legislation makes a lot of sense. I would strongly suggest to you that before you accuse others of not knowing what they're talking about, you do a little bit more research.

I also want to mention to you—and then I'll leave you alone—when you were talking about police, you know again it's this myth that the Tories are the ones who care about the police, who care about law and order, but again what's the reality? The reality is that there were more police officers on the streets of Ontario when we were in power than you have right now. That's the reality. So rather than just blabbing off a lot of platitudes, maybe what you ought to do is take a look at the facts, because being in here—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I'll get to you in a minute—versus just sort of talking on the doorsteps that you referenced, there's a big difference. Especially when you're going to use third parties like the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and refer to what happened in previous governments, I would urge the member to please be a little more careful in doing his research, because if you ever have a point that I agree with, it would hurt to see you lose it because of other things you've attached to it. Having said that, though, again I enjoyed listening to you, as much as I disagreed probably with about 80% of it.

The member from Dovercourt—God, I could do my whole hour on whatever that was, and I'm not really sure what that was. Again, I mentioned earlier and I wasn't going to because I had mentioned it in an earlier speech

this afternoon, but he's provoking me. First of all, he says that the most important thing in the world has to be paying off the debt, and then in the next sentence he talks about, "What are you going to do about the homeless?" At the end of the day, you can't do both of those things at the same time. You've got to pick your priority, which is the essence of Liberal schizophrenia. They want to do everything and say that they can do everything, but the reality is that you can't.

When he talks about the balanced budget, the fact they could have balanced it earlier, what that means is that in order to do it you'd really have to unravel at least part of the tax cut. But what did they do in the last election? After they cursed the tax cut, sounded a lot like New Democrats in condemning the tax cut because it benefited just a very few wealthy people at the expense of a lot of programs and benefits that affected the majority—we would roll that back; they aren't doing that.

Mr Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member is really out to lunch because—

The Acting Speaker: Will you withdraw that.

Mr Ruprecht:—totally wrong because there is no—
Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Sorry. That is my mistake. I apologize. Davenport. Correct? It doesn't help your speech at all, but I want to make sure you get your title right. I do apologize, though. I didn't mean any slight by that. Besides, personally, I don't think you can hold a candle to the previous member from Dovercourt, but that's another matter.

Again we hear this whole diatribe about being opposed to the tax cuts, but when the crunch comes, when it's time to show the people how you're going to be different from this government, which is what elections are about, they weren't doing it, they weren't doing anything different. In fact, we've already seen that on the balanced budget legislation, the official opposition, so-called, in the province of Ontario rolled over and voted with the government.

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: I'm not sure why some Liberals are applauding. This wasn't such a good thing for them. It's that kind of position that will keep you in, at most, second place forever. That's true.

2100

Mr Ruprecht: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can I just mention, since when is the pot calling the kettle black?

The Acting Speaker: What is the point of order? There's no point of order. Maybe we could calm down just slightly and the member could address his comments through the Chair.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker. I think I'll move on. It's like clubbing baby seals.

I want to comment just a bit on the member from Oak Ridges. I believe one of the Liberals commented on it. The chief government whip was referring to the comments made by my leader, Howard Hampton, this afternoon, wherein he was pointing out about the production

of vehicles in Ontario overtaking that of Michigan, and of course I can appreciate the partisan applause at the time that was said and the fun we had. But I think you gave a misinterpretation of what my leader was pointing out, and if I might, what that was, was that since it's exports that are driving our economy and since we are enjoying so much productivity lift, if you will, within the auto industry, but that most of it is export, the argument the government makes that the economy is doing so well because you've cut taxes makes no sense at all since the demand is being generated in another nation, not just in another province but in another nation.

I agree with my leader—now don't stand up and do a point of order; wait until it's your turn; you had yours—that the point is that your tax cuts had absolutely nothing to do with that overall demand because it's coming from the States, and let me tell you that if the American economy goes in the ditch and we follow shortly after, believe me, you're going to be the first one to say: "Wait a minute, you know, this is not all our fault. A lot of it has to do with the fact that the American economy has gone in the ditch and the demand for our exports has dropped."

You can't have it both ways. At the end of the day, we still maintain that the tax cuts you've implemented have only benefited a very few people at the top and that everything else that's happening in Ontario, by and large, is a result of the booming American economy, which is bound to lift ours.

