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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 9 May 2000

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Mardi 9 mai 2000

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 9 May 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 9 mai 2000

The House met at 1845.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TAXPAYER DIVIDEND ACT, 2000

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

Mr Young, on behalf of Mr Eves, moved second 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.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We are going to share our time, I believe. The member will be sharing with the members for Durham and Etobicoke North. And the Liberals would like to defer their leadoff speaker, if that's OK. Unanimous consent?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I appreciate the opportunity of addressing this very important piece of legislation. It is indeed an honour to speak to this historic legislation that is in front of this assembly.

It is now a week since Minister Eves stood in this chamber and presented the budget, a budget that is worth talking about, that is worth reading and that is worthy of praise. In almost every respect, this is in fact a milestone budget for this province. It's a milestone in Ontario's history. Not only does it highlight our successes over the past five years; it sets out a framework for the future, a framework for continued success in this jurisdiction. That framework will keep us on track to build an Ontario with new opportunities and put Ontario in a strong position to meet the numerous challenges that face us in this new century.

I, for one, would like to take a moment to acknowledge the hard work of the members of my caucus, and particularly of those who were with us in the last session who are not here this session, for various reasons. There are a number of members, including my predecessor the former Attorney General Charles Harnick, who sacrificed a great deal to ensure that the financial and economic well-being of this province was restored, to ensure that this juggernaut we found ourselves facing, an economic

juggernaut heading towards the abyss, heading towards bankruptcy, was righted and turned around. Because of their hard work, because of the sacrifices made by those men and women before me, and by my caucus colleagues in this term, we have travelled a great distance.

In 1995 this province was on the verge of bankruptcy. Perhaps the most telling statistic of all is that we as a province were spending \$1 million more an hour than we were taking in. That's \$1 million more every hour than we were taking in in revenue. One does not need to be a mathematician to understand that is not sustainable. It is a formula that would end in fiscal disaster. As I will explain later in my address to you, Mr Speaker, and to this assembly this evening, unless you have a sound fiscal base, you cannot afford the social, health and educational infrastructure and services that are so important to Ontarians and that Ontarians deserve.

In order to understand how far we have travelled and how significant this budget is, it's important to recall where we were in 1995, before our government took office. Another very telling statistic is that the annual deficit stood in excess of \$11 billion. That was the budget that was tabled by Mr Rae's government just before he dropped the writ and called the election. Ontario was plagued by high unemployment at that time. It was commonplace for discussions around this province to talk about the number of thousand people less who were going to be employed at the conclusion of the year. Swollen welfare rolls were something we came to accept, albeit grudgingly on this side of the floor, as we did spiralling debt. Reluctantly, until that election in 1995, we had no alternative. Instead of leading Canada's economic recovery, Ontario was holding the country back. We were 10th of 10 provinces in terms of our economic growth.

Contrast that, if you will, with where we are as a province today. As the government over the past five years, we have cut taxes, we have begun to pay down the debt—and I'll have some further comments about that in a moment—and perhaps most importantly, over 700,000 Ontarians have a job now. There are 700,000 net new jobs, and those individuals didn't have jobs five short years ago. But we promised there would be exponential growth in the number of jobs in this province—net new jobs, primarily full-time jobs—and that's what we've delivered. We have helped almost half a million people break the cycle of dependency, the welfare cycle that so many of them thought they would never escape.

We did this all while protecting and strengthening our social infrastructure. In particular, spending on health care has never been greater than it is right now in this province, and we'll talk about that more in the next few moments.

When we took office in 1995, we did so after presenting a plan to the people of Ontario during the election campaign, a plan that included a promise, an undertaking, a commitment to the residents of this province that we would, over a five-year period, balance the provincial budget. Well, we've overachieved. The budget is balanced a year ahead of schedule. That's very significant. We've turned the corner. In fact, both last year's budget and this year's budget will be balanced. That's the first time in over 50 years. For anyone who is under 50 years of age, they have never experienced this before, and because of the unexpected but very welcome growth that we have experienced, because of the surplus that we experienced in 1999-2000, we were able to devote almost \$700 million to reducing our provincial debt.

But in keeping with the spirit of overachieving, we have amended our Blueprint promise, the promise we made to the people of this province. You will recall that when we campaigned this time last year, in 1999 for the June 3 election, we went to the people of this province and we set out in writing in very clear form that we were going to pay down at least \$2 billion of this province's debt. As I indicated a moment ago, we have overachieved. We have amended that commitment. Instead of committing to paying down the debt by \$2 billion over the remainder of this term, we have more than doubled that goal, and we have committed in this budget, I'm proud to say, that we will eliminate at least \$5 billion of the debt before the next election.

It's important to remember that not only did we balance the budget for this year and find that we had a balanced budget last year, we also in the fall passed the Taxpayer Protection and Balanced Budget law. That will ensure that no Ontario government is ever able again to hike our taxes, to run deficits or return to the days of multiplying debts. That's another commitment that was set out very clearly in our Blueprint that I and my colleagues here campaigned on this time last year. We've passed that. That's now law.

But as you know, it was more than just debt and deficits that made the years between 1985 and 1995 what we call the lost decade. The absence of economic growth in this province deprived the taxpayers of this jurisdiction of a number of things. They were deprived of jobs, they were deprived of wealth and they were deprived of improvements to the social safety net. Only with a strong and growing economy can a province afford to have those things in place.

I must emphasize that it is the increased economic growth that has made it possible for our government to shore up those aspects of our social safety net. I'd like to share a quote with you if I may:

"My immediate priority is growth.... Liberals are committed to economic growth because we know that

economic policy is social policy Growth—growth which provides new jobs and new revenues—is the only fiscally responsible way that Ontario can meet the social imperatives of the coming decade."

David Peterson made those remarks in the late 1970s. Surprisingly, I agree with him. What isn't surprising, though, is that the Liberals since then have forgotten this, and perhaps, with the greatest of respect, many of them may not have ever embraced or accepted it in the first place.

Let's talk about what we have done in the last year. Ontario's economy grew by 5.7% in 1999—real economic growth. I had occasion the day before yesterday to spend some time with John Clinkard, who is a very well respected economist in this province. I looked at him and said, "John, very impressive growth, do you not agree?" and he agreed. I said, "John, in your economic forecast did you anticipate this sort of growth?" He said that he had thought things would be good for this province, but he did not anticipate they would be that good. He attributes that exceptional growth to sound economic decisions made by this government over the last five years.

As we look ahead, Ontario's economy is expected to grow at 4.6% next year. Over the 1999 calendar year we created 198,000—almost 200,000—net new jobs in this province and almost all of them were full-time jobs. That capped five years of growth, totaling over 700,000 net new jobs since we took office. What does that mean? It means, first and foremost, that for those individuals who have the dignity of a job when they did not before, they have the means, the ability to not only believe in themselves but to supply their families with the necessities of life without looking to others.

That growth has also allowed us to balance the Ontario budget for two straight years, and that, as I said earlier, is the first time that's happened in about half a century. That growth has allowed us to begin to pay down this province's debt and, as I indicated earlier, to commit to even more money, \$5 billion worth of pay-down of that debt. That growth has allowed us to make a \$2.4-billion investment, both permanent and one-time funding, in health care: \$1 billion immediately out to hospitals, and I know the local hospital in Willowdale, the North York General, is one of the numerous recipients of those funds, \$1 billion out for capital—it's a one-time payout—and an annual increase of \$1.4 billion.

We'll talk about that because it's very interesting that that raises our annual spending on health care to an unprecedented level, a level never before approached in this province, and it's a level that is essentially at the point we committed to being at at the conclusion of our term, but here we are less than one year into the term and we're already prepared to revise our spending estimate upward.

That phenomenal growth that we are talking about this evening and the resulting benefits were spurred by tax cuts, spurred by putting money back into the hands of consumers, and really, who better than the people of

Ontario, the consumers, the hard-working men and women of this province, to decide how to spend their own money?

1900

We cut taxes on numerous occasions over the past five years in numerous ways—99 times, including a 30% reduction in the provincial share of personal taxes. We promised in this budget to cut taxes a further 67 times. So if this legislation passes, we will be at 166 tax cuts that will have been brought in since we took office.

The lowest provincial tax rate will be cut by 5% and the tax rate for middle-income earners will be reduced by 7.4%.

The retail sales tax that applies to vehicle insurance—because of course it is compulsory for each and every vehicle owner within this province to have insurance on their vehicle. The retail sales tax they will pay in relation to that obligatory measure of ensuring that they have automobile insurance was cut, effective this day last week, and it will continue to be cut by 1% a year until it is finally eliminated.

The capital gains inclusion rate will be cut by 66.66%, to 50%, over a four-year period.

Significantly, we have committed to fully indexing Ontario's personal income tax system to eliminate bracket creep. This will ensure that no Ontario taxpayer will pay more tax simply because their income increases to keep up with inflation.

Businesses large and small are under pressure to stay competitive in this province, as they are throughout the world in this global economy. They need to be taxed fairly. They need to be taxed reasonably. To that end, our government has committed to cutting both the general rate and the manufacturing and processing rate to 8% by 2005. When we accomplish that in 2005, we in Ontario will have the lowest corporate income tax rate in this country. I say to you, as did the Deputy Premier in this chamber last week, that we challenge the federal government to match those cuts, to make businesses more competitive, to allow them to grow, to attract them to this province.

Many individuals have also told us that when it comes to small businesses, they need even more help. They need more help to survive and they need more help to create jobs. We agree. That is why our government will also cut the small business tax rate to 4% by 2005, which will then, like the corporate tax rates that I talked about a moment ago, be the lowest in Canada.

As well, we will be expanding over the next five years the amount of income that is eligible for the lower small business corporate tax rate, to \$400,000 from its current out-of-date level of \$200,000. It's important to recall, as Judith Andrew reminded me the other day, that the \$200,000 threshold or cut-off has been in place for two decades. It's time it was changed, and we're pleased to be the government that brings in that change. When fully implemented, the income limit at which the small business rate would be phased out would be \$1 million. That gives small businesses enormous room to grow. We

estimate that 7,500 growing small businesses will benefit from this change.

Finally, the reason we are here this evening, our government intends to give every working man and woman in this province another tax cut, by way of a dividend, a dividend of up to \$200 for every Ontarian who paid personal income tax in 1999.

Taken together, our program of cutting taxes and reforming our tax system will lead to further growth in our economy, more money in the pockets of individual Ontarians and an opportunity for all of this province.

Contrast that with the record of our predecessors, the Liberals and the New Democrats, in that lost decade. By our account, during that 10-year period those parties raised taxes, while in government, about 65 times. Today's Liberals try to ignore the fact that they were so bad at managing the public purse in a boom time in this province that they had to raise taxes over and over and over again. And the NDP, who admittedly came into office at the beginning of a recession, taxed and spent, spent and taxed, taxed and spent, spent and taxed, until Ontario's economy ranked right at the bottom of this country—the weakest in all of Canada. I'm going to repeat it because it is troubling and it's important to remember just how far we had fallen: This province, under the leadership of the NDP, was spending \$1 million more every hour than it was bringing in.

I'd like to share with you some quotes that appeared around budget time when the NDP was in office: "Welcome to the worst of all worlds: record taxes, lingering recession, high unemployment." "Floyd Laughren taxed dirt yesterday, and he still couldn't balance the budget." How about this headline? It pretty much says it all: "Tax Massacre." Let's be clear. There is no justification for 65 tax increases over the space of 10 years, none whatsoever. There's no justification for the wastrel ways of the parties across the aisle.

The taxpayer dividend proposed by Minister Eves last week in this chamber would give every Ontarian who paid personal income tax last year up to \$200 of their own money. I want to stress this: It's their own money and we're giving it back to them. That is \$200 more to spend in their communities. That is \$200 more to donate to charities. That is \$200 more to invest or save if the individual so desires. But it's important to remember that it's \$200 to be disposed of as the individual taxpayer sees fit. I have confidence that all the people of this province have the wherewithal and the ability to make good decisions with their own money.

I'd like to share some quotes with you from last Friday that appeared in the local paper that is distributed throughout the riding of Willowdale, the North York Mirror. These quotes are perhaps more important than all the quotes that will be shared with you over the next number of days about this budget from the so-called experts. We'll do some of that as well. These quotes are from regular working people, hard-working Ontarians who, when asked what they're going to do with the \$200 dollars when it's returned to them, said the following: "I

am going to spend it on my nephew and get him some summer clothes." "My plan is to fix up the house." Michael Breen said, "I'll probably put it down on my debt."

