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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 2 May 2000

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Mardi 2 mai 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 mai 2000

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Today I want to speak about an announcement by Mike Harris last week to introduce private universities to Ontario. I want to tell the people who live in my riding of Windsor West that I am opposed to this announcement. Moreover, I want to ask the parents in my riding to answer the very question that the Minister of Colleges and Universities put to parents last week during that announcement of private universities. When at the end of that press conference a student asked the minister, "Where are we going to find \$40,000 a year to attend this so-called private university?" it said, and I quote, "She snapped, 'Ask your parents.'"

I say to the people who live in my riding, even if we have a four-year program, we're talking about \$160,000, which is about the cost many people will spend on a home. I want to ask these parents on behalf of the Minister of Colleges and Universities, where are we going to get that kind of money to send our students to these so-called private universities?

It's just one more example of how the Tories find the easy way out instead of addressing real issues about college and university education for our young people in Ontario. I am opposed to moving to private universities and think instead that you should get back down to basics, roll up your sleeves and figure out exactly how you want to better fund our post-secondary education.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to remind the opposition of our government's unprecedented record of following through on its commitments.

The Ontario economy has created more than 701,000 net new jobs since the throne speech in September 1995. In 1999, over 99% of the 198,000 net new jobs were full-time jobs and the majority were jobs in the high-paying sector.

I want to congratulate the taxpayers of Ontario for putting their faith in this government's promises that tax cuts create jobs and improve our economy.

It is also worth noting that more than 485,000 people have stopped relying on welfare since June 1995. These facts alone are something to be proud of.

Later this afternoon, the Minister of Finance is expected to announce a balanced budget. The opposition, the critics and many journalists said it couldn't be done, and while Ontario fell behind, thanks to the poor performance of the NDP and the Liberals, Ontario has now managed to bounce back, thanks to the dedicated efforts of the Harris team. Over the past five years, the people of Ontario have received more political stability, financial security and a better justice system.

Just as Sir John A. Macdonald encouraged his associates to look ahead for Canada, this government has moved forward and created a better and brighter future for all who call Ontario their home.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise today to express the concern of my constituents regarding school closures slated for June 2000 and June 2001.

As a result of this government's stupid funding policy and space allocation policy, schools in the city of Hamilton, particularly schools in the inner city that are the heart and soul of our community, are being forced to close, are going to be on the chopping block, not because the trustees want to, not because the parents want to, but because Mike Harris's funding policy is forcing these.

Three such schools are Parkview secondary, Lloyd George elementary and Scott Park secondary in my riding. Of these schools, particularly Scott Park high school with about 800 students in the heart of Hamilton East, in the heart of the community, is not only a school but is the heart and soul of our community. It is the recreation centre, it is the place where parents meet and it is the place where students go in the evening. It is the real heart of our community, and this government is going to shut it down. Lloyd George elementary school, in the north end of Hamilton, is a small school but one that has come together, one that keeps that community together, one that becomes in the evening the main centre of the neighbourhood.

This government, because of your stupid policy—irrational, not well-thought-out—is going to force these schools to close. You can't blame the trustees; you can't blame the parents. The blame is clearly on Mike Harris and his funding policy that is forcing many inner-city schools to close. You're going to pay a hell of a political price for this come next election.

ONTARIO VOLUNTEER AWARDS 2000

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): Tonight I will attend the Ontario Volunteer Awards 2000. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the outstanding achievement of those individuals from my riding of York North who will be honoured tonight.

Nominated by the Bellhaven Women's Institute are June Fairburn, Edna May, Ruth Mondy, Helen Pegg and Phyllis Yorke; nominated by the Family Life Centre is Cyril Harper; nominated by Gymnastics Ontario is Teresa Orr; nominated by the Lake Simcoe South Master Gardeners are Joyce Cathcart, Albert Evans, James Pickering and Audrey Whitcombe; nominated by the Sandgate Women's Shelter is Dorothy Perry; nominated by the Union Street Women's Institute are Olive Hant, Joyce Karges, Flossie Martin and Ida Morin; nominated by the Unionville Home Society is Barbara Houston; nominated by the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum is Ruth Pogue; nominated by the Women's Sexual Assault Helpline and Outreach Services of York Region is Judy Konaka; nominated by the York 4-H Club are Doug Johnson and Mike Winch; nominated by the York Holstein Club is Alan Faris; nominated by the York North chapter of the MS Society is Patricia Robichaud; nominated by the York Region Rose of Sharon Services for Young Mothers are Christine Kalan-Tidman and Terry Kelly Anderson.

I would like to thank all of these volunteers for making the riding of York North a better place to live.

APPOINTMENT OF JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I want to use my time today to direct an appeal to the Attorney General related to the lack of resident justice-of-the-peace services in the town of Marathon.

For the past three years, Marathon Mayor Pat Richardson and I have been lobbying this government to fill the vacancy left when the previous Marathon justice retired in 1995. We've written several letters over that period of time and have tried to co-operate with the ministry in every possible way to help them once again provide this important service.

As you know, Marathon is the largest community on the north shore of Lake Superior between Thunder Bay and Sault Ste Marie and, as such, has an extremely busy court docket. Yet, while most other communities in my riding have at least part-time resident JPs, Marathon has only received the services of a travelling justice of the peace.

Minister, your refusal to appoint a resident justice of the peace for Marathon is most difficult to understand. It is forcing members of the OPP detachment in Marathon to travel to either Manitouwadge or Schreiber, each approximately 100 kilometres away, to get the signature of a JP, which means more costs for taxpayers and the loss of that officer from his or her regular duties. As for

the travelling justice of the peace, many planned visits to Marathon have had to be cancelled because of road closures and weather-related problems which have caused unnecessary and costly delays in the delivery of justice.

Minister, perhaps your lack of understanding of our northern reality has caused you to delay making this appointment. Regardless, it is important for you to delay no further. Marathon is an important, vibrant community that requires this service. Please fill the vacancy now.

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CANADIAN HEARING SOCIETY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I rise today to bring to the attention of the House and people across the province the excellent work and contribution of the Canadian Hearing Society to our communities and to this province over some 60 years now.

In my own community yesterday, I participated in a celebration in the Station Mall, where people gathered who have helped with the Canadian Hearing Society work over a number of years to celebrate this 60th anniversary and to talk about the wonderful things that have been done in Sault Ste Marie, Algoma and across this province by so many people who are committed to such a positive effort on behalf of those who are deaf or deafened or hard of hearing in the province: The contribution they make, creating possibilities for people to participate in communities, working on issues of access—in my own community, for example, participating with the hospitals to make sure that people who have a challenge in terms of hearing and go to the hospital are able to express themselves, get the service they need and to go away well taken care of.

I dare say that in this place, we saw the work of the Canadian Hearing Society in the election of one Gary Malkowski to the Legislature in 1990, a deaf person who served here in a magnificent way, both as a role model and a trailblazer for those in this province who, up to then, may have felt that acting as a member of parliament was out of their realm.

TELEMARKETING PRACTICES

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to bring to the Legislature's attention concerns I have about local consumer complaints of telephone or mail scams and unscrupulous salespeople who mostly prey on seniors. I recently met with a constituent, Mr William Lamacraft, to discuss a situation he experienced with a package he received in the mail, announcing that he had just become the winner of \$1.8 million. Of course, after sending in appropriate forms no prize or money was ever received. It was yet another magazine subscription scam.

While I appreciate the visit from Mr Lamacraft, I'm quite disappointed that consumers in my riding, especially the vulnerable and elderly, are targets of many illegitimate and fraudulent companies. Last year at my seniors seminar, I heard many complaints about vacuum

cleaner, gas and other door-to-door salespeople, who are often too pushy and unclear about what consumers are really buying.

The Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations has been very proactive in keeping consumers aware and informed of telephone scams and who to contact with a complaint. I urge anyone with concerns to contact the ministry's general inquiry unit for information on a variety of consumer issues or to report a scam. The 1-800-268-1142 number is just for that reason.

I applaud the government's efforts to this end, and I thank Mr Lamacraft for bringing his concerns to my attention in order to promote awareness in our community.

ONTARIO BUDGET

BUDGET DE L'ONTARIO

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Comme tout le monde le sait, aujourd'hui le gouvernement Harris présente un budget équilibré, le premier depuis une décennie, le premier depuis l'année 1989-1990, la dernière année du gouvernement libéral à l'époque.

Il est important de noter que ce gouvernement a finalement atteint son objectif, trois ans après le gouvernement fédéral et après plusieurs autres provinces, qui ne jouissaient pas d'une situation économique aussi favorable que la nôtre.

This government has already allocated most of the surplus, with the majority going to tax cuts and with little directed towards health, education and debt reduction.

Par contre, une partie du surplus devrait être dirigée vers les intérêts des communautés francophones. Ce gouvernement devrait prendre les démarches nécessaires afin de rencontrer les besoins de ses citoyens et de ses citoyennes et de garantir des services municipaux de qualité en français, surtout pour les villes d'Ottawa et de Sudbury.

It is imperative that this government recognize the linguistic duality of this province.

On ne peut se permettre de se diriger vers un système de santé à deux paliers, une éducation seulement accessible aux riches et un manque de respect pour les composantes culturelles et communautaires de cette province. Les Conservateurs doivent reconnaître l'importance de ces domaines au lieu de les remettre au contrôle du secteur privé.

Ce gouvernement ne doit pas se vanter d'un budget équilibré ou d'un surplus. L'étude de n'importe quel domaine—éducation, santé, services sociaux, logement subventionné—nous révèle que les obligations n'ont pas été rencontrées et que les gens ne reçoivent pas les services nécessaires.

In reality, this government is in a deficit situation. What is the use of a tax cut if the people of this province are hit with user fees? The citizens are now paying more and receiving less.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Today, May 2, is Holocaust Memorial Day, Yom ha-Shoah, in Ontario. On this day, all Ontarians come together to remember all victims of state-sanctioned genocide. Here, on the threshold of the 21st century, we need to remind ourselves that many instances of this most horrible crime have occurred in modern times.

Remember, not all victims of these crimes are dead. Many survivors of genocide walk amongst us. Some choose to bear their pain in silence, while others have taken up the clarion call of "Never again." They chose to shed the glare of their experience on these acts rather than remain silent about them.

We need to remember such horrors because, in the modern world, we are not immune. Our horror, our indignation and our belief in a better world are not enough to shield us from these horrors.

Witness Zimbabwe today. Formerly Rhodesia, this African nation is spiralling dangerously close to genocide. An emphasis on the responsibilities of citizenship is our only defence against man's inhumanity to man. When a state sanctions this type of action, it is up to the citizens who make up that state, and indeed all citizens of the world, to stand in their place and say no. This heroic act is a defence of freedom and cannot be ignored.

Today, as we remember, we neither can be ignored.

REPORT OF CHIEF ELECTION OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that I've laid upon the table a report to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario entitled Meeting the Needs of a Modern Electorate, submitted by the chief election officer for Ontario.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: Earlier today I wrote you a letter with respect to the report that you have just placed on the table. Pursuant to standing order 21, I filed notice with you about this. We became aware that copies of the report from the chief election officer entitled Meeting the Needs of a Modern Electorate were in circulation prior to being tabled in the House. Indeed, they were circulated, by our understanding, to the media a full three weeks ago.

The Election Finances Act:

"2(4) The chief election officer shall make an annual report on the affairs of his or her office in relation to this act to the Speaker of the Assembly...."

"2(6) The Speaker shall lay annual reports received under subsection (4) and recommendations received under subsection (5) before the Assembly if it is in session or, if not, at the next session."

The Election Act further states:

"4.1(4) Within 12 months after polling day, the chief election officer shall (a) make a report to the Speaker of the Assembly on the voting equipment, vote-counting equipment or alternative voting methods used at the elec-

tion; and (b) make recommendations to the Speaker with respect to amending this act so as to adopt the voting equipment, vote-counting equipment or alternative voting methods on a permanent basis.”