That's not just us talking. I would agree with the Liberal who made the point earlier, and we've made it often too, that this is really why there hasn't been the lift in the credit ratings of Ontario on the international markets. They recognize that implementing the tax cut before you balanced the budget was not the best fiscal policy you could follow. It might have been the best political one, but it wasn't the best fiscal policy.

I think it points to the absolute arrogance of government members who persist in saying: "The debate is over. Tax cuts work." The fact of the matter is that debate is far from over and your bond ratings are at exactly the same level now as they were when you took over from us—for that very reason.

Hon Mr Runciman: Stay tuned.

Mr Christopherson: "Stay tuned," says the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Yes, I guess we will, because you're in a bit of a race here. I understand that if you can cross that line and balance the budget and start to show some money going to pay off the debt, then since the bond markets don't really concern themselves much about quality of life and standard of living—that's not their business; they're in the business of dollars—if you can get to that point before a dip in the economy, or God forbid, any kind of a burst of the bubble, then yes, you're right. Then I think your comment about staying tuned and your ability to be able to say something different about this down the road is there.

However, in that race, if the economy falls before you cross that threshold, believe me, this will be the least of

the criticisms you're going to have trouble defending against.

One of the other members—I didn't jot down which one; I believe it was one of the government members—earlier talked about provincial debt. I want to take a minute to put on the record that when they do that, they leave the impression that it's the Tories who magically know how to manage the economy and take care of things, and everybody else really just isn't, to use a phrase, up to the job. But the reality, if you will—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: You liked that, did you? I sort of slid that in there.

The reality is that when Mulroney came into power in 1984, the accumulated debt was \$157 billion. When he left office in 1993, it was \$466 billion. It's hard to make the argument, as the government does, therefore, that Tories automatically know how to manage the economy better.

Hon Mr Runciman: Come on.

Mr Christopherson: What do you mean, "Come on"? Do you mean cut him some slack for the time he was governing in? Is that what you mean by "Come on," Bob? Cut him a little slack for governing in the deepest recession since the 1930s? Because if that's the case, you're right; I should cut him a little slack and be fair.

Hon Mr Runciman: We're not federal Tories.

Mr Christopherson: My point is not that it's exactly apples to apples. What I'm talking about is a bit of the Tory arrogance that we feel when you talk about economics, really in an almost condescending fashion. I'm pointing out the record of former Conservatives, and earlier I talked about what happened in Manitoba. I can go there again, if we need to. That's just a few weeks old. My point is that being a Tory doesn't automatically equate with being a good fiscal manager; it really doesn't.

Hon Mr Runciman: A Mike Harris Tory does.

Mr Christopherson: Oh, I see. Now we're going to be that specific. Actually, if you cared that much about the debt, you wouldn't have given the tax cut, because you would balance the budget and be eating away at the debt even sooner. So you really stand on your own argument when you do that.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: You talk about job creation, but we've been there earlier today too. The fact of the matter is that your argument that revenues are up because of all the stimulation doesn't wash, because page 55, the first line of the taxation revenue in your document released today, shows that from the actual in 1998-99 of \$17.19 billion, your projected revenue is going to be \$1.1 billion less, Minister. You can't go on now to say, "Our cuts stimulated so much job growth that we're actually getting more money in revenue than we did before," because you're not. We are now realizing the full impact of your tax cut and we're seeing who it benefits. It's that very small portion who are extremely wealthy in our province, and we're now receiving less money in personal income

tax than we did the year before. That's why you can't balance the budget sooner and that's why you can't get at your stated priority, which is to lower the debt.

Again, an earlier member talked about growing the economy. What a lot of us are concerned about is the growing gap, that gap between those who have and those who don't. That applies in each of our communities, it applies in the province, it applies in Canada, and quite frankly it's happening globally. If I can just bring forward one piece of this—this, by the way, was published a year ago, and there's an update due very soon from the Centre for Social Justice, the folks who publish this, which had enormous coverage in the media and had a significant impact on a lot of professional policy people.

I want to bring to the attention of members of the House that in the summary one of the first things they point out in terms of the growing gap is that the top 10 CEOs in Canada each brought home more than \$10 million. That's an income of more than \$10 million. On average, the top 100 CEOs saw a 56% increase in compensation in 1997. It is mind-boggling that 100 of the top-earning individuals in this country to start with saw an increase in their compensation, 1997 over 1996, of 56%.