Those are all good decisions. I've met some other people who said, "I'm going to donate it to a charity." They are entitled to do that. That's their way of directing money to their community. They'll also get a tax receipt should they so choose.

There's an old saying about government and taxes—well, maybe it isn't an old saying; maybe it's a new saying because this is unprecedented—"If you send it, they will spend it." That's the point. It has often been said in this chamber, far too often by some members across the way, that the government has no money of its own, it only has what the taxpayers send it. There's only one pocket. There's only one taxpayer. During the 10 years of Liberal and NDP rule, Ontario taxpayers were asked again and again to send more and more. Did Ontarians see benefit from these increased taxes? I have trouble finding words that will say this as emphatically as I desire: No, they did not derive any benefit from those increases of taxes, time and time again. No reform, no modernization of substance to our health care system took place before this government took office. There were no substantive improvements to our education system. There was not one long-term-care bed, not one.

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One need not be a demographer to understand that we in this province are going to face enormous challenges as the baby boomers age and become 65 and over. As the Minister of Health said in this chamber approximately two weeks ago, about 50 cents of every health care dollar today is spent on Ontarians who are 65 years of age and over. If you do the math—one need not have a degree in statistics to understand this—and you consider where we will be at when the baby boomers, that bulge in our demographics, come forward at 65 years of age or more, we have some enormous challenges.

One only hopes that the federal government will come forward and attempt to do their share in that regard, because they have clawed back billions of dollars in health care funding. I'm optimistic for one reason, and only one reason, and that's because we will be in the midst of a federal election shortly. Much the same as we got Harbourfront in this city decades ago, I anticipate that when it comes to dropping the writ, or perhaps a few months before, we will see the federal government opening up their pocketbook and restoring some of the funding they have cut back so that the people of this province can have the health care they need and deserve.

During that lost decade when the NDP and the Liberals governed this province, more people joined the welfare rolls. The statistics cannot be argued with. Economic growth basically stopped, came to a full stop. The principle is very simple, and I can't stress it enough: More growth equals more jobs; more jobs equals more wealth; and more wealth benefits everyone across this province. Tax cuts and more recently the rebate, the \$200

that most Ontarians will get back, mean growth. That means growth for this province.

I'd like to share a quote, if I may, Mr Speaker, a statement I'd like you to consider, as I would the other members of this chamber. It's made by Mike Chater, who is the president of the Historic Downtown Chatham Business Improvement Association. Here's what Mr Chater said after reviewing our budget: "When you consider \$200 times the population of Chatham-Kent, that represents a significant amount" of money. "And I'd say the majority of that money will be spent right in our own economy." I think he's right. Imagine the benefit, if you will, to communities of \$200 extra in the hands of every single taxpayer across this province.

Pat Crossman said the following: "We'll turn that around and spend that money on something family-related." That's what Pat Crossman said he was going to do with his \$200 rebate. He went on to say: "It's money we could spend and not save. It would go back into the economy." That's the point. That's the essence of not only the \$200; that's the essence of the principle that has motivated this government to cut taxes time and time again: more individuals spending more money, contributing to more growth in every community across this province.

We all know that the members across the way don't share our belief that taxpayers' money is their own and should be spent as they deem fit. Certainly not now that the election is over do we hear that sort of rhetoric from them. Indeed, I think that Mr McGuinty, the leader of the official opposition, characterized the \$200 as a bribe. I would ask Mr McGuinty, why? Why call it a bribe? I'm puzzled how returning money to taxpayers is tantamount to a bribe. If Mr McGuinty as the Leader of the Opposition doesn't have enough confidence in the people of this province, enough confidence to trust them to spend \$200, how could he possibly have their confidence to govern this jurisdiction?

What does the public think about that? Do they think it's a bribe? Do they think we're bribing them? The Toronto Sun of May 9, 2000, quoted Dave Pilniuk as saying the following: "The rebate comes as a welcome and unexpected ... surprise. I only hope it will be repeated as future government surpluses appear. That would let us decide where the money will go, instead of it disappearing down some needless politically correct black hole." He doesn't want it to be wasted away. How did he describe that \$200 rebate? He said it was "a wise move on the Tories' part." When the suggestion of it being a bribe was put to him, his answer was, "Hardly."

There are numerous other individuals across this province who have commented on the taxpayer dividend. I want to share a few of those comments in my remaining moments. "At the end of the day, I bet this budget is going to keep probably \$600 in my pocket." That is a calculation by this individual, Ken Sullivan, who was quoted in the Hamilton Spectator earlier this month. That is undoubtedly his calculation of the savings he will

derive from the \$200 we will be sending back to him and the tax cuts.

An analyst at Nesbitt Burns said the following: "Taxpayers will be given a rebate of up to \$200 on 1999 taxes, an almost unheard move by a Canadian government."

In the Ottawa Sun on May 3, 2000, there's a quote that reads as follows: "'Overall, I'm quite pleased,' said Joe Phillips, sales manager for Mark Anthony Brands winery. 'Finally government is starting to give back to the taxpayer. I think the middle class has been squeezed for a long time.'"

Tax cuts have also been the subject of a great deal of praise and dialogue over the past number of days, the seven days since Minister Eves stood in this chamber and read his budget. Let's consider what was said by Gerald Yaffe, a small business owner. He is quoted as saying the following: "We're overtaxed Small business is always looking for direct incentives. I think this budget covers all the bases."

Elyse Allan, who is the president and CEO of the Toronto Board of Trade, was quoted in the Toronto Star on May 3, 2000, as saying the following: "It's good to see they came out fairly aggressively" on corporate taxes.

Natasha Kong is the co-founder of an on-line women's magazine. She is quoted in the Globe and Mail. She comments upon this budget: "The cuts to capital gains taxes makes me feel like I made the right decision staying here" in Ontario.

I know those on the other side of this chamber will feel an obligation to criticize one aspect or another of the budget. I appreciate that they believe that to be their role here and I guess that's accurate to a degree, but when they rise to enter this debate, as they will this evening and during the subsequent days, I hope they will remember what they said in writing. I hope they will remember the commitments they made to the people of this province. I hope they will acknowledge that many aspects of this budget are what the people wanted and what they promised they would do if they had the privilege to govern this province.

Let me share a couple of quotes with you. I want to be clear about this. I'm reading from the Ontario Liberal Plan—I guess it was called the red book euphemistically in 1995—during the election campaign. Just so we're clear, it is the policy document that was presented by the Ontario Liberal Party when they went out to the electorate in 1995. These are the promises they made. In fact, what I'm about to read to you in most instances is called a policy commitment. Let me read this to you, because I know you'll be interested in this. "Rising taxes also kill jobs. Paying higher taxes than their competitors is the last thing Ontario businesses can afford. As for Ontario families, many can't afford the taxes they're paying right now." Well, that was in their red book, so clearly they acknowledged at that time, and undoubtedly would today, that Ontario taxpayers need a break, and should undoubtedly applaud the fact that we are giving Ontario taxpayers a break.

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Let's talk about those policy commitments if I may in my remaining few moments. Again, I'm quoting because, Mr Speaker, as you may recall, this is in a separate portion of this document. There is a title saying "Policy Commitment," and underneath it says the following: "A Liberal government will repeal the 5% tax on auto insurance premiums." As you will recall, that's exactly what our budget is doing. It says very clearly that they're going to work to make auto insurance more affordable by doing so. Well, then, undoubtedly they will stand on their feet in due course and applaud this initiative, just as they will on other policy commitments that the Ontario Liberals set out in writing in 1995 for the people of this great province. They said, "A Liberal government will reduce the corporate tax rate for small businesses"—exactly what we've done, and "reduce the number of small businesses required to file for the corporate minimum tax." That's exactly what we've done.

On those notes, I will take my seat and look forward to hearing from some of my colleagues, including the member for Durham. I think he was going to speak to this matter. I'll also look forward to hearing from the members on the opposite side of this aisle, who undoubtedly will have some praise that they wish to share with us about this very important budget.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I will be sharing the rest of my time with the member from, I believe, Etobicoke North, or Halton, I guess. Anyway, if I don't have to be specific, I will be sharing my time with Halton, I believe.

I just want to start out picking up with the theme from the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, who started out saying, "Whose money is it anyway?" We have to get back to the fundamentals here and remind ourselves—I think the member said it in his remarks—that it's the government's job to apportion or redistribute the revenue it collects from the hard-working, taxpaying public.

Clearly, in the debate you're going to hear some differences in ideology and approach. Over the last 10 or 11 years we've seen the results of that difference. We saw the Liberal and NDP coalition, then the Liberal government and then the NDP government. I hate to repeat myself, but it is worth repeating: If you don't learn from history, you're doomed to repeat it. There's the 10-lost-years theory, and I suspect that some of that was difficult, but if you make a reference to—the member on the other side is barracking. If you look from 1995, the numbers have gone straight up. There are 702,000 net new jobs since 1995 and about 500,000 fewer people collecting welfare.

There will be people who argue that Ontario has recovered as a result of the activity in the United States, but clearly, if you look at the numbers and where the real revenue is coming from, it's from the sustained economy internally. All I can say to the member on the other side is that the government will stand on its record.

I go back to saying, “Whose money is it anyway?” There are letters in the paper; it looks like a letter-writing campaign. I see 18 or 20 letters a day in the Toronto Star, or the Red Star, as some people call it. I sort of say, well, it’s a propaganda thing, but I do read them. I’d say that there are 18 different letters, 18 different suggestions, and really it’s people saying that it’s government. They’re so used to big government making all the decisions. The ideology change here is that we’re empowering people, individuals and families, to make decisions.

We’ve heard from the member from Willowdale in his remarks that each individual will make decisions. For some people that will mean buying something for members of the family. Perhaps Mother’s Day will be a time to recognize the mothers or the families that are out there. It’s people making decisions about people. Put a human face on it.

I want to move a little bit into the ideology argument, because that’s really what we’re trying to do here, to signal—if we look at this whole thing, it’s called the Taxpayer Dividend Act. I have a copy of it here with me and I will make reference to it in the brief time that I have. Some members here, those who have been in government, think that government has all the good ideas. I think a government that listens is full of good ideas, because there may even be valid suggestions from the federal government; there may even be valid suggestions on the other side of the House; there are certainly valid suggestions from the people of Ontario, who really have had direct input into this process.

I was reading an article in response to the budget. This was in the Globe and Mail on May 8, so it’s fairly relevant. This was written by a profound academic. I have a lot of respect for Professor Michael Bliss, a University of Toronto professor. He’s trying to speak of this: “Pointing the Way: Liberal Choices for a new Canada.” He may be articulating here philosophically at a federal level, but I really think there’s a lesson to be learned here. I hate to say it—it’s so ordinary—but a Liberal’s a Liberal. You can’t put spots on a leopard. Is it the leopard or—which one has the spots? Anyway, we won’t get carried away on that, but I would say this:

“One pregnant question left by the article is the alternatives facing the Liberal Party as it tries to bridge the growing divide. Professor Bliss argues that the ‘Old Canadians who control the Liberal Party are clinging timidly to the old ways.’ One infers he means the Liberals will focus on building political strength in the old [eastern] Canada through deployment of the subsidies and patronage”—so true. There it is. Jane Stewart would certainly be the best, most recent example of blatant patronage. I think it was here too, at the time when they were the government for a few years and they were opportunistic there. They had the highest revenue and the highest expenditures in the province of Ontario. The article goes on: “... that he argues are fundamental to these regions’ political cultures. Liberals would thus seek a third majority by ignoring the west, holding what they

can in Ontario and offsetting their losses in his new Canada with gains in Quebec and the Atlantic. Professor Bliss believes”—

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You guys spend more than we did. Don’t lie about it.

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. The member for Ottawa Centre will withdraw that statement.

Mr Patten: I will withdraw that statement, reluctantly.

The Acting Speaker: Just withdraw the statement, please.

Mr Patten: I withdraw.

Mr O’Toole: The member for Ottawa Centre, in his disparaging remarks—it doesn’t add anything to your knowledge base, Richard. I would say that respectfully.