I believe that the failure to table this report before the House and distributing it to the public has violated our standing orders and the rights and privileges of this House collectively.

Mr Speaker, I would ask you to rule on that issue.

The Speaker: I thank the member very much for giving me the point of privilege. I will be investigating and will be coming up with a ruling. I want to thank the member for taking the time and laying it out in a very concise manner. I will be ruling. I thank the member for his point of privilege.

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr David Young (Willowdale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe I have unanimous consent from all of the parties for one member of each caucus to speak for up to five minutes on Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Young: Last night at sundown Jews around the world lit memorial candles in observance of Yom ha-Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Day, which honours the six million Jews who were murdered by the Nazis during the Second World War. It is truly difficult to find words to put this tragedy into any sort of perspective.

1350

Coming to terms with the loss of a single loved one is immensely difficult. How unimaginable, then, it must be for the survivors of the Holocaust, who in an instant—overnight—lost an entire community, their family, their friends, their neighbours, all to unspeakable hatred. It is with this in mind that we pause today to honour the memory of those innocents who could not escape the clutches of genocide in the last century. We pause to honour those who valiantly fought this tyranny. We pause to honour those individuals with us today who survived. It is for them that we commemorate Yom ha-Shoah.

By officially recognizing Holocaust Memorial Day in this Legislature, we honour those Holocaust victims, and we honour the survivors, many of whom settled in Ontario where they have rebuilt their lives. They have become our friends, they have become our neighbours, they're mothers, fathers, and they've contributed to the richness and the diversity and the compassion that has become synonymous with the name Canada and with this great province. They are shining examples of the enduring strength of human spirit, and we remain inspired by their will, not just to survive but to live.

Earlier today, the Premier and Minister Johns, Member Chudleigh, Member Kwinter and Member Colle joined with myself and the families of 13 Holocaust survivors who are in the gallery today. The 13 have dis-

tinguished themselves in various ways on numerous occasions since they graced our country by immigrating here.

These people are Dubie Arie; Jerry Matta; Betty Kirshenbaum; Izzy Kirshenbaum; Elsa Chandler, with whom I served six years on the North York Board of Education, a dear friend; Olly Mittleman; Cantor Joseph Cooper; Max Moneta; Sally Eisner; Cantor Martin Rosenbaum; Morris Leider; Izzy Light; and Bella Snow is with us as well today on behalf of her late husband, Ralph, who recently and tragically passed away.

The Holocaust has left its mark on all of us. Every Jew knows someone who has perished and did perish in those dark days of the last century. My family is no exception. As a youngster I grew up in a community where it was common to have adults with numbers tattooed on their arms. These marks remained as painful reminders of the concentration camp and the tyrant's maniacal attempt to eliminate a people.

Even more painful for these survivors were the memories of seeing loved ones snatched away and then murdered. I grew up in a community where distant relatives and friends were called aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters because for many families there were no blood relatives left after the Holocaust. The sorrow of these victims is carried constantly in our hearts and the cries of the victims will echo forever in our souls.

As time passes, there remain fewer and fewer survivors, and without their presence among us it might be all too easy to forget the horrors they faced. We must never forget. We must never forget the atrocities which were endured during the Second World War, because by keeping their memory alive, we foster the hope that no community will ever again experience such atrocities. Yet atrocities, tragedies in Africa and eastern Europe in recent years demonstrate that we still have much to learn. We must continue our vigil to ensure that no tyrant will ever again inflict such unspeakable horror and suffering on any group of human beings regardless of their race, their religion, their way of life or where they live.

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): Today is the 27th day of Nissan in the year 5760 of the Hebrew calendar. It is Yom ha-Shoah, Vehagvurah, Holocaust Memorial Day. It is a day that commemorates not only the Holocaust, but also the anniversary of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in 1943 and the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

On December 10, 1998, this Legislature passed Bill 66 in the name of the member for Halton, and that bill proclaimed that we, the province of Ontario, would recognize the Holocaust Memorial Day, the first jurisdiction outside of the state of Israel to do so. With that we have really passed a law, and what it does is call for the enhancement of Holocaust and anti-discrimination education, which will enrich our Ontario heritage and mosaic.

This is probably the 15th time I have stood in this House on this issue, and it's a challenge because I want to make it an educational experience for all of us. Historians once commented that a people's ability to assimilate

very serious problems is predicated on, if one person dies, it's a tragedy, but if thousands or millions of people die, it's a statistic; you cannot come to grips with it. I want to talk about a situation where during the Holocaust we had six million Jews die, and of that 1.5 million were children. While this was happening the world was silent. There was no outcry; there was no comment; there was silence.

Let me give you an example of what happened in June 1939. Adolf Hitler designated that 1,000 Jews could leave Europe to go to any country that would take them. He had them put aboard a vessel known as the SS *St Louis* and off they went. They were under the impression they were going to Cuba. When they arrived in Havana, thinking this was going to be their salvation, they were refused permission to leave the ship. After much negotiation they had to leave. Every other country in South America refused.

They then went to the United States. Not only did the United States refuse to allow them to land, but it sent out a gunboat to make sure none of them got off the boat and swam to shore. They then went to Canada and pleaded with the then Prime Minister, Mackenzie King, saying: "Please, you are our last refuge of hope. Let us in." The answer was no. They said, "By saying no, you are passing a death sentence on us." The ship returned to Europe and historically the facts are that most of those people died in the Holocaust, and again the world was silent.

I want to compare that to a situation we're living in right now. Six million die, 1.5 million children: Every day, as we heard today in the ceremony that honoured 13 people, was a choice between life and death at the whim of the Nazis who were there: You go to the right, you're alive; you go to the left, you're dead. Every day was a challenge. Today in the Western world, in the United States, we have a little boy, Elian Gonzales, who came to the United States and brought the power of the President of the United States, brought the power of the Attorney General, brought the world's global media. What is the issue? It is, where is he going to live? It is not, is he going to live, but where? That is the issue that is gripping the media today.

You have to ask, what has changed, what has gone on? This is what we really have to remember: We have to come to terms with the fact that there are parts of our history where things have been done to people for the reason, particularly in the Holocaust, that their only crime was that they were Jewish.

1400

One other example: After the war, all of the remnants of this Jewish community were trying to get placed. They were all in displaced persons camps and they were trying to be placed in countries. A senior official in the Canadian Ministry of Immigration was asked, "How many Jews are you prepared to take?" He said, "None is too many." Now what has happened, of course, is we've had an incredible sea change. We've had an enlightened society, an enlightened country. I can tell you that when you take

a look at Canadian society, members of the Jewish community are in every stratum—in the arts, in the sciences, in the business community—and that is commendable. But it is important to understand that literally within the lifetime of many of us we've lived through a part of our history in which a total nation was virtually annihilated.

There were some, and they're counted among the righteous—whether it be Oskar Schindler and his Schindler Juden, or Raul Wallenberg, who, because he was a Swedish diplomat, helped the people in Hungary—who did help. But by and large the world was silent. It is that message and it's for that reason that we must always remember so that the world will never forget.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): As Mr Kwinter has said, Yom ha-Shoah falls on May 2, which is today, and it's more than appropriate that we're making the comments that are being made today. It is clearly a day of reflection and of remembering the systematic, bureaucratic annihilation of six million Jews by the Nazi regime. But it is also important to remember our role as a government, to the extent that we did very little as Canadians to accept Jews who were desperately seeking a place in this country. That's our role and that's the responsibility we have to take as Canadians, as part of that remembering.

I would add that although the Jews were the primary victims, up to 500,000 Roma people—Gypsies—and at least 250,000 mentally or physically disabled persons were also victims of genocide.

"As Nazi tyranny spread across Europe from 1933 to 1945, millions of other innocent people were persecuted and murdered. More than three million Soviet prisoners of war were killed because of their nationality. Poles, as well as other Slavs, were targeted for slave labour, and as a result of the Nazi terror, almost two million perished. Homosexuals and others deemed antisocial were also persecuted and often murdered. In addition thousands of political and religious dissidents such as communists, socialists, trade unionists and Jehovah's Witnesses were persecuted for their beliefs and behaviour and many of these individuals died as a result of maltreatment."

The issue of human rights and violations of human dignity is as much a local problem as it is a global problem. Although it might be convenient for people to say violations happen somewhere else, it's good to remember what happens in our borders and in our own country, because that's where it should begin in terms of dealing with our own problems. So simply remembering violations, in my view, is not a solution. Unless we commit to proactively and not reactively work against racism and human rights violations, these abuses will persist inexorably and universally.

We must meet this challenge not as taxpayers but as citizens. Education is part of that prevention; it's part of that solution. I refer to this Yom ha-Shoah Holocaust Memorial Day teachers' guide. It's where it begins. It begins with education and in our education system. This is what they say in the part that says, "Why teach Holocaust history?"

“Through a study of the Holocaust, students can come to realize that (1) democratic institutions and values are not automatically sustained but need to be appreciated, nurtured and protected; (2) silence and indifference to the suffering of others, or to the infringement of civil rights in any society can—however unintentionally—serve to perpetuate the problems; and (3) the Holocaust was not an accident in history—it occurred because individuals, organizations and governments made choices which not only legalized discrimination, but which allowed prejudice, hatred and ultimately mass murder to occur. ...

“A study of the Holocaust helps students think about the use and abuse of power, and the role and responsibilities of individuals, organizations and nations when confronted with civil rights violations and/or policies of genocide.”

In my view, remembering must involve the active engagement of citizens to confront and stamp out acts of racism and human rights violations everywhere.

The Speaker: I thank all the members.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO REALTY CORP

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a question for the Chair of Management Board in regard to the Ontario Realty Corp. I’m going to ask simple, straightforward questions without any rhetoric and I would hope that the answers from the minister are also in kind with that.

Yesterday, my leader, Dalton McGuinty, asked the Premier whether the taxpayers of Ontario had received any additional funding as a result of the property that was added to the Etobicoke crematorium deal. You’ve had 24 hours to look into this matter. Can you confirm today for the House whether the taxpayers of Ontario received any additional funding for the 25-foot strip that was added to the crematorium deal in Etobicoke?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The member of the opposition knows full well, or he should know, that this particular past transaction is under review by the auditors and is being investigated by the police, and that’s where it should be dealt with.

Mr Agostino: It was a simple question—it had nothing to do with the police investigation—whether or not, for the additional 25 feet, the taxpayers of Ontario were compensated. I’m disappointed the minister would choose not to answer that question.

Minister, on November 3, 1999, you were asked whether you were aware of any allegations of corruption or wrongdoing at the Ontario Realty Corp. You replied that there were no specific allegations of corruption or wrongdoing that you were made aware of. Can you confirm for the House the date you first were made aware of any corruption or wrongdoing at the ORC, and at

which board meeting you and the board were notified of wrongdoing at the Ontario Realty Corp?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I’ve outlined to this House before, it was early November when I was asked by the opposition if I had any specific knowledge of any allegations. I said I didn’t have anything specific and if they had some information, would they please share it? They refused to or they felt they didn’t need to. I’ll let the public draw its own conclusions why they didn’t offer any specific evidence of what they were alleging.

In late November, the review team of the senior management of the ORC discovered some irregularities and they asked for the Management Board auditor to have a look at it. He looked at it, he asked for assistance with outside forensic accountants. They referred the matter subsequently to the police and the police are now investigating it.

Mr Agostino: Finally, a question: Other than the Etobicoke crematorium deal, have you had any business dealings with Mr Damiani either as a minister or in the private business sector that you were involved in previous to public life?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I don’t know what it is. Either the Liberals are so arrogant that they think they can do a better job investigating than the police or they just don’t trust the police. Which is it?