2110

I want to point out one case that they mention here. Robert Gratton is with Power Financial Corp, a company I think the Liberals would know very well. This one individual was paid \$1.758 million, and with stock options of \$23.5 million, in 1997 his take-home pay was \$27.4 million. One person, one year. Based on average incomes, it would take 47 years for the average person to make that much money.

I want to mention two things about this. The first one is, can you imagine how happy Mr Gratton was the day this government implemented their 30% tax cut in terms of what that meant to him in real dollars? An incredible amount of money, yet this government continues to play with numbers, talking about percentages and all the things you can do with stats if you want, when every middle-class working family across the province knows that that tax cut, if noticeable at all, was not worth the trade-off in what they see happening in their health care system, in the education system, municipal services, the fact there aren't as many police on the streets as there used to be, the fact that the police themselves are worried about privatization of policing. With all the things happening around us, if anybody even noticed their tax cut, they're feeling, "This is not a trade-off I win."

But I guarantee you Mr Gratton felt this was a great deal. If he wasn't happy or satisfied that the health care system could provide for his children or that the education system could provide for his kids in the way he wanted, I'm willing to bet real quick that he would make sure that those family members—because we all love our family and I certainly don't fault him for that. But the reality is, on the gift of the tax cut alone, he can probably pay for the finest privatized health care system anywhere in the world, and likewise send his kids to the best

private schools in the world. Why, other than whatever social conscience he may have—I don't know the individual so I'm not commenting on that—but to whatever degree he may have a social conscience and care about what's happening to everyone else, beyond that, why would he worry about what's happening in the public school system or happening in our public health care system? But, boy, every time the Minister of Finance talks about tax cuts, he's got his undivided attention.

The sad thing is that we're also seeing this on a global scale. I don't profess to be any kind of economist by any stretch, but I do wonder how much of the prolonged economic boom that we're all enjoying in terms of an economy that's roaring, even with the cuts that this government is implementing, is being borne on the backs of newly developing countries around the world, not even the traditional countries that have been exploited, quite frankly—let's be honest about it—by the West for at least three centuries now in a big way, since the industrialization of the West? By that, I'm talking mostly about the former communist bloc nations that are now rid of the tyranny of the communist system and have embarked on a course of trying to catch up with the West, if you will, in terms of the type of economic system, and a lot of them aren't doing so good. I really worry that history will show that one of the reasons we were in such a sustained economic boom was because there was sort of a shift in gears of traditional countries that the West is guilty of exploiting to a whole new group of countries. I don't know that for sure, but I worry that that is indeed the case.

The government loves to say over and over that they keep their promises, they keep their promises, they keep their promises, so at the risk of being repetitive myself, I want to again point out that the bill we just passed—it's 9:15 now, and we passed it at five to 6, so a little better than three hours ago—Bill 14, notwithstanding the LG's signature, is now the law of this province, and one of the things it does is go exactly against what you promised.

You promised in the Common Sense Revolution, and I'll read the quote directly: "The money we make from such asset sales will not go into the government accounts. Every penny will go directly to pay down the \$80-billion provincial debt."

No, you didn't do it in actual terms. The \$3.1 billion you got from the sale of Highway 407 you put into the revenue of the budget year 1999-2000 so that your budget would look better than it actually was going into the last election. Now, in Bill 14, which is three hours old, you've brought in a change that allows asset sale money to go to—there are a number of places where it can go, but here's the one that's the real zinger—amounts allocated by cabinet "for projects that are designated as priority projects." Basically, they can put it in the government coffers and do whatever they want, which is exactly the opposite of what they said they'd do.

Let's understand, this government doesn't keep all its promises. This is a promise that you made, and you have now violated that promise both in deed and in legislation.

Why? Because a lot of your economics don't work out quite the way you say they will. You needed that \$3.1 billion. The problem is that \$3.1 billion isn't going to be there for next year. It won't be there for 2000-01. You're going to have to find that money somewhere else. You're either going to have to make deeper cuts—and we've already seen \$300 million in cuts, with another \$600 million, at least, to come—or you're going to have to increase revenue, but that's hard to do when you're giving another 20% tax cut to your wealthy friends, or you've got to sell even more resources to keep filling that \$3.1-billion revenue gap that you've got, which just happens to coincide with a lot of excitement within the government and a lot of attention to asset sales.