The Acting Speaker: In the interests of not turning this into a personal thing tonight, I would ask you to please refer to the member by his riding, as opposed to his name.

Mr O’Toole: Ottawa Centre, yes; I’ll remember that. Not that that matters.

But the thrust of this is that the Liberal theory, the Liberal ideology and the Liberal solution here is clearly as simple as tax and spend. There’s an academic saying it, who has nothing to gain by tarnishing his academic perspective on the debate. I’ll stand behind this as being well stated. I heard the member for Hamilton West in his narrow view of the world, struck with flashes of lightning in his brilliance, in his brief time in history. I have not yet heard him say anything that’s beyond the ideology of rhetoric. In his case, he has basically already sold his vote. You’ve already sold your vote. Your free-enterprise spirit is as much evident as your comments here in the House.

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I would say, more important, that I am responding to the people I’m elected to represent. I can reply to the response I had to the \$200. I could show people that this is in Bill 72—it’s in the early remarks; it’s under section 7—and it states that it is a rebate to Ontario residents. It is a rebate. If you wonder where the rebate comes from, all you have to do is look at the budget numbers and you look back at 1999-2000. We had a far more aggressive recovery than was planned for and we had an actual surplus of \$654 million. That particular revenue piece has been given back to the taxpayers of Ontario.

I return to the argument about where the money comes from, and it isn’t the government’s money; it’s the taxpayers’ money. What we’re trying to do here is send a signal—the dividend. If a company has a good year—and not that this is a private sector model, but certainly it sets a business plan. It stays the course. It provides a surplus or a stability that provides a surplus and then it returns that dividend. The government has created its own reserve fund, I believe, of \$1 billion that will oversee any difficult times that may or may not be on the horizon, but all the numbers look very encouraging. So the \$200 will go back to people who I think, from all the notes I have here and letters I’ve received, will make decisions that

affect more importantly their own lives, whether it's their children, their spouse or in making a decision. If you look at the multiplier effect of the \$200, clearly if you give someone some money, they're going to make a decision to make a purchase, perhaps larger than the dividend they're receiving.

I want to quote a couple of people here who have made comments. One was Adrian Foster, who made the comment here, "The provincial government's decision to follow its federal counterparts in returning to the index of income bracket, eliminating bracket creep, will mean taxpayers will get to keep more of the salaries they earn." I might add that Mr Foster is a financial planner, a small independently employed individual who knows the value of money. He knows what it means to earn his own bread.

We're all headed toward the top of the tax bracket. These are the people who will benefit. The mood was more optimistic than cynical over the government's decision to return the \$200 per person. Another comment was made that, "As it will probably be returned in the Christmas season, this will be well spent to help both retailers and families."

George Khouri from the board of trade stated that the community is made up of many small businesses, all of whom will see a net and direct benefit by individuals making decisions.

Another part isn't specifically the \$200, but it's part of the 67 tax cuts that were announced in the budget that was voted on yesterday. Arnold Bark, who has written to me, is an independently employed individual and he has made the definition that if he were to get for instance—"The retail sales tax reduction is a plus for those who operate vehicles in the course of their business." Also, the retail sales tax reduction on "auto maintenance will be well used toward maintaining vehicles in good working order."

There are many more points to be made, and I'm looking around and I don't see the member from Halton, so I'll just keep going until he returns.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: OK. In that case I will turn to the member from Etobicoke North, if the member from Etobicoke North would like to pick up.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'd like to thank the member for Durham Centre for his eloquent remarks, contrasted to the bellower across the way. I think he's from Hamilton Centre.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): West.

Mr Hastings: West. I'll get my directions straight.

I think what we need to focus on in this particular presentation is the benefits of the dividend tax credit. I would like to start from a very practical, fundamental perspective of what the reaction is across the way contrasted to the reaction I'm getting in my own riding made up primarily of working-class folks who have a very challenging time in today's economy. A lot of these people are newcomers to the country. I've had several phone calls from people in the newcomer category, new

Canadians who have been here maybe five, eight, 10 years. Some of them are struggling to get new skills for the new economy. Some of them are still in school. Not one of those folks, and I've had two dozen calls minimum on this, has said: "This is a bad idea and we don't need the money. We don't like the money." This is the reaction from our folks across the way. They have a different philosophy of taxation, however, to us on the government side, particularly in the New Democratic Party, but also to a lesser extent with our federal gliberal opposition. I think they belong to and agree with adherence to the Al Gore school of taxation.

The Clinton-Gore administration has said over the last few years that giving people money that was theirs to start with—any tax relief, in fact, whether it's through general across-the-board tax reductions or, in this particular context, an actual tax rebate, an actual tax dividend based on your past year's income—is what the future president from the Democratic Party labels a "risky proposition." It's a very bad idea that people would have their own money, in this case \$200, to decide whether they want to pay down their debt, save it, donate it or spend it for some particular purpose related to themselves or their families or their children.

Across the way we have examples of the fundamental divide which says that keeping the money and having the state spend it, through a ministry or through a government or through some agency, is not a risky proposition. Are you telling me today that in an economy as complex as ours it's better to allow bureaucracies to determine how they're going to spend these \$200? I don't think so. I think I'd rather trust the individual, perhaps imperfect instincts of those citizens who want to spend that money, save it or do whatever they want. It's their decision.

For these folks across the way, and anybody in our society who doesn't like the idea of getting the \$200, they can immediately apply it to state purposes. They often talk about getting the overall debt down. Well, here is a practical, everyday example for the folks who don't want the ordinary citizen to have the \$200. There's a line on your federal income tax right near the end which says, "I want to have this \$200 go to the reduction of Ontario's debt." I don't hear them using that example, oh no. We have it that only the state could take that money and only the state could wisely spend it and there's no risk involved, whereas if a government of a Conservative stripe, small-c or large, provides a tax rebate, that's risky, that's not a good idea, which demonstrates the fundamental divide between us on the government side and those folks over there, which is essentially that it's a philosophy of collectivism. It's the lack of individual faith in people making their own decisions about the \$200.

In fact, it goes much further. We have heard through the last few years particularly from the official finance critic of the official opposition party, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who has constantly reminded us, and I can remember back in 1995, 1996 and 1997 the refrain: "Where are the jobs? Where are the jobs?" We don't hear that much any more. Why? Because tax

reductions overall in any category lead to a prosperous economy. They create jobs. You'll say, "Well, where is the evidence the member for Scarborough-Agincourt brings up?" One of the best places of evidence—and particularly for his new hero, the economic spokesman for the Bank of Montreal who said that tax reductions have hardly any impact on a modern economy. All Mr O'Neill or any of his economic friends have to do is look around the city of Toronto or any of the regions and see the enormous growth in jobs in television productions, in films and now, through a new tax credit provided in the 2000 budget, in the new media. Prior to 1995, the film industry in the city of Toronto was a pretty pale imitation of what we have today. It was a struggling industry. Yes, there were some productions going on, but not nearly the numbers you see today. We have created thousands of jobs out of that particular tax credit, tax reduction.

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What else is there for proof? All you've got to do is talk to the Screen Actors Guild in Hollywood, to all the actor unions. Last summer and fall, these folks held very vigorous protests in Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento, the state capital, and in Washington. They were arguing that they need a tax credit as much as the provinces in Canada or other US jurisdictions that offered a tax credit. Why? Because there is no doubt that there is a very organic connect between tax reductions overall, whether it be corporate, personal, through this dividend tax credit, or exemption—whatever you want to call it—or through a reduction in capital gains taxes.

Over the last two years, not one spokesman on the other side has come up with a case—and I'll be interested to hear the finance critic for the New Democrats, the member for Hamilton West, make a case that says, in effect, "If you have higher taxes, you will have a prosperous economy, and that's the route to go." I'd like to hear statements like that from him. That would be their starting point on the debate. "The more you ramp up your taxes, of whatever category, the more prosperous we're going to be, particularly the government of the day. They'll have more money to spend."

Guess what happened, folks? We had that kind of experiment back in 1990, 1991, 1992. We've seen it in other states and countries throughout the world. I've brought this theme up before, and I still haven't heard a solid case against it. In Sweden, one of the highest-taxed jurisdictions in Europe, what was happening there in the 1980s and 1990s? Their citizens were fleeing, particularly the ones they really needed to maintain and sustain a very comprehensive social safety net that this party across the way has usually espoused as a means of creating social equity, social justice. Those citizens of Sweden, France and the United Kingdom, in those days, where did they go? They fled to the lower-tax jurisdictions. Why? They should have maintained their citizen loyalty to their country and allowed the state to tax them at nearly 100%. It's their duty to do so, to share the wealth.

Why don't people like that? I can think of Bjorn Borg as an example. He went to Monaco. He ought to be condemned in the widest circles of the day and today for leaving. We have Canadians of all walks of life who have left this country because our taxes, even after all our efforts, are still too high. Even British Columbia, even the New Democrats in Saskatchewan, have caught on to the leadership of the idea that a lower tax regime does bring about economic prosperity. Yet we have never heard, and I'm waiting to hear yet in this debate, actually why it's a good idea to have a high-tax regime, and that you can sustain economic growth for the longest time.

Finally, they talk about the United States as if that's the driving force of the provincial economy. But they forget to remind us that to compare the tax rates in Michigan, Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania, our immediate competitors, their tax rates are not significantly higher, they're lower, and when you connect the two there is obviously an inherent, organic connection. It will never be sustained from their intellectual viewpoint to argue that the United States is the only source driving the provincial prosperity that we have helped to bring about. In point of fact, members in the opposition, particularly in the back benches, seem to have cottoned on to the idea that the United States is the great economic light of the world. Guess what? It was free trade to some extent that brought about some of this prosperity—not a very good idea, one that John Turner of the federal Liberals of the day, a very strong—

The Acting Speaker: Your time is up. Comments and questions?

Hon Mr Stockwell: OK, respond to that.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'll respond to that. Just for the record, I'm donating my \$200 to the cancer assistance program, a program that moved to Concession Street just a few months ago to be next to the Cancer Care Centre, which is next to the Henderson, which we all just saved, so that will be the last time you hear me say that.

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: We all did.

I would have preferred, instead of getting \$200, for that total sum of \$1 billion to go into something like post-secondary education. The government did give \$1 billion in total for the SuperBuild fund, much-needed money, to renovate our buildings. The university that I was lecturing in before I got elected had all sorts of maintenance difficulties, all sorts of rats, which we didn't need for experiments, running around.

Interjection.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Yes, I have been in this place and maybe a little bit of money here.

The problem with the SuperBuild is that some institutions didn't get any money, because it was dependent on private matches. For example, Mohawk College didn't get any SuperBuild money. I would have preferred that money to supplement the SuperBuild fund.

As well, in the next decade we will need 10,000 new professors to replace those who are retiring and to

address the extra 90,000 students who are coming into post-secondary education. We're still waiting and hoping that the operating grants will increase in the next three years. We had some hint that might happen last night and we're hoping for that, but I would have preferred for some of that \$1 billion to be committed to that immediately rather than sit and wait. Colleges and universities need the information to plan, and if we had an announcement of \$1 billion for operating grants in the next three years, it would have been much more preferable. For my \$200, I have the luxury of being able to donate it; some people won't have the luxury, and they will still be sacrificing their health care at the same time.

Mr Christopherson: I would like to comment, if I can squeeze it into the two minutes, on some of the remarks made by the member for Durham and the member for Etobicoke North.

The member for Durham talked about Mother's Day when he talked about the \$200, and then he talked about putting a human face on it. But what struck me was that of course there are an awful lot of mothers on Mother's Day who won't be getting the \$200 because they didn't earn enough money to pay enough income tax. Their children won't have the money to be able to buy their mom the kind of gift they would like to. You can accuse me of tugging at the heartstrings, but I didn't raise it, your member did, and he's the one who wanted to raise the impression that somehow this budget and Mother's Day go hand in hand. All I could think of was all those individual moms who are in situations where they're not benefiting from this. That includes moms who have disabled children who are not able to access buildings, even public buildings, in this province, and there wasn't one dime to do something about that; moms who can't provide a decent home, a roof over the heads of their kids. Your budget did absolutely nothing for those moms, moms who desperately need child care spaces so they can go after some of these jobs that you want to brag about. But you didn't create a single space with this budget. So there's a whole lot of moms in the province of Ontario who won't enjoy—you know what? It's not the majority, and that's why I suppose some people can afford to say, "Well, we don't need to worry about that." But the fact of the matter is, there are far too many moms who won't have the kind of Mother's Day that others will have, and many of those others were already going to have an excellent Mother's Day. It'll just be that much richer. What about those moms, I say to the member for Durham?