1410

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul’s): My question is for the Attorney General. It’s about the serious issue of fat cat deadbeats who live in the lap of luxury while refusing to make custodial payments. The mom can’t pay the rent and the kids don’t have food on the table. In addition to going after drivers’ licences, why don’t we go after them where it hurts the most? What I’m talking about is taking away these fat cats’ ability to practise in their professions, so it would be a letter from the Family Responsibility Office to a self-regulating body such as the law society or the College of Physicians and Surgeons. They’d get the final discretion, but you’d advise them that this fat-cat lawyer, for instance, is a deadbeat, not making custodial payments, that their behaviour is unbecoming to the profession and therefore they should be suspended from practising. What do you say, Minister? Are you willing to go after the fat-cat deadbeats who are victimizing thousands of Ontarians?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): As I think the member knows, the Family Responsibility Office in Ontario has been suspending drivers’ permits at record rates in the past year. Almost 15,000 delinquent payers have been sent notices of impending driver’s licence suspensions since 1997, and more than 6,200 delinquent payers have had their drivers’ licences suspended, resulting in more than \$40 million in support being paid to children and families.

We are using the enforcement tools at the Family Responsibility Office that this Legislative Assembly authorized in the legislation that was passed here a few years ago. We are collecting record sums for the spouses and children in Ontario who are entitled to those payments.

Mr Bryant: Minister, suspending a driver's licence is a start, but it's not going to help if the fat-cat deadbeat is riding around in the back of a limo. We need to hit him where it hurts. I'm surprised that you're not open to initiatives from this side of the House, and I understand that you're not open to initiatives from this side of the House, but I encourage you to reconsider this. I would be remiss if I didn't pursue you to make a commitment to go after these fat cats and do something about the problem.

I've got another question and I am seeking an unequivocal answer. This is an important issue for those Ontarians who are victims of deadbeat dads. Will you stand up and say that you will not in any way, shape or form privatize the FRO?

Hon Mr Flaherty: In terms of being open to initiatives, it was our government that brought in the seizure of passports, that brought in the seizure of drivers' licences. It was our government, in 1996, that introduced the legislation. It was your government, for five years, that let FRO get into all kinds of difficulty in terms of performing its function of collecting money for children and spouses in Ontario.

If the member wants to talk about initiatives and being imaginative and using the tools we can use to effectively collect money for vulnerable people, that's exactly what our government has done in the last five years in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Final supplementary.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): It would have been nice if the minister had answered my colleague's question, and it leaves it open that there is privatization being proposed.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member take his seat. Order, member for Windsor-St Clair. The member is trying to put the final supplementary.

Mr Peters: I have in my hand copies of memos from the Ministry of Community and Social Services regarding social assistance and the Family Responsibility Office. Since December 1998, both your ministry and the Ministry of Community and Social Services have been trying to figure out a way to deal with 31,500 files whose FRO assignments are still with the Ministry of Community and Social Services instead of the local delivery agent. What we have here is that for 16 months Ontario caseworkers across the province have not had access to their FRO files. Caseworkers were instructed not to change their clients' support assignments because your ministry did not have the manpower to deal with it at the time. Municipalities were told that it would be dealt with somewhere down the road. Now, 16 months later, we are somewhere down the road and municipalities are going to be reimbursed on a nominal averaging formula

because, "It was not feasible to use the automated approach."

Minister, this black hole, as your own staff have referred to it, is appalling. Why are you starving the FRO to the point where possibly there are more than 30,000 screwed-up files and hundreds of millions of dollars sitting in the consolidated revenue fund. When are you going to take responsibility, Minister, and clean up this mess that you call the Family Responsibility Office?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I'm disappointed, actually, that the member would criticize the Family Responsibility Office and the workers who work there, who work on the phones every day trying to do a good and effective job on behalf of children and spouses who are entitled to payment. Frankly, I think their work should be praised; it's extremely difficult work. The province is paying \$28 million or so this year to fund this work on behalf of those persons entitled to that money, whose marriages have broken down. I think we should encourage them in their work. We should give them the tools they need to effectively do their work, which we have done with driver's licence suspensions and by interfering with the passports of persons who would flee their obligations. These are positive moves; this is moving forward. If you have suggestions that will help us forward, I'd love to hear them.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is to the Minister of Correctional Services. He will be aware that there was quite a discussion at municipal council in Sault Ste Marie last night as they attempted to respond to a letter from you recently to clarify their position re two resolutions they passed over the last couple of months. One was to have the Northern Treatment Centre continue to be a part of our community, and the other was their concern about the privatization of correctional services in this province. Last night they clarified their positions. They do not see those two resolutions as being mutually exclusive and have stayed with their position.

What they want me to ask you today, Minister, is to perhaps clarify your position in terms of what is driving your agenda. Is it, as you say in the letter, an effort to provide "safe, secure, efficient and effective correctional programming," or is it an agenda driven by the politics of your government's wanting to privatize as much as they can of the correctional system in this province, even to the point of denying the voice of duly elected municipal councils such as the one in Sault Ste Marie?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I think I have been quite clear in the discussions we've had, either privately or publicly, that we are quite interested in making sure we have programs in this province that deliver effective results as far as correcting the behaviour of the individuals who go through these various programs is concerned.

The Northern Treatment Centre deals with a particular type of behavioural challenge that the inmates have. The member will know that I visited that program with him in the fall of last year to get a first-hand view of what that institution was doing and how it was able, in their view, to benefit the inmates who spend some time there. The member will also know that the federal Liberal government has decided not to continue its involvement in that program. Currently it is a joint venture between us and the federal corrections department. They have chosen not to participate. I have indicated to the member that we certainly do want to take a look at encouraging great programs, and if that's one of them, we would like to continue it.

Mr Martin: Minister, I thank you for that answer and for the effort you have made over the last number of months since you have been minister to work with me on the very important issue of saving the Northern Treatment Centre for Sault Ste Marie and for the province. However, in reading the letter last night and listening to the discussion at the municipal council and talking to some folks over the weekend, because the letter was in the package on Friday for the agenda for Monday night, there was some concern that there was an element of coercion and intimidation in this, and indeed the term "blackmail" was used.

Was that in any way, shape or form a right perception? Is that in fact what you were attempting to do in sending that letter, and will that in any way be the tone of the decision-making you will now be wanting to enter into as you make decisions about this important facility and Sault Ste Marie over the next few days?

1420

Hon Mr Sampson: The honourable member asks what our intentions are. I think the intentions are quite clear: to run safe, effective, efficient and accountable correctional facilities not only in Sault Ste Marie but throughout the entire province. In most of the communities I have visited, when you speak to the residents and the people who work within the institutions, they are concerned about those very same issues: the safety of these institutions—the safety of those outside and of those who work inside—the effectiveness and efficiency, and the recidivism rates we may or may not be achieving in the various institutions across the province.

I was hoping council was considering that when they considered resolutions that dealt with the institutions that were then in their backyard, as the Sault Ste Marie resolution appeared to have done. I wrote to them and said, "Please clarify for me: Are you, as I am, concerned about safety, security, effectiveness and efficiency, or are you, council, taking an ideological position that relates to who operates these things, regardless of what the outcome is?"

Mr Martin: Minister, if you are suggesting here today that what they are doing is driven by ideological concerns, that is not the nature and the makeup of the council of Sault Ste Marie. It is a very diverse group of political folks, and all they were trying to say to you very

clearly in their freely elected way is that they want the Northern Treatment Centre to stay in Sault Ste Marie and they have a concern about the privatization of corrections in the province. They wanted that message to be sent to you and your government on behalf of the community.

Minister, will you tell us today what your plans are and what they will be re the Northern Treatment Centre and Sault Ste Marie?

Hon Mr Sampson: Again, my plans are quite clear. I have said many times in this House and outside of this House that the plan of this minister and of this government is to have a safe, effective, efficient and publicly accountable correctional system in this province. We need to have that system, because we don't have it now and we need to find ways to get there. If we can get there with the assistance of private operators, we should take a look at that. And that indeed is what we are doing. Quite clearly, our objectives are a safe, secure, effective and efficient correctional system and one that's publicly accountable. I believe, from what I'm hearing from you today, that those are the identical concerns of council, and I'm glad you raised those in the House today.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Broadview-Greenwood): My question is for the minister responsible for disability issues. As I am sure you're aware, a new federal study shows that disabled women in Ontario are more likely than disabled men to be sucked into a downward spiral of loneliness and poverty. The study paints a bleak picture of life as a disabled woman. They are less likely to find paying jobs, and those who do work are paid such low wages that they are forced to turn to charities or food banks.

Minister, when your government took office you took away the Employment Equity Act, which the NDP brought in to help these very people. But at least you promised to bring in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. To date you've reneged on that promise time and time again, and you're doing it now.

Will you stand in your place today and tell us you are going to bring in the much-promised Ontarians with Disabilities Act today or in the very near future?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women): Let me tell you that this government has been very clear about its intention to bring forward a disability act. As you know from your time in the House, Mr Speaker, the NDP had a private member's bill that they put forward and didn't even act on that during their time. This government has been very clear. In the throne speech we said we would bring forward an action plan in this session. We also said, on an opposition day, that we would have legislation by November 2001. We stick to our word.

Ms Churley: Another empty promise. We shall see, won't we? I will say to the minister and to all the

members of this government that when they get up and say the NDP did nothing—let me refresh your memory. We brought in an Employment Equity Act, which would help the very people we are talking about today. You guys went out in an election and distorted the facts about that act, and told people, “Be afraid; it’s quota.” Then you got into government and got rid of it. You at least promised to do something to help disabled people in replacement of that and you did nothing. Two thousand and one is not good enough. Since the Employment Equity Act disappeared, people have been waiting five years for action from this government. The time is now. This is unacceptable and a disgrace. Ontario’s economy is booming and these people are being left at the back of the line.

Minister, tell us here today that you will bring in a meaningful and effective ODA, which you promised more than five years ago, before 2001. I would say, bring it in next week. The time has come.

Hon Mrs Johns: I’d like to make a couple of comments about that. When the election was going on, the NDP and the Liberals said they could do it in two and three years, respectively. We have said that we would move quickly on that, that we would move to create an Ontarians with Disabilities Act within the goalposts of the Common Sense Revolution.

Let’s look at this study. I think it’s important to recognize that the study was done between 1991 and 1996, when the NDP was in power. Since the time of the Mike Harris government, the economy is booming—you’re right—and I think we’ll see today in the budget just how wonderful the economy is and just how this government has brought forward a great—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today marks a significant anniversary for a number of our colleagues in the House. On May 2, 1985, five of our colleagues were first elected to the Legislature, and I think we ought to pay tribute to the members for Scarborough-Rouge River, York Centre, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Mississauga South and Burlington. That was a day that many of us refer to as a time when the great darkness was lifted.

The Speaker: That’s not a point of order, but I’m sure all the members are very pleased to be here.

New question. Start the clock, please.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Premier. In the Blueprint document it stated, “For too long, the criminal justice system treated victims of crime as an afterthought.”

A constituent of mine, Mr Robert Monforton, has written to you about his particular circumstances. Mr Monforton was left a quadriplegic as a result of a crime that was committed in 1971. As of yesterday, Mr Monforton’s benefits under the Criminal Injuries Com-

pensation Board were eliminated because he had hit the lifetime maximum. We have written to you to ask if your government will consider changing the act that governs this. Premier, will you give an undertaking to victims of crime, particularly Mr Monforton, that this case will be reviewed?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Attorney General has some information on this case.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the honourable member for Windsor-St Clair for the question. He and I have discussed this matter before and he has asked me about it before in the House.

I understand, as the member has indicated, that the decision of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board has been issued. The Compensation for Victims of Crime Act, as the member knows, sets a quarter-million-dollar cap on the total amount any eligible person can receive in a lifetime. That was the limit that was agreed to, as I understand it, with the support of all three parties in the late 1980s in this place.

