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of Ontario**

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**Official Report  
of Debates  
(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
(Hansard)**

**Wednesday 6 December 2000**

**Mercredi 6 décembre 2000**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier  
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 6 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE  
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 6 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1845.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HOUSE SITTINGS

**Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for francophone affairs):** I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall continue to meet until Thursday, December 21, 2000, at the end of which time the Speaker shall adjourn the House until the next sessional day.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to allow the official opposition to stand down its leadoff hour.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Member Caplan requests unanimous consent that his party stand down. Agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Baird moves government notice of motion number 81. To lead off debate, the Chair recognizes the Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Hon Mr Baird:** This is a routine procedural motion, and in the debate I would like to share my time with the hard-working member for Guelph-Wellington and the hard-working member for Willowdale, two of my colleagues. I'd like to indicate that at the outset.

This is a procedural motion that will allow the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to sit an extra week before we break for the holidays. Normally we would break next Thursday, and this resolution, if passed, would allow the House to sit an extra week, which indeed would be good news for supporters of a number of very important pieces of legislation that are before the Legislative Assembly. It will allow us the opportunity to continue to try to do the people's business before we adjourn for the holiday season.

There are a number of important pieces of legislation before the assembly. Two very important pieces of legislation have been brought forward by my colleague the Attorney General. I know there are discussions on one bill, the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act, trying to do more to assist victims of crime. It has been really a hallmark of this government to try to do more to support victims.

Another important piece of legislation concerns domestic violence. This House earlier today talked about the tragedy that occurred 10 or 11 years ago in the city of

Montreal. There's a very important piece of domestic violence prevention and protection legislation that's been put forward by my good colleague the Attorney General and member for Whitby-Ajax, which seeks to provide the police and our justice and law enforcement officials with more power to ensure that women who have been victims of domestic violence have greater protection. It's not an answer to every problem but a substantial move forward.

I want to congratulate the Attorney General for his leadership in this initiative in pushing this bill forward. To date, I understand the bill is at the justice committee, but we'd like to get that reported out of committee, to come for an opportunity for third reading debate in this Legislature. That's something we can accomplish over the next week, the next number of days, allowing it to sit an extra week.

There's also important legislation on replica guns that's being put forward by the Solicitor General to try again to ensure public safety in the province of Ontario, particularly for our law enforcement officials. You saw in the press this fall a tragedy that took place in another jurisdiction where this was the case. This would seek to provide some protection.

**1850**

This is also important because there's a budget bill, the second bill that normally comes in the late fall, early winter, to bring in many of the measures passed in the budget. That legislation, presented by my colleague the Minister of Finance, Mr Eves, is an important bill. It's a very important part of our economic growth agenda. We obviously need to accomplish more.

We are excited about the economic growth that has taken place in Ontario, excited about the huge welfare caseload decline that we've seen happen in Dufferin county, which has the number one caseload decline, I say to the member for Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey, a very good riding. I had the privilege of working for the former member of Parliament from that riding for many years but the riding name has changed.

This economic growth, again, is important. We celebrate the fact that more than 800,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario. We celebrate that success, but we can't declare a victory. We know that there are still some people out there who are looking for work and, as my colleague from Halton says, "As long as there's one person looking for a job, this government and this caucus have work to do." That's one of the priorities we're undertaking, economic growth and job creation, because the very best thing we can do for someone who's

unemployed is to give them the dignity that comes with a job and the pride that comes with being independent. That's why this budget bill, that we want to have some more opportunity to debate before the Legislature adjourns, is important.

We've discovered that every time we've cut taxes two things have happened: (1) at the end of the day we found out we brought in more money; and (2) we found out that it has assisted job creation. It has assisted in economic growth to the point where half of the new jobs created in Canada over the past five and a half years have been created right here in Ontario. It's a record which is unparalleled. In fact, our economic growth here in Ontario will lead the G8 countries for economic growth. In fact, our economic growth is even higher than that south of the border in the United States. So for those who would say that all the credit belongs to Alan Greenspan and the American economy, while that's helped, our economic growth is actually higher than it is south of the border. That is indeed good news.