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The Acting Speaker: Further comments and questions?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke North can only be a responder. It cannot be comments and questions.

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I think one of the things that has been omitted in this discussion is the underlying principle that has been recognized by this

government, and that is simply that it is taxpayers' money we're talking about. One of the things that people in government forget is where the money comes from. This government has recognized from the beginning that it is the taxpayers' money that we're talking about, and this dividend is simply the manifestation of that principle: the principle that we are recognizing that it is the taxpayers' dollar.

There are obviously those, as we have heard from the comments across, who would have themselves preferred to see money go elsewhere. But this dividend is designed to show that it is possible to cut taxes, create jobs and pay for the priority items identified by people across this province: health care, education, safe communities. These are all issues that we recognize are important. But most of all, we recognize that it is taxpayers' money and we know that by giving them the money, they will make the best decision, a decision, by the way, that will be manifest, whether it is by giving it to charities of their choice, whether it's making contributions to their community or whether in fact it cumulatively will go to further job creation and the kind of environment that we all will enjoy in this province.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I appreciate the opportunity to make some comment on the debate that has taken place so far this evening. I have to say that the member for Etobicoke North did catch my attention, especially with his comment with regard to the Liberal backbench. You know, he gives a great sermon about us on this side of the House and what we believe and what we espouse, but I would suggest he knows very little about being Liberal. He suggested that maybe we in the backbench are very vehemently Liberal, and I'm most proud of that and I hope that has been reflected in the comments that we make. It certainly is a reflection of what the people in my riding are saying to me. So when you hear what I am saying as a member of this backbench, you're hearing what I'm hearing in my riding from the people of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, and I think they're raising some very good points.

I believe again it was the member for Etobicoke North who indicated that this government has faith in the people of Ontario to manage their money well. Well, I would suggest to the government that the people in Ontario have lost faith in your government's ability to provide them with the level of service that we once had, that we don't enjoy in the area of health care as we once did. When I talk to the people in my riding who now have to wait many months for critical cancer treatment and, if they are to access it, have to go to the States—that has not always been the case. I live very near to a facility that provides cancer care treatment. So people in our part of the world have lost faith in the responsibility of government to provide the necessary services so that we can live healthy and productive lives. They may have more money in the bank, but they're not being served as well as they once were.

The Acting Speaker: Two-minute response.

Mr Young: I want to also take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank the members who have spoken before me for two minutes each, those being the members for Hamilton Mountain, Hamilton West, York North and, most recently, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

I do appreciate the fact that views are very strong about this budget because, as I said at the outset, this is a budget that is unprecedented and it undoubtedly will attract attention. I'm pleased to say that the attention has been, by and large, almost exclusively positive. The applause has come from almost every corner of this province.

One of the things, though, that we have heard from time to time is, what has this government announced for this great city of Toronto? I'm one of the representatives from that city, as is the Minister of Labour.

I want to take a few moments to talk about the numerous initiatives set out in this budget document that deal directly with this city because, of course, we know that all of the initiatives, whether it be the taxpayer dividend that's going to residents of this great cosmopolitan community or whether it's the tax cuts that will make our businesses more competitive or whether it's the tax cuts for individuals that will lessen the burden that each individual taxpayer has, affect the residents of Toronto. But we also have very positive announcements in this budget about waterfront redevelopment. We're still waiting for the federal government, by the way, to come to the table, but we have a commitment from this government.

We have \$15 million committed to the Ontario Science Centre redevelopment. I encourage you to talk to the individuals who work at that fine institution and they will tell you just how excited they are about that new funding.

There is going to be for the GTA area, including Toronto, a new Telehealth service, much like they have in northern Ontario, that will assist us on a day-to-day basis, and there are additional capital dollars for our hospitals, dollars that are flowing through, even as we speak, to the hospitals in this great city.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I understand we have unanimous consent to defer the leadoff for our party until our finance critic is able to be here.

The Acting Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mrs McLeod: I am very pleased to have an opportunity to participate in the debate and hopefully bring a little bit of a sense of reality from this side of the House to balance the self-congratulatory hour which we have just survived here.

This is a bill, An Act to pay a dividend to Ontario taxpayers, cut taxes, create jobs and implement the Budget, and I would suggest that the name of the bill says everything about the Mike Harris government and the Mike Harris government's priorities. It says that it is concerned almost solely—perhaps solely—with tax cuts and that its budget is really all about tax cuts. It was widely touted before the budget came out that this was going to be the

health budget, because Ontarians were concerned about their health care, because there's a decreasing sense of confidence, as my colleague has just said, in having access to health care in this province. So the government had heard the message of Ontarians and this was going to be the health budget.

But it's not a health budget. This is a budget about tax cuts. It's a great budget if your priority is about tax cuts. It's a great budget if you're a corporation, a big business corporation. It took them five years, I say to the member for Willowdale, to understand that they had beaten up on small business so badly in this province that they were going to have to do something for small business. Five years later they're finally looking at something for small business and still the balance of the benefit in this budget is for the largest corporations and for those wealthy enough to engage in speculation on the stock market. If you're an average taxpayer looking at this government's priorities and what you get out of their tax cuts, you get \$1 for every \$5 that goes to the largest corporations and the largest income earners in this province.

So it's a great budget if you're one of the really well-to-do or one of the big business people: \$8 billion in tax cuts when this budget is fully implemented. And the government said that this was going to be a health care budget? I'm the health care critic so you'll understand that I had a particular sensitivity when I looked for a budget that was supposed to be a health care budget and I found that the government statement about what it was putting into health care was \$1.4 billion. I'm going to come back to that. That was the government's statement about what it was doing for health care in this budget: a \$1.4-billion increase. Well, there's \$4 billion in corporate tax cuts alone—\$4 billion—supposedly there in order to make our businesses more competitive with our American neighbours.

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But in fact most economists would argue, even on the basis of tax rates, that our businesses are comparable with our neighbours' to the south. The thing that gives us the great economic advantage over our neighbours to the south and the reasons why our exports are so high that it's causing some concern for our finance critic—who I'm sure will speak to that when he has an opportunity—is because of the strength of our medicare system. If that's an economic advantage, I ask you, why would this government want to put its priority into \$8 billion more worth of tax cuts, \$4 billion in corporate tax cuts, and sacrifice health care in order to do that? I guess one of my real quandaries is why the government would spend \$8 billion in tax cuts and \$1 billion of that is for something that can at best be described as a \$1-billion "Your cheque's in the mail" advertising campaign.

I want to come back to the whole question of the health care increase, the \$1.4-billion supposed increase in health care spending in this budget, which is actually, if you take one-time spending from last year into account, about \$1.1 billion. Then if you were actually to recognize that they take another \$1 billion out that they were spend-

ing on capital last year that they're not spending this year, and look at the total health care spending increase, it's considerably less than \$1 billion, considerably less than the \$1-billion "Your cheque's in the mail" advertising campaign. In fact, the Toronto Star cited two different analyses that suggested that the actual increase in health care spending in this budget is about \$49 million. It's very difficult to know exactly what dollars are going into health care in any given year because, as we've seen, the numbers tend to change from month to month in terms of what the government says it's going to spend and what it actually spends.

I'm not going to take a lot of time to get into the federal-provincial funding levels in this budget, because I recognize that, as we've said in this House before, we need more health care funding from both levels of government. I recognize there have been tax cuts from both levels of government. But I do think we should just note in passing that of the increase in health care spending in Ontario over the last two years, fully 53% of that has come from increases in federal funding for health care. So I don't think the government can use as an excuse the fact that the federal government has not increased health care spending in the last two years. This is all about this government's commitment to tax cuts as a priority, far and away beyond any concern they have for health care, a \$49-million increase in health care spending, perhaps, versus \$8 billion in health cut commitments.

I want to just look at the \$1 billion, the \$200 that each relatively well-off, at least income-earning, Ontarian is to expect to find in their mailboxes. I know a number of people on the other side of the House tonight have said: "You know, you could take your \$200—it was taxpayers' money." I don't understand that argument. Of course it's taxpayers' money. Where else would the government's money come from, other than taxpayers? If we were talking about the Conservative Party, we could talk about a different source of contributions, but the money the government has at its disposal is taxpayers' money. What a moot point that is in this debate.

The question is, what do taxpayers want you to do with their money? You have chosen to give \$1 billion back with \$200 cheques in the mail. The members opposite have said, over the course of the evening, "You know, if you don't want your \$200, if you think there's something better to do with \$200, you can put that money into a charity and you'll even get a tax receipt for it."

I suggest to the members opposite, they've missed the whole idea of government. The whole idea of government is to use taxpayers' money, which it collects, in a way that benefits the citizens as effectively as possible. You do that in one way by putting it into health care. There's not a single Ontarian who can meet any portion of their health care needs or deal with any of their concerns about access with \$200.

Come and talk to people in my riding, who are having to take money out of their pocket for northern health travel because they are northerners, because the northern health travel grant program does not cover the costs for

those who have to leave their home community to get health care if you happen to live in the north. They're not talking about a \$200 expense that can be covered with this one-time-only \$200 cheque in the mail.

Come and talk to Alan Rawlyk, a pensioner in my riding who's now spent \$10,000 of his own money to get medically necessary care and who's had to dip into his pension fund in order to cover that \$10,000. If the members opposite are tired of me raising Mr Rawlyk, I'm afraid they're just going to get more and more weary because I'm going to keep raising the concerns of constituents like Mr Rawlyk until the government understands that a \$200 cheque in the mail may be good public relations as they give this tax dividend, but it's going to do absolutely nothing for the anxieties of Mr and Mrs Rawlyk as they wonder where the next \$2,000 is going to come from for their next trip to Toronto that won't be covered.

I look at what that \$1 billion alone—even \$1 billion of that tax cut—if it had actually been put into the health care budget this year might have done, because again I say, it's not a \$1.4-billion increase in health care. It is more like \$49 million or certainly less than half a billion dollars going into health care operating at best. If you took that and you added to that budget the \$1 billion that this government is going to put in the mail, what would that buy in terms of health care for taxpayers?

I remind the government that Ontario taxpayers have said their number one concern for the expenditure of government dollars is health care. What could you buy with \$1 billion for the Ontario citizen who wants health care? First of all, you could buy some care in hospitals. You could make sure that if people need a hospital bed, it's going to be there. If they need surgery, they're going to get it in something less than six months, or if it's cataract surgery you're looking for in my community, it's probably going to be a year.

You could start to deal with the hospital deficits, because in this budget there's at best \$100 million for hospitals over and above what they gave to hospitals last year. We all saw the crisis in access to hospital care. We saw the emergency rooms overcrowded. We saw the ambulances that were bypassing emergency rooms because there was literally no room in the hospitals, and often during periods this winter there was no room in hospital after hospital. We saw a woman in labour with twins having to be flown from Brampton, I believe to Ottawa, because there was no room in the largest city in the country for her to give birth to her twins.

The government could have taken some of that \$1 billion, not even all of it, and they could have solved the hospital deficit problem. They could have finally brought in a funding formula that would address the needs of hospitals. Remember the auditor said the funding formula has nothing to do with the needs of patients. They could have brought in a funding formula that would address the needs of patients, solved the deficit problem for hospitals, opened some new hospital beds and maybe next winter we won't face the emergency room crisis that we

faced this year. That would only have taken a small part of the \$1 billion that's going into cheques in the mail. That would be a good use of taxpayers' money.

If the government wanted to do something maybe a little bit different with that \$1 billion and improve access to health care, they might have looked at home care. Do you know that with \$1 billion—I'm not even talking about the rest of the \$8 billion in tax cuts, just the \$1 billion that's going into cheques in the mail. Do you know that \$1 billion put into home care would double the home care budgets for all of the home care agencies in this province? The government puts \$1 billion into home care, and those home care agencies are having to deal with people who are coming out of hospitals sicker and faster because the hospital budgets have been squeezed.