There has been a hearing and there has been a decision by the board. There is an appeal mechanism, so I am restricted in what I can say about the particular case with which the member is concerned. I understand it’s a tragic and serious case. But as I’ve indicated, there is an appeal mechanism.

Mr Duncan: The Attorney General is aware that the appeal is an appeal to the courts, which would cost Mr Monforton a considerable sum of money. The Attorney General and the government can deal with this situation. I give an undertaking to the Attorney General that the official opposition would support an amendment to the statute to allow for the benefits of innocent victims, like Mr Monforton, to continue.

The appeal to the Divisional Court will cost Mr Monforton and his family a considerable sum of money. You gave your undertaking before the decision of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to review it at that time. I’ll ask you again today—and state up front that the official opposition will support an amendment to the act to provide for Mr Monforton—will you, as the Attorney General, bring forward the appropriate legislation to prevent Mr Monforton from being victimized yet again?

1430

Hon Mr Flaherty: I thank the member for the supplementary. The last time the limit was looked at was November 1986. As you know, we have a deep-seated concern for victims of crime on this side of the House.

I can confirm to the member that I have asked the chair of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board to review the lifetime maximum limit and to provide me with some background material and data, which I would be pleased to share with the member for Windsor-St Clair. I will review the issue of whether the lifetime maximum ought to be increased and respond to the member opposite once I’ve completed that review, so that we can act, as I’m sure the opposite wants to, in the best interests of victims of crimes.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. I understand that today the larger municipal utilities in Ontario filed their electricity rate applications with the Ontario Energy Board. My constituents are concerned that this will mean rate increases to electricity rates. Minister, is this true?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the question of my colleague. We are reviewing applications that have been put before the Ontario Energy Board. It does appear that many municipalities are going for a cash grab on the backs of electricity customers.

The white paper that preceded the Ontario Energy Competition Act made it very clear that municipalities can earn a commercial rate of return on their equity or on their wires business. But we told them that they had to earn that rate of return, which means: find savings.

This province still has over 250 local municipal utilities. That's far too many. We need more amalgamations, and we need those municipal politicians who now run those utilities to start working with the Ontario government to bring electricity rates down. There is nothing in the act that requires rates to go up and, frankly, we're disappointed in the behaviour of many of our municipalities.

Mr Tascona: It is very reassuring for my constituents to know that this government is here to protect consumers. Minister, you have outlined what municipal utilities should do to keep rates down for their customers, but what is our own company, the Ontario Hydro Services Co, doing to ensure rates are low?

Hon Mr Wilson: The Ontario Hydro Services Co is, under the act, treated like a large municipal utility, and it is setting out an excellent example for other municipal utilities to follow. It is earning its new rate of return by cutting costs. It is squeezing efficiencies and not squeezing customers, like we're seeing in some municipalities.

For almost four decades, longer than I've been alive, the Ontario Municipal Association and municipal politicians asked to be in commercial businesses. They wanted the opportunity to run a business. This is the first time in the history of this province that we've allowed municipalities to get into a commercial venture, and rate increases are threatened by those very politicians.

If I have to, I will ask this Legislature to act against those municipalities that are not acting in the best interests of their customers. We will not tolerate municipalities robbing from Peter to pay Paul; robbing from their electricity accounts to pad their municipal budgets in a municipal election year. That will not be tolerated by this side of the House.

PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges

Universities. On Friday you announced the introduction of private, for-profit universities in Ontario. You did this without bringing the policy to the Legislature to be debated. This was not part of the Blueprint and the government cannot claim that this was a promise made during the election. You did this at the end of April, once most students had already finished their studies for the year. You claimed at the press conference that students were asking for private universities. The students deny this.

Minister, I would like you to answer a question here that you didn't answer at the press conference—here in the Legislature where you are accountable to the students of this province. Private vocational colleges have a loan default rate of over 30%, the highest of any post-secondary institution. In the last month, three private vocational colleges have declared bankruptcy, leaving their students with huge OSAP loans, no education, no diploma and no place to turn. How can you guarantee that these private, for-profit universities you are inviting into Ontario won't follow the same miserable track record and leave our students high and dry with OSAP loans and no education?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): In response to the question, the announcement we made last Friday was about providing students, no matter what age they are or where they live, with a wider range of choices to complete degrees. As part of that announcement, we made three promises: (1) They would have choices; (2) they would have a quality education, a quality degree; and (3) they would be protected from the very scenario the member has presented to us today.

The quality assessment board will be established, and we're looking for input for the board, for its mandate, the best advice we can get on how we make sure that these degrees are of high quality and that this is not an expense to the public—otherwise, no public dollars—so that when and if, down the road, we do look at OSAP—when and if—we will not be looking at the scenario the member put forward to us today.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Minister, at the press conference you said that OSAP loans would be allowed for these institutions. Unless you change the bankruptcy laws, how are you going to prevent a private corporation, a for-profit university, from going bankrupt? How will you prevent that? Let me make it clear: Last week, Clarke career college went belly up. It closed three locations without any warning. Three hundred students went to school Tuesday morning and the doors were locked. One student in my riding is a single mother with a \$4,000 OSAP loan. She's stuck, two months before graduation, without a diploma and with a \$4,000 loan.

The people in your office have tried to help her. That's not the point. Their hands are tied, Minister. What will you do specifically? What will this quality board be able to do, specifically, to avoid this, not only for the career colleges but also for the for-profit universities that you're bringing into this province?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: The scenario as described by my colleague opposite is very serious. When we establish our private vocational schools right now, we demand that those students are protected. This is a competitive environment and we do not want those students not to be able to complete their education as described. We have had a few of these scenarios and the students have had arrangements to complete their degrees and they've also had arrangements so that their money is refunded.

This is not entirely the best we should be able to do, but we have another opportunity, and that is why we are going out for public consultations on the quality assessment board. These issues can come forward, and if there are any better ideas around the question the member asked me, we will be listening. Better ideas and a competitive environment of course will make more accessibility for more students, under more circumstances, no matter where they live.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member. If we can stop the clock for a quick minute, in the members' east gallery we have Mr Ross Stevenson, who was the member for Durham York in the 32nd and 33rd Parliament, and all the members would like to welcome him. We can start the clock.

RURAL JOBS STRATEGY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Rural economic development continues to be a concern to my constituents. Tools like the rural job strategy fund and the rural youth job strategy fund have been very important in my community as well as in other rural communities around Ontario. In fact, in the small hamlet of Craighurst, a company named Chelsea Chocolates is just being developed by two young women who are using Ontario icewines to fill these chocolates and they're shipping them right across the province. They've used the rural job strategy to do so. Minister, could you give this House an update on the other benefits of the rural job strategy fund?

1440

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I'd like to thank the member for Simcoe North for the question. The rural job strategy fund, which members of the Legislature will remember was announced in the 1997 budget, is a three-year, \$30-million fund to create jobs in rural Ontario. I'm pleased to announce that as of March 31 of this year, all the funds have been committed and are working to promote job creation and investment in rural Ontario.

In 1997, an initial \$3 million was invested to create 4,300 summer jobs for rural youth. During the past two years, we have approved 192 projects around rural Ontario, which represents an investment of \$163 million by private-public partnerships. The province has committed over \$27 million, which has leveraged six privately secured dollars for every public dollar. I expect this investment to generate over 10,000 jobs in rural

Ontario in agriculture and food, tourism, manufacturing, mining and the forestry sectors.

Mr Dunlop: Minister, there is no doubt that the rural job strategy fund has been successful in helping rural Ontario. The rural youth job strategy has been another very important tool in helping give job opportunities in rural Ontario to our young people. Could you give us an update on this program as well?

Hon Mr Hardeman: The rural youth job strategy, which was announced by our government in 1998, is a four-year, \$35-million fund that has been a real success in rural Ontario. In partnership with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, we have provide transportation assistance each year for close to 5,000 school-to-work transition students and created jobs for over 363 rural youth in community access partnership program sites in rural Ontario.

The rural youth job strategy has also provided funding towards the Ontario *WorkinfoNet* project, which provides free-of-charge Web sites to help Ontario youth service providers, educators and government agencies in job searching, career planning, training and starting a small business.

As of March 31, we have also approved 60 projects, representing an investment of \$36.1 million by private-public partnerships in job creation, training opportunities and work placements for rural youth. Over 2,212 rural youth have been placed in internship positions and another 2,000 are taking specialized training programs to raise their skills. In total, the province has invested \$17.5 million in creating jobs and work—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time's up.

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and it's with respect to the Direct Democracy Through Municipal Referendums Act and provisions that would amend section 68(1) of the Municipal Elections Act. Minister, this is a section that I've spoke to you about directly and I appreciate your attention to this issue and looking at it.

For the edification of members of the House, the amendment that is being proposed under the Municipal Elections Act would stop candidates in municipal elections from fundraising about seven months after the campaign period is over, even if they have a debt. Currently that period for filing is December 1, and if there's a debt they can continue to fundraise receiptable, rebatable funds until that debt's paid off. You will all know that in our riding associations, where we have political parties backing us, many times there are debts that go on much longer than six months. For an individual municipal politician with no party backing, to be faced with a six-month period after which any fundraising is not receiptable or rebatable becomes a barrier to participation in the democratic forum.

I've raised this issue in debate and with the minister and I know it's being looked at, but given the fact that a

time allocation motion was passed yesterday which now only allows one day to deal with clause-by-clause, I'd like to bring this issue to the attention of the House and ask the minister if he would respond to the concern I have raised with respect to this section.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): In response to the honourable member's question, she has raised it; I have looked into it. I agree with her. I think there is an opportunity to make an amendment in the style that she has requested and I'm gratified that this the worst she can say about the act.

Ms Lankin: Don't provoke me. There's much I could say about the act. But I do have a sense that there is an issue here than can be resolved and I appreciate pursuing it.

One of the things you said to me in the letter is that you're proposing to establish a clear deadline for all campaigns, just as you and I face dates for our campaigns. I would argue that the current December 1 or the proposed December 31 is in fact a deadline for the campaign, unless there is a debt. Just like you and I, once we file our papers, if there is a debt, we continue to have the ability to raise receiptable funds to pay that off. I would hope that as you look at the amendment you would recognize that any deadline on a candidate with a debt becomes a financial barrier, both perceived and real, to participating. Given that your bill purports to be about increasing democracy at the municipal level, I would hope you would recognize that this amendment, as it applies to candidates with debts, is entirely inappropriate and that there shouldn't be any deadline. I appreciate, so far, your indication. Can I ask you, will your amendment eliminate any deadline with respect to an individual who is facing a debt?

Hon Mr Clement: We're trying to be reasonable here on both sides of the House. I certainly encourage her, if she has any particular options, to bring them forward. I would say this: I do not agree that there should be no deadline, because we have had cases in municipal elections where municipal politicians have used the absence of a deadline to be permanently campaigning and permanently raising money. So I don't think the answer is no deadline; the answer is, a reasonable deadline, and I'm willing to take her suggestions in that regard.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today the government is going to release a budget and tell us how great things are going in Ontario. I can tell you that everything is not that wonderful. Municipalities cannot afford to upgrade the downroads on the municipalities, namely, the bridges. Then there is the condition of Highway 138, a lonely provincial highway connecting the International Bridge and the 401 to the nation's capital.

When my leader, Dalton McGuinty, was in my riding a few short days ago, he told my constituents they would continue to pressure the Legislature to get that highway

upgraded. After my statement a few days ago, you came over and told me you would be starting an upgrade on that highway shortly. Minister, can you tell my constituents what you told me a few short days ago in the Ontario Legislature about the upgrade to Highway 138?

Hon David Turnbull (Minister of Transportation): Absolutely. I think the member started the question absolutely correctly by talking about the absolutely magnificent budget we're going to bring in, which is confirming all our promises we made in both the 1995 election and the 1999 election. You're quite right, and our government has proceeded year over year to have record budgets for road construction in this province.