You want to talk about a fast way to break this province. It won't be in cash flow by doing that, but at the end of the day a lot of the foundations that were put in place, ironically, in large part by previous Tory governments for 40 years, will be eliminated, and without that foundation, all your talk about the fiscal foundations means nothing. Much of why this is a great place to live and do business in is because of the foundations that we have, and now it looks like you're about to sell them, breaking your promise in the process, in order to make your books look good, because you've now got this goofy balanced budget legislation, and like the Manitoba Tories you're going to have to do a dance at some point to cover off your revenue problem. So one of the things you're looking at is, sell more assets. Now you've changed the law, so every time you sell an asset, rather than what you said in 1995, that it would go against the debt, every dime will go into the general revenue fund and you can help to refill that \$3.1-billion gap.

2120

If we start to dip, if we fall in terms of the economy and we get anywhere near recessionary numbers—today the minister was talking 5% plus in terms of growth. I agree that's phenomenal, but I've been around the cabinet table when the news from both the private forecasters and your ministry forecasters is that you're going into negative numbers in the coming year and possibly for the next couple of years, because that's what's happening around the world, exacerbated in Canada by the high interest rates implemented by Mulroney. Let me tell you, you get into that world and you don't know what troubles are. You won't be able to sell assets fast enough.

They're banking that the race the minister and I talked about a few minutes ago is one that they will win. Well, as the minister said, stay tuned.

Let me take just a moment, because it's important to remember that one of the reasons we have the calendar motion before us right now is that the member from Stoney Creek's favourite piece of legislation will soon be coming. That is, of course, the amalgamation of a number of municipalities. I'm sure the government members know this, but originally the government's intent was to have the House rise as per the original calendar on December 9 and then if necessary to call us back in early January in order to finish the municipal legislation. That

plan changed—at least we became aware of the change—about two weeks ago, when the government was indicating, and a week ago confirmed at the House leaders' meeting, that indeed there would be a calendar motion extending the House not just one week but all the way to the 23rd, because no matter what, they wanted this thing law by the time they came out of this place, rising for the Christmas break.

Therefore, I think it's quite germane to talk a bit about the report as it relates to my community in Hamilton-Wentworth and, given that there aren't a lot of minutes left, I do just want to touch on a few things.

I had mentioned earlier today in my member's statement about the labour leaders threatening work action. Again, Speaker, you will know that I have raised the concern that in our special adviser David O'Brien's report—who, by the way, I thought did an excellent job. I met with him; he gave us a very detailed report. I think he's been as honest, as sincere and as professional as we could hope, but I really take exception to the things he's recommended as they relate to the people who work for the region and the municipalities that are involved.

The reason the labour leaders are upset is not because they disagree with one tier; in fact, most of them, by and large, certainly within Hamilton, have been in favour of the one tier. So it's not that they are looking for an excuse to oppose the whole action. What they are concerned about are some of these recommendations. I want to again point out that it was only in our recommendations that these recommendations were raised with regard to labour. They don't appear in any of the other special advisers' reports that I am aware of. I won't say that I've read every one of them front to back, but I'm not aware that these are in the other reports.

I say to anybody watching from those municipalities in Sudbury, Ottawa or Haldimand-Norfolk that if it happens to Hamilton, it's got to happen in yours, because so far the government's talking about an omnibus bill, which means all these bills will be bundled into one. I can't imagine how they would justify treating workers, from a legislative policy point of view, differently in Hamilton-Wentworth than they would in Sudbury or Ottawa or Haldimand-Norfolk. It would be very hard to justify that. So these concerns, if anybody watching cares about them, need to be removed from Hamilton-Wentworth, because if they aren't, it means everybody is going to have to wear it.

What are a number of these concerns?

First of all, it's recommended that there be a two-year moratorium on union certification. That just blew me right out of the water. To take away someone's rights—one of the fundamental rights that people have in a free society is access to free collective bargaining and the right to association and the right to join collectively. Those are fundamental rights in a free society. At least, so far in Ontario those are still fundamental rights. We're not so sure how they're going to hold up over the full tenure of Mike Harris's term as Premier, but for now, they are still rights. To suggest that they would be abrog-

ated in any way, shape or form because the government feels the need to do this restructuring would be such a miscarriage of justice, not to mention creating a climate within the workforce in all our municipalities that would make implementation of these changes very difficult, to say the least, and possibly non-workable.