Tax cuts do create jobs. When I talk to families in my constituency, whether it be a family in Metcalfe, a family in Greely, a family in Stittsville or Richmond, in North Gower or south Nepean, families have hit the tax wall. Increasingly over the years, government was taking more and more money out of their pockets and they were having a difficult time being able to provide for themselves and their families. What we've tried to do is to say not only should we stop driving into that wall, but rather we should pull back and cut taxes to help create jobs, cut taxes to allow hard-working taxpayers the chance to keep more of their hard-earned money. What we've discovered every time we've done that is they've spent that money and they've helped create even more jobs so that more economic growth ensues.

It has contributed a terrific amount to increased consumer confidence, and consumer spending has done well. I look at the home-building industry in my constituency. Whether it's in Stittsville, Longfields, Davidson Heights or Chapman Mills in south Nepean, or small home builders in Greely, Ontario, you see a terrific number of new homes being constructed in the province of Ontario. This government and this Parliament were re-elected just 18 months ago. In fact, in my constituency there are almost whole streets which didn't exist 18 months ago, so there has been a substantial amount of new home construction. We're always pleased to see that because with that comes a lot of jobs, whether it's the home builder, whether it's the person who installs the carpet, the plumber, the carpenter, the real estate agent, the lawyer that helps a family move into that home. That indeed is good news.

But that didn't happen by accident. It's happened with the assistance of tax cuts and the economic measures of this government, which is another reason why we have to have the opportunity to deal with this second budget bill.

We've seen a substantial amount of economic growth in the high-tech sector and I'm pleased to state that the new city of Ottawa is the high-tech capital of Ontario. We have a substantial amount of high-tech growth in our

part of the province, at Nortel Networks in Nepean, at JDS Uniphase in the city of Nepean as well. We've seen, in Nortel's case over the last five and a half years, more than 6,000 net new jobs created, and we'll see even more come in the future, we have learned. We've seen the incredible rise of JDS Uniphase and the former JDS Fitel; we've seen the huge amount of economic growth.

One of the challenges we have in Nepean-Carleton is building the roads and the infrastructure that will allow this growth to continue. But certainly that high-tech growth didn't happen by accident. It happened because of policies like the doubling-the-pipeline proposal presented by the Canadian Advanced Technology Association. When they came before the government and said, "We don't have enough skilled labour to meet the growing demand for people in our high-tech industry, for high-tech workers, for computer engineers, for software engineers, for electrical engineers," and the double-the-pipeline proposal was brought forward to the government, the government accepted and created the access to opportunities program.

In my part of the province, Carleton University has been a big winner under that program. I had the chance to visit Carleton with Richard Van Loon, the president of Carleton, and see the expansion that has taken place there within their engineering program. Now Carleton University has the third-highest number of engineers of any institution in the province of Ontario. That has been assisted not just with the leadership of Dr Van Loon but with the access to opportunities program, ATOP, which is indeed good news.

One of the challenges is that we educate high-tech workers in this country. We're graduating more engineers and more experts in the area of software and related fields from our colleges and universities. We also get a lot at Algonquin College in my constituency.

But one of the problems is that companies from south of the border have been coming in to recruit. The most telling example of this was that a former student who was working in my office accepted a job offer at Nortel Networks and then was offered a job in Redmond, Washington, at Microsoft. What did it for him—and I want to tell you this because you're going to be interested—was a Web site where he could plug in what his salary would be in Nepean in Canadian dollars, with the cost of living in Nepean, in the Ottawa-Carleton area, with Redmond, Washington, and what that salary would be worth there with the tax structures, the currency exchange and the cost of living. It was frightening. What it pointed out was that high-tech was being discouraged or inhibited in its growth because of high taxes. That's why we undertook to cut taxes.

But one of the initiatives that was contained in last year's budget that we're working on rolling out more—and we hope the federal government will join in that case, because they've been absent; they haven't been supportive of high-tech industry in this regard—is the stock option tax credit, particularly in our research-and-development-intensive companies, to encourage more of

those workers not just to be educated here in Ontario but to stay in the province.