With respect to Highway 138 in your riding, you're quite correct. In 1998 we invested some \$2.8 million to reconstruct Highway 138 north of Monkland—that was the 17-kilometre section to Highway 417. The MTO is currently preparing a contract for the southern 19-kilometre section, from Monkland south to Cornwall Centre Road. We are very pleased to be delivering on our promises to improving the roads of this province.

Mr Cleary: Thank you, Minister. Can you tell me when those contracts will be out and when you expect to complete the section of that highway? My constituents want to know. They're tired of driving over those potholes. Your government's been in power five years now and I think that's a disgrace as a provincial highway.

Hon Mr Turnbull: I want to say that yes, indeed, our government has been in power for five years and every year we have invested record amounts in the roads, improving the condition of the roads that, quite frankly, the two opposition parties left in a very sad state of affairs. We have consistently invested in upgrading strategically all across the province, in northern Ontario, in southwestern Ontario, in eastern Ontario and in central Ontario. We will be moving forward with many other projects and we will announce those in due time.

1450

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question today is directed to the Minister of Correctional Services. Last week in the Northumberland News, a constituent in my riding wrote a letter to the editor claiming that this government will be hiring lone, not fully trained, low-paid private security guards to escort violent offenders in our communities. The union representatives are creating great concern in my riding that a security guard will not have full training and will not have the same rights and responsibilities as real correctional officers. I've been wondering if this is union propaganda or is there justification for the rhetoric? I'm told that this is scheduled to start June 1, 2000. Minister, who and what type of officer will escort these violent offenders into communities that have hospitals like Cobourg, Campbellford and Quinte West?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I should say to the honourable member that the

only one who's been talking about the likes of what he read from the article, in this House or anywhere, is the member for Brant in the Liberal benches opposite. I'm assuming that's his recommendation to me, but I should say to him and to you and the people in the House that indeed it's union rhetoric. We have absolutely no interest in proceeding along the road that was referred to in this letter that was written, I assume, by the union office and president.

Mr Galt: I'm not surprised to find it is in fact union rhetoric, but it certainly has created an awful lot of concern in my community, particularly in Cobourg where the Brookside facility is located. I thank you, Minister, for that response.

Correctional officers and residents in my riding are very concerned also about privatization. They have heard some horror stories, and they're trying to spread those horror stories and extend them. They're concerned that privatization will mean less accountability and will jeopardize public safety. Minister, how will privately operated correctional services mean more accountability and adherence to standards of safety and security?

Hon Mr Sampson: Again, more union rhetoric, more Liberal rhetoric. Clearly, what we are trying to do in this province is establish benchmarks that deal with levels of safety, effectiveness and efficiency in this province. I gather that only the union executive and the Liberals would be happy with having 7,800 staff in this province and a budget of almost a half a billion dollars producing results such as 70% to 80% of offenders who go through the system reoffending. I gather that is the measure of success of a Liberal and that is the measure of success of a union leader; that is not the measure of success of this minister or this government.

I believe, and this government believes, we need to have a correctional system that's safe, effective, efficient, is producing results and is publicly accountable for those results on a regular basis. Liberals want golf courses attached to jails; we want a correctional system to deliver results. That's the difference between you and I, sir.

MAMMOGRAPHY

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Health and is about accreditation of mammography machines used for the screening and early diagnosis of breast cancer.

Accreditation by the Canadian Association of Radiologists requires that a physicist audit the machines yearly. It also means that radiologists and technologists require special training because of the nature of the X-ray and because the mammography X-ray is one of the most difficult to interpret. I'll give an example of Ajax and Pickering hospital whose catchment area serves about 300,000 people. It has a mammography machine that's 12 years old. Dr Jaffe, a physicist, would not accredit the machine because it was too old. Women are still screened on this machine because there is no regulation. Minister, why are 60% of the mammography machines in this province not accredited?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the member knows, we have actually taken some steps to ensure that the Ontario breast screening program is expanded across Ontario, and new equipment is being made available. In fact, we have invested \$24.3 million over four years to expand that program. Since 1995, we have seen the opening of at least 49 new sites. We know that as the result of the screening that is going to continue to take place, we will see a decrease in the incidence of death among women over the age of 50.

Ms Di Cocco: First of all, the Ontario breast screening program is restricted to women over 50 only, and there is no breast screening program in Ajax-Pickering. The breast screening program doesn't mean that the machines are accredited except for when they are first installed. Minister, you wouldn't even meet with the founders of the Breast Cancer Society of Canada to gain a better understanding of the issues.

Since 1992 in the United States, accreditation has been mandated by an act of Congress. Minister, I ask again: Why do we not have accreditation for all mammography machines in this province to provide a better service?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Again, we have certainly indicated our strong commitment to ensure that all women, particularly those over 50, because that's what is recommended, have access to screening. We have been making new equipment available. Every step is being taken to ensure that women are getting the proper screening that is necessary.

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE APPEALS TRIBUNAL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I have a question for the Minister of Labour, before I get around to congratulating him on his speech last night. Even I understood what he was trying to explain—an excellent speech.

The Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal provides a very important service to workers and employers in Ontario as the final level of appeal in the workplace safety and insurance system.

In April 1999, the Ombudsman released a report of her investigation of delays in processing appeals at the tribunal. Lengthy delays in hearing appeals and rendering decisions were identified as areas needing serious improvement. That was a year ago. Can you please tell the House what measures, if any, you have taken to address this problem?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I thank the member for the question as well as for his adjudication of the debate last night.

Obviously there is a concern, which the Ombudsman brought forward and which we share, with respect to long delays in processing appeals. The number of appeals and the backlog have been steadily increasing since 1990. From 1993 to 1996, the number of appeals increased by 136%. We are the first government to take proactive steps to eliminate the backlog. We have provided addi-

tional funding. The actual expenditure for 1991 was \$10.7 million. Today the expenditure to run the appeals commission is \$24.9 million.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: More than double. Thank you, member for St Catharines, we accept those accolades.

There are nearly double the number of vice-chairs to adjudicate the backlog and additional staff hired. As I said, when the member for St Catharines is onside with respect to this initiative, extolling the virtues of the government and extolling the virtues of the backlog cleanup, then we must be on the right track, because it takes a lot to get him to present our case in a forthright and fashioned way. I thank the member for St Catharines and the member who asked the question as well.

Mr Johnson: I'm pleased to hear you have taken steps to reduce the backlog. The question is: Is the plan working, have you set a target for eliminating the backlog and will the target be met?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Obviously if you are going to clean up a backlog, then you had better set yourself a target: not necessarily a target you can live within, but make sure it is going to clean up the backlog to help those workers who have reached an impasse with respect to getting their benefits paid to them if, in fact, they are due.

Yes, we at the tribunal filed a plan, including a target date for elimination, with the ministry and the Ombudsman last June. We not only had to work in concert with the WSIB, with WSIAT and with the ministry, but because the Ombudsman thought this was such an important issue, we took the initiative to work with Ombudsman as well. Since that time, the tribunal has consistently met its quarterly targets.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Once again the member for St Catharines is extolling the virtues of the government and I appreciate that initiative.

We consistently met our quarterly targets, we're on schedule to meet our elimination goal in March 2002 and we feel assured that the backlog situation will not recur. So yes, we set targets. They're realistic targets, and we're ahead of schedule on the targets. I think we've done the proper job to try and weed out the backlog and the concerns—

1500

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Stop the clock for a quick moment for a point of privilege.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: You heard my name used in vain three times by the member. I just wish to say to you I disagree with what the minister said today.

The Speaker: Thank you very much. Start the clock.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is for the Minister of Health. Last April, Cancer Care Ontario began sending southern Ontario cancer patients to the

States and to northern Ontario for treatment. On recommendation from Cancer Care Ontario, your ministry is providing special additional funding to cover 100% of the travel, food and accommodation costs for these cancer patients to access treatment elsewhere. This results in blatant discrimination of northern cancer patients, who must regularly travel to access cancer treatment in Sudbury and Thunder Bay. The only help that northern cancer patients get is a portion of travel costs covered—nothing for accommodation, nothing for food.

In December 1999, staff from your regional health office in Sudbury told the chair of Cancer Care Ontario's northeast committee, Mr Gerry Lougheed, that a proposal would be given to him by Christmas to cover all these costs for northern patients too. Minister, four months later there is no proposal from your ministry. It's as if the commitment was never made. My question to you is simple: Are you blocking the efforts of your staff to try and get this serious situation resolved?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The member knows full well that the northern health travel grant was introduced by the Liberal government in 1985. It has not basically changed since that time. You found the formula acceptable. In fact in 1994, when you were part of the NDP government, you tightened the criteria and you required patients to access a specialist nearest to them. What we have been doing is trying to encourage the specialists to move into northern Ontario, and I'm very pleased to say that we have been able to recruit 115 specialists into the north and we will continue to work hard in order to do so.

Ms Martel: Minister, your government has set up a special program with special funding to cover 100% of the costs of southern cancer patients to get cancer treatment elsewhere and you are not applying those same provisions to northern cancer patients. Imagine how emotionally stressful it must be to have cancer treatment, and then imagine the additional burden of wondering whether or not you have the finances to leave your own community to go to Sudbury or Thunder Bay and stay to get treatment. Imagine again how you will feel when the patient beside you from southern Ontario tells you that 100% of their travel, food and accommodation costs for cancer treatment is being covered by the Harris government, when you're wondering if you're going to get enough money back from the travel grant to cover even your gas costs from Timmins to Sudbury and back to Timmins, or from Fort Frances to Thunder Bay and back to Fort Frances.

Minister, even you must understand how wrong this is. Why don't you do the right thing now and say that you will cover the costs so that northern cancer patients can access cancer services in Sudbury and Thunder Bay too without a financial burden?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Stop the clock for a quick moment. The member has asked the question. The Minister of Health is waiting patiently to answer.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite quotes Mr Loughheed. I would just show you that I have a letter here from Mr Loughheed in 1999, where he writes to the Premier and says, "Your government is doing an excellent job on regional cancer delivery." I also have here information indicating that our government has continued to provide more capital funding for the northern regional cancer centre. On May 5, 1999, we provided approval of—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Will the minister take her seat. Stop the clock for a minute.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member has asked a question. I need to be able to hear the answer. We can't be shouting across. Sorry to interrupt. Minister of Health?

Interjection.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Mr Speaker—

The Speaker: Will the minister take her seat. This is the last warning. Stop the clock for a quick moment. We've got a couple of minutes left. It's the last warning for the member for Nickel Belt. It's the second time I've been up. I can't keep getting up. I'm afraid this is her last warning. We're almost out of question period. The minister is waiting patiently to try to give an answer. The Minister of Health, if she would, please. Sorry to interrupt.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Our government has responded to the needs of the north with respect to cancer. As you know, we are going to be developing a new cancer centre in Sault Ste Marie. We have indicated increased funding support for the Thunder Bay hospital, and that also includes funding for the cancer centre. We have given additional money for the centre in Sudbury, and we have—

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

LOW WATER LEVELS

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): To the Minister of Natural Resources, several weeks ago I brought to your attention the problem with low water levels in the province and the crisis that has created for property owners and marina operators to have access to the lakes surrounding my riding. Since that time, the process for dredging permits has been improved from six weeks to one week. But at that time, I asked if you would consider giving special assistance to residents and marina owners in my riding by sharing the cost of necessary dredging, and you said that you would be more than happy to provide expertise to the residents in that area.