Secondly, it's recommended that in order to deal with the differential in wages, because there are different collective agreements that apply to different municipalities, there would be something called "average leveling." As I understand it, what it means is average the wages of everybody in a given category, and wherever that wage averages, you would bring anyone below it to that amount, but anyone above it would be red-circled, meaning they're frozen. So even if there are COLA increases or other increases built into their collective agreement that they've negotiated, they wouldn't get them.

This creates a lot of problems, not the least of which is—and anybody who has ever sat at a bargaining table will know—that wages alone are not an accurate reflection of the remuneration that you receive, your total compensation package. For instance, if you've got a workforce that's getting a little older, then you might put a little more money into pension benefits rather than wages. If you have a younger workforce, it's not unusual that they would rather have the wages. Because of the upfront costs that young people face when they're starting a family and perhaps buying their first home, they'd rather have the wages. We all know that when you're in your early 20s retirement is never going to happen to any of us. None of us is ever going to get that old; that only happens to somebody else, so it's not unusual to see that sort of thing.

Also, you could see different negotiations putting money maybe into a dental plan, if there are a lot of people with young children and they want to make sure they're covered there. So the wages alone don't reflect anything. Not to mention, how can you expect any kind of esprit de corps at all among working people when two folks side by side doing exactly the same job and having exactly the same employer are making different money? Not to mention the fact—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey): It happens here.

Mr Christopherson: My friend Bill Murdoch points out that it happens here. I would remind him how he feels about those cabinet ministers on certain days of the week.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Don't get him going, David.

Mr Christopherson: We don't have enough time to wind Bill up tonight, no. There's not enough time to wind him down after.

You can appreciate that that's not a good start for a brand new municipality, and all of this would happen arbitrarily and unilaterally. There is no suggestion here that maybe these are goals or suggestions or starting points for the parties to sit down and talk about. There is no recognition that the unions have a right to negotiate and speak on behalf of their members. This just totally removes that.

For somebody who wants to support this bill—I really do, because I've been so strong a believer in one tier—it's making it very difficult, if this is in the legislation, for me to vote. I realize that if they've got critical mass and they've reached the number they need in the government caucus, they don't care what we do on this side of the House. I understand that and I don't take it personally in any way, shape or form.

Mr Clark: I care.

Mr Christopherson: My colleague from Stoney Creek says he does, but I certainly don't. I want to vote for it because I do think it's the right thing and I think history will show that it's the right thing for my community, and I'd like to be voting in a positive fashion. But if you're going to have stuff like this in there, it makes it very difficult. So I hope there's a response from all the communities affected and enough pressure on the government that we see this dropped and there is none of this anti-worker, anti-union, anti-labour legislation contained within the bill when it's ultimately tabled.

I have barely a couple of minutes. Let me just mention a couple more things.

I was surprised at the size of the council. I think there ought to be an increase. I thought it was a little small for a population of almost half a million. I would hope there would be an increase and that there still can be a recognition that the suburban areas deserve to have better representation on the new council than is recommended

in here. I believe that because, again, I think everyone has to feel some ownership or being a part of the new city, and if there aren't enough reps there to do that, I think you're beat before you're finished.

An unpopular item with a lot of the public but one that I think needs to be addressed by us, outside the councillor world, or no one can really effectively, is that I think the mayor's pay is just fine but the councillors' pay is only about \$4,000 more than it is currently for Hamilton aldermen sitting on both city council and regional council. I know that sounds like a lot of money to people, but for the amount of work involved, for the responsibility that's involved, and in a desire to attract as good and the best kind of candidates we can, I think that's a little low.

Hon Mr Klees: Do you want the job?

Mr Christopherson: Not for councillor. I would hope the government would seriously look at that in a very non-partisan way and recognize that needs to be set at a level that is reflective of the responsibility and the work that's there. I don't think the report quite does that now. I would urge the government and the ministers involved to look at that, and with that, Speaker, I would move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. That's actually not necessary. It being 9:30 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 2132.

CONTENTS

Tuesday 30 November 1999

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

House sittings, government notice of motion number 12, <i>Mr Sterling</i>	
Mr Klees.....	957
Mr Dunlop.....	959
Mr Mazzilli.....	961
Mr Gerretsen.....	964
Mr Patten.....	966
Mr Ruprecht.....	967
Mr Sergio.....	971
Mr Christopherson.....	972
Debate adjourned.....	977