The government's answer has been to ration home care. If you need personal care support, if you're a frail, elderly senior, you're only going to get two hours a day, at best. The home care agencies are having to take the \$1 billion they get from the government and put it more and more into the acute care of patients who can't find a place in the hospital because the hospital budgets aren't large enough. So they could have taken that \$1 billion and they could have doubled the home care budget. I don't think that's where you'd put the whole \$1 billion, but it is, I think, a reasonable use of the money of taxpayers, of Ontario citizens who say they want their dollars used for health care.

Up where I come from, and in fact in about 100 communities across this province, Ontario residents would have told this government another use that they would like to see made of their \$1 billion. They might like to see some new medical school spaces created so that we could deal with the acute physician shortages that are facing at least 100 communities across Ontario, and that's by the government's own numbers. Dr Robert McKendry says we're at least 1,000 physicians short. We can't get the government to acknowledge that there's a shortage yet, let alone deal with it, but they obviously knew that the public was concerned, the Ontario citizen, the taxpayer was concerned, because they put a very deliberate line into the budget that said, "I am ... announcing today that we will implement Dr Robert McKendry's recommendations to increase the number" of medical school spaces.

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I thought: "All right, it's a small amount of money, \$11 million, not a large part of that \$1 billion, but at least it's a step in the right direction to deal with physician shortages so that people will have greater access. Maybe the 25% of the Ontario population who can't get a family doctor will have a chance a few years down the road of getting a family doctor because this government's going to put \$11 million into creating new medical spaces."

After having given credit to the government for taking a small step in the right direction, however belatedly, I found out later in the day that they were not creating new medical school spaces. They were trying to create the impression they were responding to that particular

Ontario taxpayer concern by suggesting they were, when in fact all they were doing was reannouncing something they had announced back in December, which has nothing to do with creating new medical school spaces in either our existing medical schools or in a new medical school in northern or rural Ontario. I think that would be another very responsible and appropriate use of a small part of that \$1 billion.

I think most of the Ontario population who are concerned about access to health care—I really believe it's a growing majority—would say that a very appropriate use of a significant amount of that \$1 billion would be increasing access to primary care. Part of that is dealing with the physician shortages, undoubtedly, and part of it is ensuring not only that we have physicians involved in primary care, but that we have a comprehensive approach to primary care that involves other practitioners, other health care providers, working together as a team to provide really comprehensive, first-access health care, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and maybe even dealing with issues of prevention of illness.

I can tell you that if you look at primary care reform, because the government did try to suggest that somewhere in among all the tax cuts there was money for primary care reform in this budget, the only money that's there for primary care reform is to implement the agreement with the Ontario Medical Association. So the only money that's there that has anything to do with primary care reform has to do with the way in which we pay physicians.

That has nothing to do with the other health practitioners. You should hear the nurses' reaction to this budget. The nurses of Ontario certainly don't think that the \$1 billion, the cheque in the mail, is going to be nearly as effective as putting that same \$1 billion into hiring more nurses, and particularly more nurse practitioners, to move into truly comprehensive primary care reform. In fact, the nurses aren't even sure that the money that was in last year's budget for nurses is actually going into full-time nursing care for patients in this province.

I'm going to run out of time to suggest all the other areas where that \$1 billion could have been used to improve access to health care to make this truly a health care budget, which the government said it was. It didn't say it was a tax cut budget; it said it was a health care budget. When I find there's \$8 billion for tax cuts and less than \$500 million for health care at best, it obviously concerns me.

I want to talk about all the ways the individual \$200 coming together to make \$1 billion could have been used to make this a health care budget. One of the ways, one really small way, is that it could have offset the \$50 million in further delisting of health care that we are about to see. One of these areas that we know for sure is going to be delisted is rehabilitation funded under our hospital insurance scheme, under OHIP. There's \$17 million currently in rehabilitation. Do you know how much money the government put into rehabilitation as they're about to delist \$17 million worth of rehab ser-

vices? They put \$1 million into that. I'm pleased about that as a northwesterner because I happen to know it's going to go into northwestern Ontario, because when they pull out the OHIP clinics in my part of the province, we have no rehab left. So I think they put \$1 million in the budget to help us out in the northwest, but they could have used a little bit of that \$1 billion to make sure that people would not have to pay privately for rehabilitation.

If I'd had my way, they would have taken more than the \$1 billion. They would have taken a good chunk of the \$8 billion going into the tax cut and as a government they would have brought back into the publicly funded health care system some of the \$12 billion in health care services that are being paid for privately by Ontarians today. Some 34% of our health care is being paid for privately, the largest percentage of any province in this country in terms of how much people pay for privately out of their pocket.

I'll tell you again, as with Mr Rawlyk on his northern health travel, people who have to pay privately for their home care, privately for their drugs, privately for their rehabilitation or privately to get health care when it's not available in their communities are not helped by \$200. It doesn't go anywhere. Do you know how much it would cost to have to go to a private rehab clinic to get rehabilitation after knee surgery? Probably about \$1,800 to \$2,000, yet that kind of coverage is going to be lost, and particularly lost to seniors, because it wasn't a priority for this government.

I wish I had time to go on and talk about what the government might have done even with \$1 billion when it comes to cancer care, how it might have been used to deal with the shortages of trained professionals to stop the necessity of referring people out of Ontario or to northern Ontario, as the case may be, to get cancer care that they can't get in southern Ontario. I'm not going to get into the fact that if that happens you have all your costs recovered and how inequitable that is for northerners, or the fact that the government could have used some of the \$1 billion to deal with the northern health travel grant program and make it equitable for northerners, providing the same kind of coverage they saw fit to provide for those from southern Ontario. I'm not going to deal with that today, but I just wish the government could have anticipated the crisis we're about to face in access to chemotherapy and had put some money into this budget to deal with that growing crisis.

I want to conclude by recognizing that this government believes that a strong economy is really what provides the money for medicare. They want to argue that these \$8 billion worth of tax cuts are going to strengthen the economy, and that once you've got a strong and growing economy that's good for health care. I might agree about the good economy being good for health care. I would debate whether tax cuts are really serving the purpose of the growing economy. But I would like to also argue that a good economy will only provide support for medicare if the government in power chooses to take the dollars that are generated from that good economy

and put them into health care. This government in this budget has clearly said it is not prepared to take the growth of a good economy and put those dollars into health care. They want them in tax cuts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Comments?

Mr Christopherson: I want to compliment the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan on her analysis of exactly what this budget means. You're right, that whole hour of self-congratulation was a bit much, given the fact that a whole lot of people are left out of the celebrations. Yes, it includes the very poor, but it includes an awful lot of middle-class people who have no choice but to rely on a public health care system, a public education system, and a Ministry of the Environment that protects our water and the air our children breathe. So this is not just some rant against tax cuts per se; it's about an overall theme you have put together that benefits those who already have. Then you try to look down your nose and wave away with disdain those of us who say: "Wait a minute. There are a few million people who have been left out of this."

I intend to do an exercise similar to that which the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan has done this evening, which is to talk about some of the things that could have been done with the \$1 billion that you've given away, as an attempt at a tax bribe of \$200 to everybody, which I really believe is beginning to backfire as people understand that past the headlines we still are going to need 60,000 to 90,000 nurses between now and 2011. That's real. And 200 bucks in your pocket every year for the balance of your term is not going to come anywhere near replacing a nurse when it's your family member who's in distress and needs that health service.

Mr O'Toole: I must admit I'm quite disappointed with the comments made by the member for Thunder Bay-Atikokan. She should recognize that we are dealing with the issue of the dividend. She might think, as the health critic, that she's empowered to turn it into a debate on health care, but I want to set the record straight. Tom Kent, who's the social policy adviser for the federal Liberals, said it all when he recognized that Allan Rock, Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin have taken about \$1.7 billion out of the health care system of Ontario. Our province has put back in from \$7.4 billion to \$22 billion.

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I can tell you that this budget is about health care: investments of \$1 billion invested in hospitals to accelerate capital restructuring; \$500 million for research infrastructure; \$235 million for the hospital sector, primarily for transitional issues; \$110 million to enhance patient care; \$54 million for priority programs such as cancer care, end-stage renal disease and cardiac care; \$45 million at maturity to Telehealth, a toll-free health advisory number on a 7-24 basis, seven days a week, 24 hours a day; \$30 million annually to develop strategies aimed to integrate and strengthen aspects of stroke prevention; \$21 million over three years for projects testing blood conservation and bloodless surgery techniques; \$11 million annually to address physician shortages; free tuition for medical

students who relocate; \$10 million over two years for the health integration program; \$10 million for a patients' bill of rights; \$6 million annually to provide education and training for level II neonatal units; the list goes on.

This budget addresses health care. Who's missing in health care? The Liberal government. I want to hear more from the health critic—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Patten: I'd like to congratulate my colleague from Thunder Bay-Atikokan. Right off the bat I think she identified the core issue: This bill clearly expresses the values of this particular government. When my colleague identified and made the statement, she did not elaborate too much on it, but it is certainly true that when we hear many ministers talk about competitive advantage—the labour minister, of course, talks about this frequently—we find when we look at the competitive advantage in this country versus our neighbours to the south, of course it's our health care plan. Therefore, when you talk about trying to shore up and make a universal contribution not just to those who are in a position to pay tax but to those seniors who pay no tax, those people who are truly poor, those people who have not participated well, this has been said a number of times but it should be underlined: One thing at least that can be done would be to strengthen our health care program.

I'd like to refer to a program. The member for Durham quoted someone at the University of Toronto. I'd like to quote somebody from the University of Toronto as well. This is Thomas Wilson of the Institute for International Business at the University of Toronto: "I hope this does not set a precedent. We'd be much better off applying that kind of rebate to pay down the Ontario debt by another billion dollars, and then that would enable future reductions in rates of tax." He goes on to explain his worry that this is not a sound investment, and everyone knows that the doubling of the contribution to reduce the debt to \$1 billion will still take about 114 years and most of us will not be around to do that.

The Kitchener-Waterloo Record says—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'd like to comment on the member from Thunder Bay's comments this evening in the House. I would point out that for the Liberal opposition it doesn't come out of their mouths easily to talk about tax cuts. Tax cuts are foul language—to the Minister of Agriculture who is sitting here, I'm not talking about chickens. They refer to tax cuts as foul language. In fact, I've heard Liberals refer to take-home pay as unused tax room. It's obscene the way they talk about taxes and how all money has to flow to the government.

The federal Liberal government did give a tax cut, but they took it kicking and screaming, and still that tax cut is less than the surplus in the unemployment insurance fund. So it's not really a tax cut at all. They're taking it with one hand and giving it back with another. They'll end up with more money in their pockets. Tax cuts in Ontario are going to hard-working Ontarians, Ontarians

who pay their taxes; obey the law; go to work every day; the vast majority of Ontarians who have suffered through the recessions of the 1990s; the people who have suffered through the downsizing; suffered through taking two or three part-time jobs in order to make ends meet through a recession that was brought on by this opposition government. It's about time those Ontarians received some recognition for their contributions and received a tax cut. They're nice words, "tax cut." There's nothing obscene about it. It's the right thing to do in Ontario today and I'm proud to be part of a government that has finally implemented tax cuts for the hard-working people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs McLeod: I appreciate the comments of my colleagues. I want to assure the member for Halton that I have absolutely no difficulty talking about tax cuts, I have no difficulty talking about priorities and I'm prepared to acknowledge that I do think there is something obscene about a budget that has \$8 billion worth of tax cuts, \$4 billion worth of corporation tax cuts and less than \$1 billion for health care, when health care is the number one priority for the people of this province.

I appreciate the member for Durham listing all the small Band-Aids that the government inserted at different places in the budget in order to try and convince the Ontario populace that they were concerned about health care—Band-Aids where the bleeding is worst, but not a single thing, I say to the member for Durham, that will really improve access to health care on the front lines for people who need it in this province.

The government's inability to get it, to give us back this recitation of the little bits and pieces of things that they do to try to make it look as though they're addressing health care issues, reminds me of the Minister of Northern Development last week responding to a question about patients from northern Ontario who have to leave their community in order to get cancer care, at considerable cost to themselves. His response to that question—it wasn't my question—was to talk about the teleconferencing initiative, much as the member for Durham has tonight. Teleconferencing is a good thing, it's a helpful thing, but it's not a way to cure cancer and it will never be a way to cure cancer. We need access to real care in northern Ontario communities, in southern Ontario communities and even in Toronto, where there's increasing concern about adequate access to health care.