Minister, I want to ask you straight up today: What they need to get through this crisis is financial assistance for dredging to have access to the waterways in my riding. Will you provide financial assistance to the residents of the riding of Essex?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member opposite for the question and for again bringing to the floor of this Legislature a very important issue for the people of

Ontario. As I assured the member opposite on the prior occasion on which we had this question, this government has been working for almost a year now. Understanding that we do have drought conditions in the province, that we do have a reduction in precipitation and an increase in the temperature, we have been working on both a response for those drought conditions this year and for an even more detailed response in the years to come. Among that is compiling the science around the causes of drought, around the amount of groundwater and lake water we have in the province, doing proper inventories between all of the different ministries that are involved, and in doing a public consultation, which we will undertake, to find out how we should respond to drought in the future. We are undergoing that right now.

Mr Crozier: Minister, you haven't answered the question. The problem is that as of the first of May, normally boats are going in the water, normally residents and marina owners are having access to the water. They can't do that this year. You should have known that this problem existed. It has existed for several years, except that it's gotten extremely bad this particular year.

I ask again. Studies, consultation, everything aside, there are marinas closing as of today because they don't have access to the lakes. There are tourism dollars being lost. There are businesses that are going to suffer irreparable damage. When we're talking about a great budget that's going to be presented today, I would hope that you can give some assurance that in that budget there will be some financial assistance for the people of my riding and, for that matter, others in the province. Will you give us that commitment today?

1510

Hon Mr Snobelen: Again to the member opposite, I want to emphasize that the ministries involved and responsible for water in this province, of which there are many, have been working very hard together for the last almost a year to get a coordinated response to help municipalities and conservation authorities, which really have the action to take when there are drought conditions. As the member pointed out, we have decreased the amount of time necessary to get a permit to do dredging and we are responding to help members in his community and communities across the province and will continue to do just that.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd just like to welcome my daughter Amy Jackson, who's job-shadowing her father on this historic day when we balance the budget for Ontario's younger generation.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Welcome, Amy.

PETITIONS

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned residents of Canada, draw attention of the House to the following:

"That approximately eight new cases of childhood cancers are identified each year in the Windsor-Essex region;

"That the impact of having a child diagnosed with cancer is a physical, emotional and often financially devastating to the families of these young people;

"That the Windsor-Essex region lacks the ability to treat children diagnosed with cancer, therefore forcing families to travel to London for all treatments related to their diagnosis;

"That the Ontario Ministry of Health for the last two years has denied the necessary funding to treat childhood cancers in the Windsor-Essex region.

"Therefore your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to provide the necessary funding through the Ministry of Health to establish and staff a satellite medical treatment centre in Windsor to treat local children diagnosed with cancer."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition signed by literally hundreds of people from the constituency of Algoma-Manitoulin.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

"Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and therefore that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

"Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

"Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in our communities."

I'm pleased to sign these petitions.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas essential public services have been deprived of government funding because the Conservative government of Mike Harris has diverted these funds to self-serving propaganda in the form of pamphlets delivered to homes, newspaper advertisements and radio and TV commercials;

"Whereas the Harris government advertising blitz is a blatant abuse of public office and a shameful waste of taxpayers' dollars;

"Whereas the Harris Conservatives ran on a platform of eliminating what it referred to as 'government waste and unnecessary expenditures,' while it squanders over \$100 million on clearly partisan advertising;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government and Mike Harris to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising."

I affix my signature as I am in full agreement with this petition.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): "To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians with a developmental disability are in growing danger of inadequate support because compensation to staff of not-for-profit agencies is, based on a recent survey, on average, 20% to 25% less than compensation for others doing the same work in provincial institutions or similar work in other settings; and

"Whereas there are hundreds of senior parents in Ontario who saved the Ontario government millions of dollars by keeping their child with a developmental disability at home, and who are still caring for their adult child; and

"Whereas there is no place for most of these adults with a developmental disability to go when the parents are no longer able to provide care; and

"Whereas these parents live with constant anxiety and despair; and

"Whereas these adult children will end up in Ontario nursing homes and hospitals if there is no appropriate place to provide care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To significantly increase compensation for workers in not-for-profit agencies so that it is comparable to the compensation of government-funded workers in identical or similar occupations; and

"To provide the resources necessary to give appropriate support to Ontarians with a developmental disability who at present have no place to go when their parents are no longer able to care for them."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature hereto.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Petitions? Seeing none, orders of the day.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): Mr Speaker, I ask for consent for this House to adjourn until 4 pm, at which time the Minister of Finance would like to present his budget.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Just so the members know, there will be a five-minute bell at five to 4. This House stands recessed until 4 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1516 to 1600.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2000 ONTARIO BUDGET

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I move, seconded by Mr Harris, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would ask the indulgence of the House while the pages deliver the budget to each member. Do all the members have their copies? Minister of Finance.

Hon Mr Eves: The budget of Ontario is balanced.

Balanced budgets mean brighter futures for all Ontarians.

“Never in the history of this province has a government at the end of five years in office been able to say that everything was paid for and that the net debt had been reduced.”

Those were the words of Ontario Premier Leslie Frost in his balanced budget address of 1948. As we approach our government's fifth anniversary I am proud to stand before this Legislature today and say that, once again, the budget is balanced and the net debt has been reduced.

Ontarians believed that we could balance the budget in June 1995 when we were faced with a projected deficit of \$11.3 billion.

Ontarians believed we could balance the budget when government was spending \$1 million more every hour than it was taking in in revenue.

Ontarians believed we could balance the budget even though they had lived through a 10-year cycle of tax, spend and borrow that choked Ontario's growth, killed jobs and eroded our economic health.

This is an important budget, but not just for the government of Ontario—for all Ontarians. While it demonstrates the successes we have achieved together, it does much more than that. It establishes the framework for brighter futures—an Ontario with new opportunities and new challenges.

I would like to thank my good friend and Premier, Mike Harris, for the vision and leadership he has shown in this regard. His commitment to renewing prosperity in

Ontario has been an inspiration to me, as it has been to many Ontarians.

I would also like to thank the members of the Legislature and my cabinet colleagues whose advice has been tremendously helpful.

A great deal of work goes into the budget every year. Without the assistance and support of my deputy minister, Bryne Purchase; my chief of staff, Jeff Bangs; and everyone at the Ministry of Finance, this would not be possible. I appreciate the tireless efforts of the entire team over the past several months.

As I was preparing for this budget, thoughts of my daughter Natalie led me to reflect on why I entered public life.

I believe we are all here, regardless of political affiliation, to try to provide a brighter future for the young people of our province.

The Natalies of today will be the leaders of tomorrow.

We are here to make it a better tomorrow for all Ontarians.

And I would like to thank the people of Ontario for the input they continually provide, the suggestions they gave me during prebudget consultations and for the faith that they have put in us to deliver on our promises to them.

That faith has paid off in a big way.

When I stood before this House one year ago, I reported that, on average, private sector forecasters predicted the Ontario economy would grow by 3.8% in 1999. We were excited about that prospect and we knew that our 99 tax cuts would play a big part in fostering that economic growth.

What we didn't know at that time was just how much growth.

The people of Ontario have demonstrated how much.

They were the ones who created the 198,000 jobs across the province last year alone. In fact, we have just experienced the best two consecutive years of job creation in Ontario's history.

They were the ones who spent more of their money on homes, on cars, furniture, computers, clothing, appliances and movies, a wide range of products and services that make an economy strong.

The end result is that in 1999, the Ontario economy grew not by 3.8%, as private sector experts had predicted, but by a full 50% more than that.

Ontario's real economic growth in 1999 was 5.7%. The Ontario economy grew faster than the economy of the United States of America.

The Ontario economy grew faster than the rest of Canada.

The Ontario economy grew faster than all of the industrialized countries in the G7.

That growth was not just a figure in an economic plan; it was felt in every region on Ontario.

It was felt by auto workers in Windsor, by high-tech workers in Ottawa, by construction workers in Mississauga, by pulp and paper workers in Fort Frances.

In the words of Leslie Frost, “Let us think—not merely in terms of money value—not in columns of

figures and decimals and statistics—but in terms of human values, of people, of development....”

Those are the benchmarks by which our government measures Ontario’s progress today.

More people working, more people spending and stronger-than-expected economic growth resulted in provincial revenues surpassing projections by an amazing \$5.3 billion.

When we determined the size of our projected year-end surplus for the 1999 fiscal year, we made some decisions that would help us accelerate our plan for the people of Ontario.

We invested in hospital construction and modernization.

We invested to secure post-secondary student spaces by expanding and renewing our colleges and universities.

And we wanted to give Ontario taxpayers some of their own money back.

And even after doing all of these things, we actually had a budgetary surplus of \$654 million last year.

What this all means is that the budget was balanced in the fiscal year 1999-2000, one full year ahead of schedule—and it’s balanced again this year.

Two balanced budgets in a row. Balanced budgets—brighter futures.

1610

The last time the Ontario budget was balanced in two consecutive fiscal years was in 1942-43 and 1943-44. It was World War II. Mackenzie King was the Prime Minister of Canada, receiving advice from ghosts and his dog.

Four out of five people in Ontario had not even been born yet. I had not; however, Norm Sterling had been. He was uncontrollable then at the age of one and he’s uncontrollable today. Casablanca won the academy award for best film. While I can say that the Premier of the province is no Humphrey Bogart, the people of Ontario did ask him to play it again in 1999.

While I am honoured to be the first Minister of Finance in more than half a century to announce two balanced budgets in a row, I am equally proud to be establishing the standard on which all future Ontario budgets will be based.

The Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget bill we passed last fall will ensure that from today forward consecutive balanced budgets will be the rule, not the exception.

And that is as it should be, because as we have always said, governments have no money of their own. The money we spend here belongs to the men and women who work hard to raise their families and pay their taxes. Our government respects that.

We will not lose sight of that as we turn our energies to tackling the burden of debt and creating more certainty for future generations of Ontarians.

Mr Speaker, I am proud to tell you that we are beginning to dig Ontario out from the mountain of debt that has accumulated.

The \$654 million surplus generated by strong economic growth last year has already been applied to reduce the debt.

As a result of overachieving our budget target in 1999-2000, net debt was actually \$2.7 billion lower than had been projected in last year’s budget.

I am very pleased to announce that beginning with this fiscal year, I have doubled our reserve by \$500 million to a total of \$1 billion every year.

Our goal is to more than double our promised \$2 billion debt reduction to at least \$5 billion during this mandate.

While we have worked to make Ontario deficit-free and to tackle the debt, we have continually increased our investments in those things that Ontarians told us were their priorities.

There is no doubt that health care is a top priority for Ontarians and for our government.

In the past year alone, we have invested \$1.4 billion more in health care. Since coming to office, we have increased health care operating spending by \$4.4 billion a year.

During that time, the federal government reduced their support to the program that funds health care and supports health care by \$1.7 billion. Not only have we made up for the federal annual reduction of \$1.7 billion; we have also increased our own spending by \$4.4 billion for a total of 6.1 billion new provincial dollars into our health care system.

In the future we hope the federal government will do the right thing, that they will become true partners in the health care system for the benefit of all Ontarians and all Canadians, that they will not only restore their cuts, but that they will become full partners in a new innovative restructured health care system.

In 1995 we promised to invest no less than \$17.4 billion in health care on an annualized basis during our mandate. In 1995-96 that number was increased to \$17.6 billion, and so on until the \$20.6 billion we invested in health care last fiscal year.

Ontario’s strong economic growth will enable us to invest \$22 billion in operating health care funding for Ontarians this year.

It was only one year ago that we promised to invest \$22.7 billion in health care by the fiscal year 2003-04, and that target will be achieved by next year, over two years ahead of schedule.

The amount of money that government spends is not the only measure of good health care. Sustaining the quality of care that Ontarians deserve requires restructuring and reforming our health care system to keep up with new technology and to meet the challenges of a growing and aging population.

That takes investment in the right areas. Our innovative partnerships with the private sector through Super-Build mean larger and better investments in Ontario’s health care priorities than any government could ever achieve on its own.