The cuts in capital gains taxes that have been the challenge the Ontario government and our finance minister, Ernie Eves, have put forward, have been responded to by the federal government, but we'd like to see the stock option tax credit become a reality. That's part of the economic growth agenda of this government—very important for our continued economic growth because it's not just a high-tech worker who wins; it's the huge number of spinoff jobs that we get, particularly from research and development.

If you talk to Peter Washburn, one of the senior vice-presidents of Nortel, he'll tell you about the percentage of R&D, research and development, in Canada that takes place at Nortel Networks, right in Nepean, Ontario. It's incredible, and we want to encourage more of that, because that world R&D that takes place in the province of Ontario and the city of Nepean is a great benefit to our entire economy. It helps bring in a lot more tax revenue, so if we want to provide more support for our hospitals, like the Queensway Carleton Hospital in my community, like the Ottawa Hospital, like the University of Ottawa Heart Institute, we need a growing economy to pay for those things. It's done and fuelled in large measure, in my part of the province, by high tech and the spinoff jobs coming from high tech. That's another important part.

We have to be here to debate some of these pieces of legislation, so that we have the opportunity to debate. I know there will be some in my office—I think of Will Stewart or Mike Van Soelen—who won't want us to work an extra week. But I can tell you, we're committed to not leave until the job is done.

**1900**

Also, bringing in a balanced budget this year has been an important part of that economic growth, an important part of that job creation agenda. I know there was a lot of heavy lifting done. I look at the member for Oak Ridges, formerly York-Mackenzie. He did a lot of that heavy lifting so we could bring in a balanced budget in the province. When we arrived as the government back in 1995, we had an \$11.9-billion—I apologize—an \$11.3-billion deficit.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** It would have been \$11.9 billion if it had gone on even another month or two, the member for Oak Ridges says, and he is right. We worked hard to make some difficult but necessary decisions, to help provide Ontario with a balanced budget. But we did so, at the same time, cognizant that the very best way we could balance our budget was to help job creation, that economic growth would be the shot of adrenaline this economy needed.

The Liberal Party said you couldn't balance the budget and cut taxes at the same time, that you'd have to ask those who were living in despair, those who were unemployed, to take a number: "We'll get to you in five years, in four years, when the budget is balanced." But this government, hard-working members like Jim Fla-

herty, Frank Klees, John O'Toole and Brenda Elliott, said no. Ted Chudleigh said no. David Tilson said no and Gerry Martiniuk said no. They said they didn't want to leave anyone behind, David Tilson particularly. We worked hard to bring in that balanced budget and cut taxes and try to stimulate economic growth in this province.

I'll tell you it was not a pretty sight when we arrived here. In the five years before this government was elected, before Mike Harris became Premier, we lost 10,000 jobs. In the last five and a half years, not the government, not politicians, but hard-working taxpayers and small business people have helped create more than 800,000 net new jobs in this province, and that is indeed very good. The record is clear. That didn't happen by accident; it happened because we had a good economic agenda. That's why the budget bill, budget bill 2 for the fall, that we'll be able to debate for an extra week, will be important.

*Interjection.*

**Hon Mr Baird:** There's the NDP—the NDP leader is here—telling us how to run the economy. I'll put Mike Harris's record against the Hampton-Rae record any day, any time. They were in government for five years. It was terrible, doom and gloom. So much has been said about that. We have repealed so much of the bad legislation. We had the chance to debate some labour legislation, and I remind—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio):** Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I wonder if you could rule on whether "windbag" is parliamentary language.

**The Acting Speaker:** If there's anything the member for Kenora-Rainy River would like to say that would add to the debate, that would be fine. If not, we'll ask you to go back to your Christmas cards.

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. I would ask the member to withdraw that remark.

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** I've offended you, Speaker, I withdraw it.