I'm prepared to say positive things about health care when the government does something positive. I just can't find very much to say about what this government is doing for health care other than the way in which they're opening the doors to increased privatization, both in terms of private providers and in people having to pay privately for their health care. I say again, people would rather have their \$200 used to pay for health care and not have to pay—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Further debate.

Mr Christopherson: I do appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate.

I realize that politically speaking the enemy is thataway, however, there is a point that has to be made here. I'm not going to dwell on it, but I am going to make the point. That is that it is somewhat galling to listen to our colleagues in the Liberal caucus condemn again another series of tax cuts and argue that that money could have been better spent on public education, public health care, the disabled, the environment, many of the same kinds of issues that we raised, yet when we went into the last election less than a year ago, they were not prepared in their election platform to do anything about the tax cuts. They wanted to leave the tax cuts—

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: I'm not looking for your applause; it hurts my argument.

They wanted to enjoy, if you will, the political benefits of being able to say "We're going to leave the tax cuts in place," but then went on to say they're still going to find money for education, for health care. Well, guess what, I say to my Liberal friends next to us here: You can't have it both ways. You can't condemn the tax cuts and then keep them. You can't say you're going to make expenditures on public health care and education if you're not going to show where the money has come from. As unpopular as it might have been—

Applause.

Mr Christopherson: Really, I'm not looking to curry favour from any of you by way of applause, but I am pointing out that there is a difference between the two opposition approaches that are being heard. In the last election, as much as it was unpopular in some quarters—I make no bones about that—at least we were right up-front and said we'd condemn the tax cuts because you cannot put money and investments in health care and in education and have the tax cuts. We know from our time in office that you've got to show where the bucks are going to come from. We did say that for anyone earning \$85,000 a year or more, and that was only the top 6% of all income earners, that would have given us the billions of dollars we needed to pay for our commitment. I just want to make the distinction between the two opposition parties in terms of criticizing tax cuts and then being prepared to put your political future on the line, if you will, to back up those kinds of criticisms.

Interjections.

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Mr Christopherson: I'm being urged by Liberals to move on, and move on I shall do. I'm not interested in fighting the last election. Believe me, I don't want to fight the last election; not the one before that either, for that matter.

I want to do something that is probably a little unexpected to at least one member across the way. I want to take up the member from Etobicoke North's challenge. In one of your two-minute rebuttals you put the challenge, I think specifically to us and maybe even specifically to me, in talking about tax cuts—I don't want to put words in your mouth—to the extent that, "How can anyone advocate that you have a stronger economy when taxes

are high?" Is that fair to say? OK. He's nodding that's fair. You know what? It's a fair question too.

I would just like to take the opportunity, while I'm dealing with the macro picture in my early comments during my time speaking now, to say to you that one of the things we have the greatest trouble with is not tax cuts per se. I don't know anybody who has a philosophy that there ought to be 100% taxes or there ought to be 80% taxes, that that's what people want. That's not desirable by anyone. No one likes to pay taxes. Any politician of any political stripe would like to decrease taxes and obviously they'd like to do it in a way that maintains the service as well as gives the money.

The problem we've had all along with your agenda with regard to tax cuts is that you, like the Liberals, wanted it both ways, only you wanted it in reverse. You wanted to give all the tax money back and say that you were still maintaining the health care services and the education services and environmental protection, and the reality is you didn't. You didn't do that. In fact a lot of the money you're spending this year is money that's being reinvested in the health care system and the education system—not the environment yet but at least in those two areas—to try to repair some of the damage you've already done.

The next point is that we had strong objections to implementing the tax cuts before the budget was balanced. I know there are some over there who will say: "Balanced budget? When did a New Democrat ever think or care about a balanced budget?" I think I've heard that from you, and I'm seeing some of the members across the way nodding their heads; most, it seems. But let me point out, first of all, that the first province in this country, in the modern economic era, that balanced their budget was the NDP government in Saskatchewan. That's a fact. That is an absolute fact.

Secondly, it was Tommy Douglas, who is the father of our universal health care system—what a lot of people don't know or have forgotten is that during the 16 years that Tommy was the Premier of Saskatchewan, it wasn't until the 14th, into the 15th, year that he actually brought forward his public health plan, and it was only the first step.

I can tell you from experience, having sat on that side of the House, as you know too, that the groups and individuals who make up one's political party put a lot of pressure on you to do certain things. Tommy was under enormous pressure to make this move, but his commitment was that he was not going to do anything that couldn't be sustained fiscally, for the simple reason that if he did it in that fashion there would just be a right-wing government that comes in, uses the fiscal argument as the shield and obliterates health care. It sounds a bit like what's going on in some places across the country today. However, that was his argument and I think it was valid to the extent that that was the cornerstone of the universal health care system that in many ways defines us as Canadians as opposed to other nationalities around the world.

The concept of tax cuts and balanced budgets is not foreign to us as a philosophy. The notion of doing it before the books were balanced to us was wrong. Had you balanced the budget first before you put the tax cuts in place, you'd have balanced the budget years ago.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Yes, yes. You can't say no, because there's \$6 billion to \$7 billion a year that's a tax expenditure that is revenue that was lost. In fact, if you look at the numbers, not only would the budget have been balanced years ago had you not done the tax cuts first; that would have been in the absence of cutting \$1 from any ministry. I think that shows itself, and the member from Scarborough-Agincourt makes the point very succinctly. I think that the proof in the pudding is the fact that your credit rating today is still the same as it was the day you took over power from us back in 1995. Why? Because economists, who don't have a particular party to support or an axe to grind—it's the most cold calculation in the world; it's dollars, dollars, dollars. And the reality is that our credit rating on the international bond market is no better now than the day you took power, because the economists considered it to be less than fiscally prudent to make the tax cuts before you balance the budget.

My last point on this, because I thought it was a very pertinent question and a legitimate challenge, is that we do see the issue of taxes very differently. I say that without trying to be funny. We do see them very differently. You're very much in the individualistic mode, that this \$200 or that \$5,000 can always be spent better by the individual, and then of course you really spun it up with the state spending it, categorizing and characterizing it that way.

But we stand back and take a look at the fact—and I say this a lot because I think it's something we should never forget—that the United Nations has chosen Canada, I believe it's five times now in a row, as the best place in the world to live. That was not based on the fact that we have a tax system that keeps the most away from collectivism; it's based on the fact that we have historically—and mostly Tories, because your party, at least the old Progressive Conservative Party, was in power for 42 years, longer than any of the totalitarian states in eastern Europe. That's how long you were in power—42 years—and during that time the notion that we would all contribute to paying for a publicly accessible health care system and an education system that was available to all our children regardless of their income, based solely on their ability and their desire to work, was what helped make this the best place in the world to live; the fact that we had strong environmental laws, the fact that we had strong labour laws, the fact that we had in place at one time municipal laws that supported good communities, safe communities, progressive communities. So much of that is gone now. So the difference between us is that the idea that collectively we can build a better society is one that we put foremost—fairness, equity, justice.

I realize that if you count your money by the millions, my kind of argument doesn't really stick much; it will to some, but by and large people who count their money by the millions, let alone the tens or hundreds of millions, aren't really all that concerned about a public health care system or a public education system because, of course, they've got the means, the personal independent means, to pay for it. With this budget, I will argue on behalf of the New Democratic caucus, you have played to their argument and played to those individuals and against the history and tradition of Ontario. That's what really infuriates us. You hear me many times, and my colleagues also, being very loud and very passionate. The reason is because we see something that took decades to build being destroyed and lost.

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If you're in that part of the population that has a lot of money, you wouldn't feel that. Nor would it be as big a priority. I'm not suggesting they're bad people, but the life they live is not one where what's going on in the schoolyard has to be a big priority for them if they can choose whatever private school to send their kids to; or the fact that there's a backup in surgeries if they can jump on a plane and fly anywhere in the world to make sure their loved one gets the service they need. It just stands to reason that the public health care system and the public education system are not as huge a priority because that's not the lifestyle they live.

The flaw, as we see it, in that design of society is that that represents such a small portion. In fact—I have my chart here somewhere; just not handy, of course. I'll come across it later because I have this laid out by segments. The fact is that the top 5% of income earners in Ontario earn \$95,000 a year or more. They will share \$733 million out of the tax cuts that are available, and that's five times their fair share. I can't conceive of how that builds a better society when the health care system still needs money. There's a \$1.8-billion deficit that all of the hospitals in Ontario have. This budget did nothing to address that. We still have, on a per student basis, \$810 less being spent per year on students in elementary and secondary schools. Nothing was done to make that better. In fact, there's a cut in your budget that exacerbates that.

We as New Democrats have a great deal of difficulty understanding how you can accept moving away from a society that was so highly regarded by people around the world—the United Nations, as I mentioned—to a society that seems to be based on, "Me first, me the most, greed, and everyone else be damned." That's the direction we're heading in—certainly that's what this budget spells out—and that's a shame.

That's a shame because my eight-year-old daughter, who is to be eight next Sunday, is not going to know the kind of Ontario I was raised in, where the notion was that the education system was there and available, not based on income but based on ability and willingness to work; that there was a health care system where there was accessibility to all the services that I needed and everyone around me needed when they were needed.

There have always been problems in both those areas—they are huge ministries; they're of great importance—but never this kind of crisis, especially during the biggest economic boom we've ever seen in the history of North America. That's what has us looking at this budget and most of your measures and saying you're just playing to the greedy, because the vast majority of individual Ontarians, as a collective, are losing. There is no fairness in that. There is no equity in that. There is no justice in that. Yes, you got re-elected, and you can point to that and draw whatever conclusion you want, and I won't question your right to govern, but I will continue to question the ethics and the morality of continuing to give to those who already have at the expense of those who have less and in many cases nothing. It's just wrong. It's fundamentally wrong and it doesn't have to be this way.

I want to read from an article that was published in today's Hamilton Spectator. It's by Roy Adams, who is a retired professor from McMaster University. He says, in part:

"I was offended by what the Harris Tories did in the budget announced last week.

"From the time they took office in 1995 until now the provincial debt has risen to \$114 million from \$80 million. That's an increase of over 40%.

"If the \$80-million debt that the Tories inherited in 1995 was as bad as their campaign rhetoric claimed it to be, surely \$114 million is much worse. As a result we should expect them to be paying down this much larger debt as quickly as possible.

"Instead, not only have they cut taxes significantly, thereby failing to tap revenues that might have gone to debt repayment, but in this last budget they actually gave back \$1 billion that they had already collected. Most of Ontario's taxpayers will get a one-time payment of \$200 in the mail.

"It's a tax break. That's how I regard it," said Ernie Eves. "It's the people's money and we're returning it."

"The subliminal message seems to be, 'Thanks for your money folks, but even though we have a huge debt and lots of people clamouring for us to patch up some of the damage that we've done to social programs, we figure that we don't need it so we're giving it back.'

"The formal Tory logic for this loony action, that undermines the credibility of their alleged concern about the debt, is that it will stimulate the economy. But most serious economists agree that the primary cause of Ontario's recent economic success is the booming economy in the United States."

I know that just to say where this is from is going to drive the Tories crazy, and for that reason alone I read it, but it is the Toronto Star and their comments on May 3 read as follows:

"It was a great day to be affluent in Mike Harris's Ontario. Finance Minister Ernie Eves has doled out another round of tax cuts designed to make the province an even more business-friendly place. But for those of us who need hospital care, affordable housing, better schools, cleaner air, Eves offered skimpier pickings

"But at its heart, Eves's budget gives the most help to those who need it least, while he keeps the screws on helping those in need.

"Basically, with 'an amazing \$5.3 billion' more revenue than projected, he used it for \$5.2 billion in tax cuts rather than restored services.

"This is where the real goodies are for the better off:

"A wonderful deal on stock options—the first \$100,000 each year won't be taxed.

"A cut in Ontario's capital gains tax by a third over five years.

"A cut in corporate taxes—they'll be chopped nearly in half.

"The small business tax falls to 4%, the mining tax to 10%.

"Lawyers, as well as doctors and other 'self-regulated' professionals, will be able to incorporate their way to lower taxes.

"Against this, public services are country cousins.