As a result of our economic growth in 1999, we have invested an additional \$1 billion in hospitals to accelerate capital restructuring. That amount was enhanced by our partners through SuperBuild, bringing to \$1.5 billion the total invested in the last fiscal year to modernize Ontario's hospitals and provide better equipment.

This is in addition to the \$340 million the government had already invested.

Primary care reform is pivotal to our vision of the future of health care—an accessible, integrated, dependable system, providing comprehensive care to patients 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Ontario is at the forefront of primary care reform. It is our goal, working co-operatively with Ontario's physicians, to have 80% of eligible family doctors practising in primary care networks over the next four years.

Since 1995, the Ministry of Health has set up primary care pilot projects in seven communities with the co-operation and assistance of the Ontario Medical Association.

Today, I am announcing that we will spend \$150 million beginning next year to provide new information systems to support the transition to primary care networks.

We will further dedicate \$100 million over the next four years to expand Ontario's primary care system.

We will enhance patient care through \$110 million for improved medical supervision in home care settings and improved psychiatric services.

We will increase annual funding by \$54 million for priority programs such as cancer care, end-stage renal disease and cardiac care.

We are establishing a \$180-million system management fund and providing \$75 million to transfer doctors in academic health science centres to alternate payment plans.

In July 1999, our government opened a telephone health advisory service for northern Ontario. This toll-free Telehealth service gives callers access to experienced triage nurses who provide health care advice, information and referral.

We are now expanding this valuable service to the GTA and eventually to every community across the province.

We are taking action to increase access to physicians' services, especially in rural communities. We will provide \$4 million for free tuition to medical students to practise in rural and northern areas following graduation. We will endeavour to work with communities to assist with physician recruitment in underserved areas.

I am also announcing today that we will implement Dr Robert McKendry's recommendations to increase the number of spaces for medical students.

As Premier Harris has always said, the reason we are undertaking our significant reform agenda is to ensure our health care system meets the needs of Ontarians today and tomorrow.

We are increasing our health care spending dramatically.

We encourage the federal government to join with us in reforming the system in Ontario and across the country and to finally become an equal partner in the future of health care.

1620

Dr Cal Stiller, chairman of the Canadian Medical Discoveries Fund, has said: "The creation of the Ontario research and development challenge fund and the Ontario innovation trust has launched a new era of exploration and excitement in both the public and private research communities here in Ontario. These investments position Ontario, for the first time, to compete strategically on a global scale. They will pay dividends for years to come."

The medical research community on Toronto's University Avenue alone is one of the largest concentrations of medical researchers in North America.

In last year's budget, I announced the creation of a \$250-million Ontario innovation trust. It provides matching funding to Ontario's colleges, universities, hospitals and research institutes for labs, high-tech equipment and other research infrastructure. In its first year the trust has approved \$161 million in matching funding for 120 projects.

Today I am announcing that we are tripling the trust with an additional endowment of \$500 million for research infrastructure, including cancer research facilities.

There are few families in Ontario today who have not felt the tragedy of a relative or friend affected by cancer. For this reason, I am also announcing that we are doubling the funding for the Ontario research and development challenge fund to \$100 million.

I have asked Dr Stiller to head up a team to review and report back to the government on the most effective way to launch a concentrated effort in the fight against cancer.

Breast and prostate cancer are two of the leading killers of women and men in Canada.

By harnessing the energy and talent of our research community we can make a meaningful impact on the lives of Ontarians for generations to come.

Strokes kill 20,000 Ontarians each year and are the leading cause of adult neurological disability. But new life-saving treatments offer opportunities to reduce death and damage from strokes. We are proposing new funding of \$30 million to link the province with the Canadian stroke strategy. Together we will develop a comprehensive plan to prevent stroke and rehabilitate its victims.

As part of our government's commitment to the best possible customer service and improved accountability in the health care system, we will spend \$10 million on a Patients' Bill of Rights.

Furthermore, hospitals will have their funding directly tied to how well they deliver on the services that matter most to Ontarians. The findings will be publicly reported through hospital report cards.

Of all the investments we make today, perhaps none is more important for the future of our province than those we make in our children.

Those are the kinds of investments that pay off many times over for all members of our society.

In each of our budgets we have taken steps to give Ontario's children a healthy start and a good education by removing barriers so that all children across this province can realize their full potential.

Yet again this year we are expanding children's health programs and illness prevention.

We are enhancing our successful pre-school speech and language program. We are introducing an infant hearing screening program and investing in treatment for an additional 5,000 young people with eating disorders.

The Early Years Study commissioned by our government in 1998 indicates clearly that the first six years of life establish the foundation for learning, behaviour and health.

We are responding to the study's recommendations by moving forward on a number of the proposals.

The \$30-million early years challenge fund will be launched this fall as promised.

It will build on the success of the five demonstration projects we launched last year, to help parents and communities develop the resources needed to increase their children's learning potential in the early years.

Many young children learning to read are benefiting from programs that provide specially trained teachers, reading clinics and reading buddy programs.

We will invest an additional \$70 million annually to enhance these programs and improve the reading skills of young students, especially in the primary grades.

As part of our commitment to quality education in the early elementary grades, we will be providing additional funding of \$101 million annually to reduce average class sizes, JK through grade 3.

My colleague the Honourable Janet Ecker, Minister of Education, will be coming forward this spring with initiatives and legislation to improve education quality for all students, including secondary students, in the province of Ontario.

I take particular pride in the fact that our government has always placed a high value on improving access to a quality education for all our children. As you know, Mr Speaker, in budgets past I have announced a wide range of measures that open doors for young people with special educational requirements, to help them reach their full potential.

We have also acted to provide parents and families with a greater voice in decisions about special education. We have established individual education plans for children and province-wide standards for the provision of special education.

But more can and will be done for these students.

My inspiration in this regard comes from the courage and determination shown by my late son Justin, who was learning-disabled. There are hundreds of thousands of Justins out there, and they deserve an equal opportunity in life.

I am announcing \$70 million annually in new special education funding. This funding will allow for early interventions and will expand programs for students with speech and language disorders and learning disabilities.

It will also be invested to increase the number of specialist teachers and professional supports.

This is in addition to the investment recently announced by the Minister of Education and will bring the total increase in special education funding to \$140 million a year, beginning the next school year.

We are also providing \$4 million in training so qualified professionals can test and identify young franco-phone students with learning disabilities.

I would like to thank Dr Bette Stephenson, my friend and chair of the Learning Opportunities Task Force, for bringing this need to my attention and for her advice and guidance in the area of special education.

Through the Ministry of Health, we are delivering on our promise by proposing to extend funding for the medical requirements of special-needs students to include students in all denominational schools. This will eliminate unfair barriers for special-needs children seeking a faith-based education. It is the fair and equitable thing to do.

I would like to thank Frank Dimant of B'nai Brith, Larry Tanenbaum, Isabel Bassett, Charles Harnick, David Young, Tina Molinari and the Honourable Frank Klees for their advice in this regard.

June Callwood, author and highly respected advocate for social justice, has worked with many organizations across Canada in the fight against child neglect and abuse.

She told me she believes Ontario can take a leadership position and I agree, so I am today announcing steps to continue to address important children's issues.

1630

To recognize the special circumstances faced by working single parents, I am proposing the introduction of a new benefit for single parents as a part of the Ontario child care supplement for working families.

This change would increase the maximum annual benefit by \$210 for each child under age seven in single-parent families. We expect that this new benefit will assist some 77,000 children across the province.

Ontario is prepared to invest up to \$50 million over five years as part of a \$100-million challenge to the federal government to join us in providing additional support for the children of low-income, working single parents.

We also call upon the federal government to reduce the high effect of marginal tax rates faced by low-income families.

We realize that single parents with disabled children face unique obstacles and we want to look at ways to help those families.

In the coming months, my colleagues the Honourable Helen Johns, the minister responsible for the disabled, and the Honourable John Baird, the minister responsible for social services, will be bringing forward joint recommendations on steps that can be taken to help these families build better lives.

We're also taking June Callwood's advice on establishing a \$5-million prevention and intervention program.

In schools, it will help teachers identify when children, especially in the primary years, may be at risk of neglect or physical or emotional harm.

The additional funding made available under the national child benefit will be invested in a wide range of initiatives that will help the children of Ontario.

Ontario's youth deserve equal opportunity no matter what community they live in, no matter what region.

These are the places where our children play, learn and grow up.

Where all Ontarians live and work.

As we enter a new century, our government is focused on continuing to build Ontario's communities, large and small, urban and rural.

Industries such as agriculture, tourism, mining and forestry are a vital component of Ontario's economy, especially in rural and northern regions.

Ontario's 67,000 farmers and their families make a contribution to the social and economic fabric of our province. Our government recognizes their contribution.

Thanks to the strong advocacy of my colleague the Honourable Ernie Hardeman, they are finally receiving their fair share of federal agriculture safety net funding, an additional \$30 million or more.

We will also meet our commitment to provide a 40% share, which will bring the total amount of safety net funding for farmers to about \$230 million a year.

I am pleased to announce that we propose to convert the retail sales tax rebate program for farm building materials into a point-of-sale exemption.

This was requested by the Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal.

The task force also identified a variety of barriers to economic growth facing rural Ontario. To address these unique challenges, we are establishing a \$600-million Ontario small town and rural development initiative.

This new approach to building our rural communities will include \$200 million for economic development and \$400 million for infrastructure through SuperBuild.

We are doing this so the benefits of strong economic growth are shared across rural and small-town Ontario.

We are also responding by providing \$300 million over five years as part of a renewed mandate for the northern Ontario heritage fund, to ensure that northern Ontario communities are full participants in Ontario's strong economy. This will double the annual funding to \$60 million a year.

When we came into office, we made a commitment to the mining industry that we would consider tax relief for that sector when the budget was balanced. Today I am honouring that commitment.

I am proposing to cut Ontario's mining tax rate in half, from 20% to 10%, over five years.

Although the federal government missed the opportunity to recognize this critical sector, our government is acting to provide tax relief. So today I am proposing to increase tax incentives provided for investors in flow-through shares. We challenge the federal government to do the right thing with respect to this sector as well.

We also intend to provide a 10-year mining tax exemption for new remote mines, and we will create new geoscience information that will encourage more exploration for new mines to create jobs in northern Ontario.

In addition to new infrastructure investments for rural and northern communities, I am announcing the launch of the new SuperBuild millennium partnerships initiative. It will invest \$1 billion over five years in public-private partnerships for strategic infrastructure: environmental projects and projects for economic development of urban centres across Ontario.

We are also signalling today that in response to the innovative and exciting Fung report, the Ontario government is ready, willing and able to do our part to revitalize Toronto's waterfront and to make Toronto's 2008 Olympic bid a resounding success.

Our government recognizes the important role that sports, recreation, cultural and tourist attractions play in the growth and development of our province. We will invest \$300 million over five years in the SuperBuild sports, culture and tourism partnerships initiative, in order to rebuild and enhance publicly owned local facilities, as well as expand major cultural and tourist attractions.

I am pleased to announce the first projects to be funded through this initiative. We plan to contribute \$15 million towards a new \$30-million project at the Ontario Science Centre. We will also contribute \$2 million towards redeveloping the Avon Theatre in Stratford.

And we are spending an additional \$50 million over four years to promote tourism in our province and world-class tourism opportunities that exist here at home.

Last year we made a record investment in the highways that link our communities. Today I am announcing that we will spend \$1 billion this year on Ontario's highway system—a new record of investment.

Infrastructure investment keeps Ontario moving, and moving forward.

Our communities not only need to be strong; they need to be safe.

In my pre-budget consultations I met with law enforcement officers who told me we need to do more to protect our seniors, to fight organized crime and to reduce youth crime. I would like to thank them for their advice. I would also like to respond to them by doing what they asked us to do.

We are establishing a permanent community policing partnership program with \$35 million a year in funding.

We are providing \$6 million in annual funding to establish three new specialized OPP policing teams that will be deployed province-wide.