"Hospitals will get a \$100-million boost in operating spending—not even enough to cover the raise for nurses.

"To get \$1 billion in capital, hospitals will have to raise \$500 million—and still be left without enough nurses

"And then there are the downers, \$90 million cut from municipal affairs and housing—read that, no money for the homeless. There's \$110 million cut from social services, \$57 million from culture and recreation, \$143 million from the environment.

"Often, too, good spending is swamped by the bad in other spending.

"For example, there's \$4 million more for asthma prevention, treatment and control. But there's \$113 million more for the energy department, whose fondness for coal adds to the pollution that aggravates asthma.

"Yes, it's better to be rich enough to escape these annoyances. A lot better this week than last."

When we took a look at the budget and saw all the cuts that you are providing to all of these corporate players—and, by the way, let's be sure we understand the context. When this is looked at historically, it won't escape anyone that all of these tax cuts are happening at a time when corporations are making greater profits than they've ever made before and the hospitals and education system are in the greatest crisis that they've ever been. Simultaneously that's what's happening in our society, and you chose to help out the corporate and the very wealthy sectors that are already making record levels of money. What we don't understand is how this is supposed to make any sense. There is nothing in this budget at all for the disabled, child care, homelessness, affordable housing, poverty—child poverty has increased 118% in Ontario since 1989 and you did nothing about that. On all of those fronts you did absolutely nothing. Aren't disabled individuals part of Mike Harris's Ontario? Aren't families who need child care part of Mike Harris's Ontario? How about the homeless? Do they just not count? Are they are on the social scrap heap and don't matter? It's far more important to give a corporate tax cut

than to make sure a homeless person has a roof? Is that the message Ontario is sending out now? It must be.

2050

I want to make sure I leave enough time to talk about this \$200 because I have to tell you that if there was anything that was symbolic of this government's cynical approach to governing, it's this.

First of all, there's 25% of the population that isn't going to get any of the 200 bucks. They get nothing out of the \$1 billion. Who would these people be? If I made that statement flat out, that 25% of the population is not going to get this \$200, a logical person might think, "I guess what they're doing is making sure that the top 25%, the wealthiest Ontarians, don't get this 200 bucks because they want to make sure it's focused where it'll do the most good." That would be a reasonable, logical, rational thought if you had just heard out of the blue that the Harris government was sending out \$200 cheques to all Ontarians except 25%.

But that's not the way it is. That's not what's happening in Mike Harris's budget, Mike Harris's Ontario. No, that 25% is the poorest of the poor: the same homeless people, the same people in poverty, the same folks who need child care, the same individuals who are disabled or have a disabled family member. It's the same people who don't get the 200 bucks. And then your finance minister wants us to believe that you have a social conscience? That's insulting. The 25% of the population who won't get the \$200 or any part of it are those who didn't earn enough money to pay even \$200 in income tax in a year. Cabinet ministers spend that much on a meal.

Hon Mr Stockwell: How much?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): How much?

Mr Christopherson: That woke them up. Talking about the homeless didn't. Talking about poverty didn't. Talking about child care didn't, but boy, talk about a cabinet minister going out for dinner and suddenly they're awake. I'm not attacking that per se. What I am pointing out is that there are some people who didn't earn enough money to pay \$200 in income tax and they don't get any of the \$1 billion you're giving out. Then you somehow want us to believe that you care. It's just words, empty words.

Then we find out you're going to spend \$3.5 million to mail the cheques out. The member from Etobicoke North was talking earlier in the discussion about a line on the income tax. I wrote it down. I don't remember the context, but he talked about a line on the income tax; I think it was where people could contribute back the \$200. You could have saved the people of Ontario \$3.5 million by adding a line on the income tax form. But no, you wanted to make sure your little public relations exercise got as much exposure as possible, so it's OK for you to take \$3.5 million to send out individual cheques. I don't know what you're going to do with the 25% who aren't going to get it. Are you going to send them a little sorry note, like you do when you're campaigning: "Sorry I missed you"? Is Mike Harris going to write out little

"Sorry I missed you" notes and send those out to the 25% who get nothing?

It's not just the NDP, or for that matter the Liberals, that are condemning this. Earlier the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance was fond of reading out quotes. Here's one for you from the Hamilton Spectator.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Good right-wing paper.

Mr Christopherson: My friend the labour minister said, "Good right-wing paper." Some in Hamilton would argue that editorially they are a right-wing paper. They must have said one nasty thing about you, and that's put them way off side with you folks? They even write in their editorials that when they criticize you, "We tend to support Mike Harris's policies, da da da da. However," and then they do a "Yeah, but...."

In this case, it was published yesterday and it's headed up, "We're \$200 Richer But Are We Any Wiser?" It says in part, "What is the Harris brain trust's real motivation?" speaking to the \$200. "If, as Ernie Eves says, the rebate is just formal recognition that the money belongs to Ontarians, not the government, it sets quite a precedent. (Uh, Mr Eves ... the money you used on that multimillion-dollar ad war with Ottawa that many of us think is a waste? We'd like that back, too, please)....

"We elect governments to be the best possible stewards, and to make the most intelligent, constructive decisions. Consider the state of our schools, hospitals, infrastructure and provincial debt, then ask yourself—better yet, ask your MPP—is this the best possible use of one billion Ontario tax dollars?"

The Kitchener-Waterloo Record supports the budget editorially, but even they couldn't pretend not to see what's going on here. They say, in their editorial of May 5: "Obviously, the 'taxpayer dividend' is designed to curry favour. It is a blatant political move. Public relations with the public's cash."

The Brantford Expositor, May 6:

"It's been a couple of days now, and we still haven't figured out what Eves was thinking. His first, and biggest mistake, of course, was not applying the \$1 billion towards paying down Ontario's debt.

"Second, how will sending out cheques stop the money being eaten up by higher deductions from our paycheques for CPP and UIC? Or, for that matter, how will that stop the \$200 being eaten up by higher user fees at provincial parks, for drivers' licenses and other government fees?

"But let's assume, just for the sake of argument, that Eves is smarter than we are and has good reason for what he's doing. But why mail out cheques? Isn't that just about the most expensive and inefficient way to get the money to taxpayers?

"It would cost virtually nothing to offer the money as a credit on next year's taxes. Eves isn't doing that. Instead, he wants the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, a new quasi-independent federal agency, to do the mailing for free."

If I might, that was also just about as absurd as the whole concept that, when it was pointed out or brought to

public light that \$3.5 million was going to be wasted mailing it, the response—I believe it was attributed to Eves—was, “Well we’re going to ask the feds for it.” They’re going to ask the feds for it? I thought this was the party that kept saying over and over and over, “There’s only one taxpayer”? Until it suits your purposes to pretend that there are two different taxpayers. There’s a word for that but it’s unparliamentary.

“If the province were to do the job on its own, it would cost about \$3.5 million.

“But whether it’s \$3.5 million or \$350,000, the fact is that it’s wasteful.

“Maybe it isn’t so much to a big-money guy like Eves, but ask any hospital, any school board or any municipal government and they would come up with all sorts of better things to spend the money on than printing cheques and stuffing them in envelopes.

“Here’s a suggestion. While he’s in a spending mood, Eves can be among the first customers for a new service from Canada Post and get his face put on 5.2 million postage stamps to adorn the envelopes containing our cheques.

“Then there would be no doubt who to blame for wasting our money.”

2100

The \$200, aside from the 25% of the population that gets none of it, still amounts to \$1 billion. There are more and more people realizing that for the vast majority of people \$200 is not going to make a huge difference one way or another, but combine all that money and \$1 billion, even in a huge budget like the Ontario budget, can make a difference.

For instance, \$1 billion would kick off an innovative early years education and child care program that would be affordable and accessible to all parents. The total cost after six years of phasing in such a child care system would be \$4 billion, exactly the amount of money this government is giving away in corporate taxes. One billion dollars could restore all but \$7 million in real per capita funding of public schools that this government has stripped from Ontario classrooms since 1995, and we would suggest that you could get the other \$7 million from the \$3-million-plus that you blew on TV ads fighting with the federal Liberals and then kick in the \$3.5 million you’d save by not sending out cheques. You could wipe out that debt. One billion dollars could restore cuts this government made to hospital budgets and go a long way to wiping out their collective \$1.8-billion deficit. It wouldn’t even take \$1 billion for Ontario to get back in the business of creating new affordable housing. That would cost \$780 million and create thousands of affordable homes.

You can’t spend this \$1 billion on all these things, but what we are suggesting is—you had on this list: “Give back \$1 billion and spend an extra \$3.5 million to mail it out so the political benefits, if there are any, come to us. By the way, we’ll do it in such a way that the poorest of the poor don’t get any of it.” One billion dollars would practically cover the \$1.4-billion price tag OCUFA

estimates will be needed to prepare for the pending arrival of the double cohort, something you still haven’t addressed. It would only take \$80 million to restore the capacity of the Ministry of the Environment, and only \$155 million to restore the capacity of the Ministry of Natural Resources after years of cutting. You didn’t do that. In fact, you cut both those ministries again.

You cut at a time when you had a surplus, and you’re giving away billions and billions of dollars. You cut the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources. I suspect that your Minister of the Environment will stand up and say that things are going to be better in the environment as a result of your cuts. I suspect that the things that are not happening, not being checked, not being monitored, not being analyzed, not being enforced, are just another benefit for a lot of your corporate friends who wanted ways around environmental laws. So there’s another benefit to them that will equate to dollars, because you’re going to make it easier for them to make more money. The fact that our environment gets hurt, possibly irreparably, in the process is sort of, says this government: “Tough luck. That’s just too bad.” The same with the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Talk to our kids. Our kids have got this environmental stuff down cold. They’re being raised with the whole notion that we can’t continue to destroy the planet around us. We can’t continue to ignore the fact that sustainable development has to mean something. Maybe all of you are sort of hoping for a Bladerunner future, where you’re the ones who get to go off-planet. I don’t know, but I’ve got to tell you, if that doesn’t happen, you can only move so far into the country to get away from air that’s going to give your kids cancer. You can only go so far away before you don’t have fresh water to swim in at your nice comfortable cottages. That affects all of us, and yet you just don’t care. What other explanation can there be?

I happened to mention to Marilyn Churley, who is our environment critic, earlier today that I was trying to make some sense out of the fact that, relatively speaking, it would take very few millions of dollars to remove this criticism. What I couldn’t come up with was why you didn’t just take the millions of dollars—in total, you could repair all the damage you did for \$100 million. That’s a lot of money, but in the context of this budget and these tax cuts in the billions, it’s not really. You could have made all of this political heat and criticism go away.

The only thing I can imagine is that you want to send that message out. You have already decided that no environmentalist is ever going to vote for you, and that to the people who want you to eliminate the protective measures that exist in our laws that are upheld by the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources, you want to send out a message that you’re eating away at that. Rather than convince that part of the population you’re speaking to with words, you do it with action. So it’s even worse than just what you’re doing; it’s that you’re almost bragging about it. It’s the only

thing that makes sense, because they obviously spent a lot of time crafting this political document, and all budgets are—my party's, the Liberals'—political documents. I'm not suggesting that somehow you've made them different, but you do spend a lot of time on them, and given all the damage you've done to environmental protection and to our natural resources, why would you leave yourself this vulnerable?

There's always the argument that you made a gaffe, and that's entirely possible. It was interesting to watch the finance minister, within a matter of hours after delivering the budget, starting to talk about social services and the homeless. All of this stuff was starting to come out and I don't think you realized that total vulnerability. I would say that speaks to the fact that you don't think a lot about the homeless, the disabled. I'm not saying you're evil—some of you, I'd have to question that—I don't believe that all of you are evil, but I don't believe that enough of you get up every day and give a tinker's damn about our health care system, about people who are in poverty and the homeless and disabled and public transit. I really don't think you do, because if you did, there would be something in the budget. And there isn't. There's nothing.

Mr Chudleigh: We took half a million people off welfare.

Mr Christopherson: What about the disabled, hotshot? What are you going to say to the disabled?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Halton.

Mr Chudleigh: I couldn't hear you; I was yelling too loud.

The Acting Speaker: I could name you but we'll wait. Member for Hamilton West.

Mr Christopherson: Maybe the member for Halton won't be quite so cocky when he knows that the people who care about the disabled monitor very carefully everything that's said and everything you do in this regard, because you've left them no choice. You wanted to go out of your way, you even leaned over to Hansard and said, "Make sure they know it was me from Halton." They'll know it was you from Halton who didn't care at all and didn't even have the respect to not heckle when somebody was raising the issues about the disabled. That's how much you cared about it.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Perhaps the debate would go better if we directed our comments through the Speaker.

Mr Christopherson: You're right, Speaker. I was on the point of whether or not this was a gaffe, and I suppose it could be, but it's just too big to be that. I just can't imagine that you went ministry by ministry—and I know the process. I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance for two years myself. I know how carefully everything is looked at. I just can't believe that you would deliberately leave yourself that vulnerable on that issue. Therefore the only other conclusion is that you deliberately wanted to send out that message. It's part of the fear we have that a lot of the criticizing we do, you

like, because it sends the message to your supporters that you're doing what they want. However, what do we do about that? It's not like we're not going to criticize. All we can do is hope that eventually enough people get past the PR and get past the headlines and have a chance to look at what this budget is telling Ontarians. What it's telling Ontarians is that you're making sure there are billions and billions of dollars that are going into your friends' pockets, and if that means you have to take it out of public services, then that's exactly what you're going to do, and that's exactly what you have done.

2110

I want to spend a couple of more minutes on the \$200 since I really think this is one that you called wrong. You thought it through but, at the end of the day, I just don't believe the average citizen believes you on this. I don't believe that Ontarians can be fooled that often and I believe they've been fooled. I'm one of those who sits on this side of the House and watches the names you put on bills: bills to protect the environment, and they do exactly the opposite; bills where you say you're promoting democracy in the workplace, and you're doing the opposite. I happen to believe that over time—unfortunately, far too much time—people will begin to understand that you're not there for the average Ontarian. You're there to con the average Ontarian. The ones who are really winning with you in power are the ones who are sitting right now in very comfortable, I would suggest, overstuffed leather chairs in a wall-panelled room, killing themselves laughing that there were so many Ontarians who bought into your line that you got back into power a second time and they're getting all the cream. They're getting all the benefit while the average Ontarian watches their health care system disintegrate around them; the education system disintegrate around them; our environment being raped; students not going to university because they can't afford the tuition and they can't afford to be in that much debt; labour laws that have been changed to the point where so many workers have lost rights that your party gave them in the first place decades ago. I just don't believe, at the end of the day, there will be enough Ontarians who will buy into this agenda that this will continue. I don't even like to think of what another half or full decade of this kind of governance would mean to Ontario.

Interjection: What about the \$200?

Mr Christopherson: Two hundreds dollars would pay for one month's rent increase for a typical building in downtown Toronto as a result of your rent decontrol. The 200 bucks might pay for the tuition increase announced by the Conservatives over two years for students paying \$5,000 per year. The 200 bucks would pay for two copies of the statement of arrears that the recipients require at least twice a year from the Family Responsibility Office. Two hundred bucks might help recover the cost seniors face because of new user fees on prescription drugs. However, I would remind you that there are an awful lot of seniors and disabled who don't qualify for the rebate because they didn't pay enough tax because they don't

have enough income to pay that kind of tax. Unfortunately, \$200 doesn't even come close to helping adoptive parents pay the \$925 head tax on international adoptions which your government has brought in. Two hundred bucks doesn't come close to paying for the school supplies, the field trips and classroom materials which parents now have to organize in fundraising drives to pay for.

Just as an aside, I'll tell you what is so obscene about the kind of fundraising that has to go on in our schools right now. If you need \$20,000 for a field trip, that is a lot easier to do in a city like Markham or Mississauga, where you have a much higher per capita income—

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Solicitor General): Markham is a town, not a city.

Mr Christopherson: The town of Markham—I stand corrected—or the city of Mississauga. However, the point is that it's a lot easier to do that when you've got average per capita incomes that are \$50,000, \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000, \$90,000 a year rather than in an inner city like Hamilton, Toronto, Windsor or Sudbury—any major older, particularly an industrial, community—where the per capita income is not as high. There is a real inequity there. When you've got an \$80,000 average individual income in a town like Markham, it's a lot easier to get the 20 grand than it is if it's down in the north end of Hamilton, where we have a lot of challenges. You've done nothing about that and your \$200 does nothing about that.

The \$200 might help people recover some of the costs that Ontarians face because new user fees have gone up or have been imposed to go to their parks, to get a driver's licence or to get a fishing licence. Virtually everything that involves contact with this government by way of permission, licence, form, document, anything in officialdom, has gone way up, and in municipalities even more so. But that was easy for you to do. You just downloaded all the responsibilities to the municipalities and let them either cut the service or raise taxes or move to user fees or increase user fees, while you run around and say you've cut taxes—easy to do when you give somebody else all your problems.

The \$200 might help pay for the \$30 fee increase for property tax appeals and the \$50 to \$110 fee increase of business property tax appeals. The \$200 might help pay for the \$45 fee to lodge a complaint to the rent tribunal.

The point of all this is that the \$200 really was a public relations scam, and you're getting called on it. You're going to talk about individualism and people should make their own spending decisions and all that kind of stuff, but I believe the reality is that the vast majority of Ontarians would rather have seen that \$1 billion go into health care, go into education. For that matter, they'd rather have seen it go into debt reduction. Given a choice between returning it the way you did, where 25% of the population, those who could use it the most, aren't even going to get it, I'd rather see you put it towards debt reduction than what you've done here. I don't think that would be the first choice, I don't think it would be the

best choice, but I think it would be a better choice than what you've done here.

It is obscene, to take \$1 billion and give it out \$200 at a time and then spend, waste, \$3.5 million to mail the cheques individually. That's a pretty expensive advertising campaign—\$1,003,500,000 total cost for an ad. Thanks a lot.

I didn't get a chance the other day to talk about post-secondary education in terms of the alternative you chose not to pick. Our universities are 59th out of 60 spots. We're 59th in terms of funding for universities, dead last in Canada. Your answer to that? Bring in privatized universities. This sounds like Snobelen has still got his finger somewhere in the education system: Create a crisis—read that to mean “Screw it up, break it, cause chaos”—and use that as an excuse to step in and do something, and then usually what you say is: “They wouldn't do anything. We're the only ones with the courage to step in.”

Believe me, there's nothing courageous or correct about bringing in privatized universities as some sort of quasi-response to the crisis that exists in universities. It is a mess. There are 13,000 professors who need to be hired over the next few years to replace the ones who are retiring—nothing in the budget to deal with that. There are billions of dollars that are needed to repair and maintain our universities—nothing in there to do anything about that. My friend and colleague from Hamilton Mountain is the colleges and universities critic. So while McMaster University is in my riding, she is as familiar as I am with the condition of the actual physical plant of McMaster University. There are parts of that university, a world-renowned university, that are shameful, disgraceful. Why? They don't have the money. They've got to choose between trying to keep the classrooms going or repair holes in the wall in the washroom, tiles coming down in the lecture halls, water seeping out from the floorboards. What kind of nonsense is this? But you've got billions of dollars to give to individuals and companies that are making more money than they've ever made before. And you know what? The reason a lot of them are making that money or that the corporations are making that kind of money is that the people in there benefited from our public education system.

2120

What about students who are in high school right now, looking at university, and saying to Mom and Dad: “I know you can't help me. I had planned all along to work to save enough to go to school, but I can't make enough money working to get ahead of this game, and I'm afraid to come out of school \$30,000, \$40,000 in debt, so I've decided I'm not going to go to university. I'm going to have to do something else.” That's got to be pretty heart-breaking for a lot of parents, when they know they've got a smart kid, a kid who will work hard, who could really make something of themselves and by doing that could contribute to society. All that's lost because you decided that rich people needed more money, that their need for more money, that corporations' hunger for greater profits

on top of record profits, is more important than that kid going to university and having a future. How do you justify that?

And it's no better in the college system. My friend from Hamilton Mountain and I share the border on which Mohawk College lies; it happens to fall into my riding, but it's right next to the boundary on hers. They're facing many similar situations. In fact, they got left out of your big million-dollar announcement not that long ago, and they had great plans. They should have fit. They should have got the money. We still don't know why Mohawk College didn't get any of that announcement. All I know is that those of us in the NDP, for sure, believe that putting money into our university system and into our college system is a good investment in the future; it's a good investment in our kids.

I guess you rationalize that the kids of those who already have, who got even more from this budget, don't need to worry about whether tuition costs \$2,000 or \$7,000. They're probably not even going to a university anywhere within Ontario. They have the luxury and they're fortunate to go to maybe other universities that are incredible in cost, \$40,000, \$50,000 a year, so why would this be an issue for that family? I'm not faulting them, I'm just saying it's not something that visits them every day.

But you can't build the kind of Ontario that all of us in this room have benefited from by following the course you're following. You can't have a repetition of the success of the generations now in leadership positions in society, in business and in politics, and that we've had in the immediate past generations since the Second World War, without making the investments in our education system. You can't do it. We'll have a different kind of Ontario. There will be some who will do fine, but it won't be the same sort of "anybody can get there" that Ontario was before. That's going, quickly.

All of you are going to be players in history. Your descendants are going to look back in time and say, "What role did my great-great-grandmother or -grandfather play during that era?" and they're going to take a look at that. I'm going to tell you, a lot of them are going to be awfully sad at where they found their ancestors were, because you're on the wrong side of history. I think you're on the wrong side of humanity here. I think you're playing to the wrong parts of what makes us human beings, good and bad.

We already had the thing working right. Damn. It's not a coincidence that the United Nations picked Canada five times as the best place to live in the world. That's not a coincidence. You can laugh all you want, but the

fact is that you are building an Ontario all right, but you're not building the kind of Ontario that we all benefited from and you're not building the kind of Ontario that would make this as strong as it could be. You're not doing that, and you ought to be ashamed of yourselves. You ought to be ashamed of the fact that you have taken care of so very many wealthy people and left so many other people behind.

The first one who wants to stand up and take the floor and explain why you did nothing for the disabled and for the homeless should feel comfortable doing so, because I don't think you can defend that. You can talk about what you did last year, you can talk about resolutions and letters you've sent, but I don't think you can stand in your place and defend, with any kind of morality, why you had no money for the disabled in Ontario—nothing.

Our education system is going to be worse off because of this budget, our health care system is going to continue to fall further behind as a result, we're going to see more environmental atrocities, we're going to see more damage done to our natural resources, we're going to see more and more people move from middle-class to poor. One of the key things I worry that people don't realize is that they may be safely comfortable, middle-class, modest-income, middle-income, whatever phrase one likes, today, but the trend lines in Ontario are not that you're about to become the next millionaire. It's far more likely you're going to be sliding down into poverty. Believe me, being poor in Mike Harris's Ontario in the year 2000 is not someplace you want to aspire to be. The thing that lets people have a different future—I come back to our education system, especially the post-secondary education system. More and more Ontario students are having to say no to a university future because of dollars rather than ability.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: You know what? The Tories across the way can hoot and holler and shake your heads all you want. Go talk to the students. Go talk to the students of ordinary, middle-class people, not your rich friends, not them. They're OK. Like any student, they ought to be OK and they will be. Go talk to the vast majority of Ontario students and ask them how they feel about the future that you're building for all of us.

This is a budget designed by people who owe things to the very powerful and the very wealthy, and unfortunately, so unfortunately, they delivered.

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

The House adjourned at 2128.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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 Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr
 Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers
 Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller
 Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman
 Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
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Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, minister responsible for seniors and women / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs, ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées et à la Condition féminine
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Gerretsen, John (L)
Broadview-Greenwood	Churley, Marilyn (ND)		
Bruce-Grey	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Tourism / ministre du Tourisme	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Carleton-Gloucester	Coburn, Brian (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, government House leader / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)		Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	Leeds-Grenville	Wood, Bob (PC)
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Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	London West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	London-Fanshawe	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines	Markham	Marland, Hon / L'hon Margaret (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Children) / ministre sans portefeuille (Enfance)
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Mississauga East / -Est	
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Brenda (PC)		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion		
Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga West / -Ouest	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio / ministre sans portefeuille	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Brad (PC)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thornhill	Molinari, Tina R. (PC)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (L)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre–Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education / ministre de l'Éducation	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Wentworth-Burlington	Vacant
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premiers et derniers numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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