The e-crime squad will build the capacity and expertise needed to respond to the emerging threat of computer crimes.

The seniors' assistance squad will crack down on criminal activities that target senior citizens and work with them to prevent victimization.

A special safety team will provide intensive patrols on Ontario's snow trails and waterways to ensure effective enforcement of the law.

1640

At the same time, we want to increase the fight against organized crime through the strategic deployment of the organized crime joint force operations for police and prosecutors.

We are building on our innovative approach to dealing with youth crime by expanding existing programs targeting youth crime and violence. Over the next two years, we plan to triple the number of sites for the youth justice committee pilot program from six to 18 new sites.

The Probation Officers Association of Ontario told me we needed more probation and parole officers to improve community safety. I am announcing the addition of 165 new probation and parole officers to provide more intensive and frequent monitoring of offenders and to assist in restricting the movements of offenders serving sentences in the community.

This is part of our new \$18-million strict discipline model for community corrections.

Our government continues to deliver the message that we stand on the side of victims of crime. We intend to make permanent the office for victims of crime. This office will provide advice to the government in the development of an overall framework for victims' services, and I thank Priscilla de Villiers for her advice on this matter.

In last year's budget we doubled the number of domestic violence courts. This year we'll provide additional funding to increase the number by a further 50%. To expand associated supports we are enhancing, by \$10 million in annual funding, the programs that support women and children who have experienced domestic abuse.

As opportunities open up in cities and towns across Ontario, we must provide our young people with the skills and access they need to take advantage of those opportunities. That means finding new and innovative ways to link post-secondary education and training programs with the private sector.

As St Clair College in Windsor builds a new automotive and engineering technology department, Daimler-Chrysler is right there with them through a SuperBuild partnership.

Helping the college realize this important goal is more than an investment in infrastructure for DaimlerChrysler. It is an investment in their own skilled workforce for today and for tomorrow.

Similarly, at Durham College a partnership of seven private sector organizations, including GM and the Canadian Auto Workers, is creating a new manufacturing and information technology centre. This state-of-the-art facility will include new classrooms, labs and shops, and provide spaces for more than 3,000 additional students.

A new apprenticeship innovation fund will provide \$15 million over three years to modernize classroom training for existing programs and introduce opportunities in new trades.

While we are encouraging partnerships like these, we are also increasing access to education so that there will

be a space in college or university for every qualified student who wants to obtain a post-secondary education.

Last year we invested \$742 million to build and modernize universities and colleges so that they can meet future demands. Through these 35 SuperBuild capital projects, we will be creating 57,492 student spaces in post-secondary schools across Ontario.

I am pleased to announce that we have provided an additional \$286 million of new SuperBuild investment to expand and renew our colleges and universities. This funding will support an additional 24 capital projects and spaces for 15,587 more students.

This means that, among others, the University of Western Ontario and Fanshawe College will receive a new communication, information and multimedia studies centre. A new faculty of arts and sciences will be built at Trent University. Brock University will get a new academic complex.

Our total \$1-billion investment through SuperBuild, combined with our partners' contributions, will result in a total of \$1.8 billion invested for more than 73,000 new student spaces in Ontario's colleges and universities. This is the largest capital investment in our post-secondary system in more than 30 years.

We are investing in skills for jobs. We are investing in the youth of Ontario.

We are investing in new technologies, fostering research and development activities, and ensuring that businesses have workers with the skills they need to compete with the best in the world.

We are committed to giving our young people the freedom and tools they need to innovate.

Our additional endowment of \$500 million through SuperBuild to the Ontario Innovation Trust will furnish our research institutions with the labs and equipment to be at the leading edge of scientific, technical and medical research.

Today I am also announcing the establishment of a new Ontario Research Performance Fund to provide over \$30 million annually to colleges, universities and research institutes. This will cover the overhead costs associated with Ontario-funded research.

The province of Ontario is quite prepared to fund the costs associated with our own research. We fully expect that the federal government will likewise cover the indirect costs associated with their own sponsored research.

This government's investments in research and development, in partnership with the private sector and Ontario's post-secondary institutions, are paying off with a number of new companies being created through spinoffs from research.

New R&D-intensive companies are increasingly using stock options to attract and retain highly skilled workers. Our government is committed to providing a competitive tax system to help these young Ontario companies find and keep these bright, young, innovative minds.

We will be introducing legislation so that the first \$100,000 each year in taxable employment benefits arising from designated stock options and capital gains will not be taxed by the province of Ontario.

I encourage the federal government to join with us and do the right thing for these innovative companies and their employees.

We are proposing to exclude from the employer health tax base the stock option benefits of employees of R&D-intensive companies.

Ontario's television and film industries make up a leading-edge sector that has grown rapidly in the last five years and now directly employs over 10,000 people in the province of Ontario. This sector spends over \$1 billion in production annually in Ontario.

The changes we propose will foster the growth of those industries by increasing the effectiveness of our tax credits and establishing regional incentives.

We will invest \$30 million over five years for the creation of the new Ontario Media Development Corp— one-stop shopping, so to speak.

As we experience renewed growth and prosperity in Ontario, we must continue to look to the future. Just as more people today are getting jobs, we need to make sure that jobs are there for our children and for generations to come.

Attracting new and innovative businesses to Ontario and increasing the competitiveness of the companies that are here will create even more employment opportunities for tomorrow and increase the standard of living for all Ontarians. Corporate tax cuts will make that happen.

1650

The preliminary working group of the business tax review panel has provided me with initial recommendations on ways to increase tax fairness and attract companies to Ontario. The panel will continue to examine more ways to further create jobs through our personal, corporate and property tax systems.

I look forward to their advice. However, we need to take action immediately.

Currently, the general corporate tax rate is 15.5% and the rate on manufacturing and processing income is 13.5%. I am proposing a comprehensive strategy to cut both the general corporate income tax rate and the manufacturing and processing rate to 8% by the year 2005.

This will be the lowest general corporate income tax rate in Canada.

When our tax cut plan is fully in place, the combined Ontario and federal corporate income tax rate would be more than 10 percentage points lower than the average rate of US Great Lakes states, our biggest competitors for businesses and jobs.

I encourage the federal government to match our reductions and make us the most competitive jurisdiction in the entire world.

I am proposing to further reduce the small business tax rate by accelerating and enhancing Ontario's small business tax cut from 8% today to 4% in 2005, also the lowest in Canada.

We are responding to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business by proposing to expand over the next five years the amount of income that is eligible for

the small business corporate tax rate to \$400,000 from its current level of \$200,000, where it has been for almost 20 years.

The income limit at which the small business rate is phased out would then become \$1 million. Updating this income threshold will help more than 7,500 of Ontario's smallest growing businesses.

To level the playing field with other self-employed individuals who can choose whether or not to operate their businesses through a corporation, our government proposes that the right to incorporate be extended to all regulated professionals.

Growing businesses, more consumer spending and more opportunity—there can be no doubt that there is a renewed spirit of optimism in our province.

The evidence is irrefutable. Tax cuts do create jobs: more than 700,000 jobs since 1995.

Our 99 tax cuts to date are fuelling robust economic growth in Ontario, allowing us to balance the books a full year early, and support unprecedented levels of investment in priority services.

I am pleased to announce an additional 67 tax cuts today. That brings to 166 the total number of tax cuts we have provided to the people of Ontario since we came to office.

Last year, we promised to reduce personal income tax by 20% over five years. With the measures I am proposing today, we are well on our way to meeting that commitment. Next year's budget will fully deliver our 20% reduction, more than two years ahead of schedule.

I am announcing that we intend to cut taxes yet again for Ontarians with lower incomes, unlike the federal government which chose not to reduce the low-income tax rate.

Ontario will cut the lowest tax rate by 5%. This is the fair thing to do and I urge the federal government to do the fair and equitable thing.

We also want to reduce the tax rate for middle-income taxpayers so they too can keep more of their hard-earned money.

We plan to restore full indexation to Ontario's personal income tax system to eliminate bracket creep, ensuring that no Ontario taxpayer will pay more tax just because their increases keep up with inflation.

In recent months the costs of driving have received a great deal of attention as fuel costs have risen.

Instead of reducing fuel taxes, a move that does not ensure consumers would realize the benefits, we have chosen to take action that will give consumers a direct benefit.

Effective midnight tonight, we plan to phase out the retail sales tax on motor vehicle insurance premiums by one point a year until it is eliminated entirely.

I am proposing a phase-out of the rate of retail sales tax applied to repairs and replacements made under warranty over the same period of time. Effective midnight tonight, that rate will be reduced from 8% to 6%.

People at all income levels are investing in the hope of realizing gains. Taxation on capital gains should be fair

and it should be reasonable. So beginning January 1, 2001, I am proposing that the amount of gain taxed be reduced from two thirds, as proposed by the federal government, to 50%, over four years.

Again, we challenge the federal government to do the right thing—to administer our reduction for Ontarians and to provide a matching reduction on their capital gains tax too.

We are also challenging the federal government to move quickly to assist Ontarians who are limited in what they can contribute to registered savings vehicles by the current federal maximum on tax-deductible contributions.

We know that to provide a secure retirement for Ontarians, the RRSP contribution limit should be increased to \$15,500. We understand that this requires federal co-operation and we will match with Ontario tax relief any federal increases in RRSP limits.

Next year we expect to fully implement a made-for-Ontario tax system. When we have our own Ontario-made income tax system, we plan to eliminate personal income surtaxes.

Personal income tax cuts have allowed us to balance the budget and begin to tackle the debt, to invest in health care, to invest in Ontario's children and their education, to invest in our communities, and to invest in research and innovation.

1700

Tax cuts have paid real dividends in terms of a strong economy and jobs in Ontario. Now I am proposing that the working men and women of this province get another tax cut by way of a dividend—a taxpayer dividend.

I am announcing that we intend to give \$1 billion of the taxpayers' money back to them. Under this plan, every Ontarian who paid personal income tax to the province last year will receive a dividend of up to \$200 apiece; that is 4.9 million Ontario taxpayers.

“Governments must at all times pioneer a pathway for the people. To a large degree the engineering plan for that pathway is the government's budget. A modern budget is not simply a bookkeeping statement or a testimony to financial management. It is a deliberate instrument of social and economic guidance. It is part of the very fabric of our society and our economy.”

Those were the words Treasurer Charles MacNaughton delivered in this House in 1969 when he announced the books were balanced. His daughter Heather Howett is in the gallery with us today.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Do you want to hear what Nixon said in 1989?

Hon Mr Eves: I wouldn't go there if I were you.

Those words ring equally true today, some 31 years later.

For our part, we have pioneered that pathway by redefining how government works for the people of Ontario.

By recognizing that prosperity is achieved not just for Ontarians, but by Ontarians—the people who work hard, who create jobs, who raise their families in communities all across our province.

By letting those people keep more of their own money to spend, to save, to invest in the things they want, not the things the government wants.

By ensuring taxpayers' dollars are focused on those services that are their priorities.

By finding innovative approaches to building our hospitals, our schools, our highways and our communities.

And by lifting the burden of debt from our children's shoulders, without resting it squarely on the taxpayers' backs today.

This budget proves that the path we are following is the right one.

Balanced budgets mean brighter futures for all Ontarians.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the Minister of Finance request that we revert to introduction of bills?

Hon Mr Eves: I request that we revert to introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAXPAYER DIVIDEND ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE VERSEMENT D'UN DIVIDENDE AUX CONTRIBUABLES

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 72, An Act to pay a dividend to Ontario taxpayers, cut taxes, create jobs and implement the Budget / Projet de loi 72, Loi visant à verser un dividende aux contribuables de l'Ontario, à réduire les impôts, à créer des emplois et à mettre en oeuvre le budget.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Government House Leader): I move adjournment of the House.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House will stand adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1707.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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Règlements et projets de loi privés**

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