**The Acting Speaker:** No, it will be unconditional. Just withdraw.

**Mr Hampton:** I withdraw the remark "windbag."

**The Acting Speaker:** I would ask the member once more just to withdraw.

**Mr Hampton:** I withdraw the remark "windbag." I understand that is the term you take offence to.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'll ask once more. I'd ask you to withdraw the remark unconditionally.

**Mr Hampton:** Mr Speaker, which remark do you find unparliamentary? I will withdraw it.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community and Social Services.

**Hon Mr Baird:** I remember this member of the Bob Rae government. His idea of an agenda for the government of Ontario was to run an \$11.3-billion deficit and then override every collective agreement in the public

sector of the province of Ontario. That was his agenda. That was his labour agenda. So when people say our labour legislation is bad, I get out the quotes, and they said so many worse things about him and his government. I know he personally advocated for the social contract. They had a negotiation, and when they couldn't get a negotiation they just went in and stripped the collective agreement. That was their way of doing things, and the people of Ontario have spoken and passed judgment on those ways of doing things.

Our economic growth agenda is working. We've seen a steady number of jobs created, not by the government but by hard-working taxpayers in the province of Ontario. We've seen a lot of growth, and indeed that growth is compounding some of the problems we have.

In my constituency we have real problems with growth in that we can't build schools fast enough for the young families who are moving into my constituency. While we've seen more than seven schools built in my constituency, which is a good start, a lot of parents in Stittsville are really keen to get a new school built, and you bet your boots I'm working hard on that with others—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** The member from Kenora-Rainy River, come to order.

**Hon Mr Baird:** We need a new public school in Longfields/Davidson Heights and that's something we've been working for. My colleague the Minister of Education made a regulation change which allowed \$14 million to be freed up from capital development charges, which could allow the new schools to be built, and we want to see the school board move forward so that those children don't have to be bused out of their home communities and don't have to live in portables. They lived for five years in portables under the NDP. We built seven new schools in the last five years, so we've done a lot better. We haven't solved everything, but we indeed are doing better. But that overcrowding is certainly my top local priority, and that's why an economic growth agenda and this motion to sit longer is important.

We also have, as has been discussed in many debates, important infrastructure. This budget and budget bill that supports our economic growth plan envisages more money for infrastructure. We need more money for infrastructure in my community, in my riding, in Manotick, with water and waste water treatment, in Osgoode township, where we've had water problems, in Metcalfe and Edwards. So that agenda is very important.

We can also pass the corrections bill that's before the House. In my community, in Burritts Rapids, we have a facility that's going to be closing down—

*Interjection.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm patient. There's another event going on in this building that you're welcome to attend. There are Christmas cards to sign. We'll get a sandbox for you to play in if you need it. But I'll not put up with any of this shouting across the room, and I'll not warn the member for Kenora-Rainy River again.

**Mr Hampton:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Where is the Minister of Corrections?

**Hon Mr Baird:** The former Minister of Corrections, Rob Sampson, is someone in this House who will take second place on integrity, on honour, on honourable conduct, to no one in this place. I am incredibly proud to call him a friend and incredibly proud to serve in the caucus. If we had had members like the member for Mississauga Centre in the NDP caucus—I can think of a few examples—this province would have been very, very fortunate.

The corrections bill is an important part of our—because we're trying to take the Rideau regional centre, correctional facility, in Burritts Rapids, Ontario, and turn it into a young offenders' facility. That'll be good news for our community. We'll be able to keep some jobs in the community that otherwise would not have been able to be kept, and I'm certainly very supportive of that. Sitting a lot longer will be important. We can also deal with some of these other challenges we're facing in terms of the budget bill and appropriations.

I'll tell you the economic growth needed to continue is very important in my area, because we need more money for health care, like the Queensway-Carleton Hospital, which is undergoing an operational review right now. Tom Schonberg, the president of the hospital, has been working hard and we have announced three times in the last eight weeks substantial new funding, a record amount, spending \$5 billion more than the NDP spent on health care.

That is very important for the agenda of the province of Ontario, very important for the agenda of the people's place, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. That's why I'm prepared to spend an extra week before our Christmas holiday break to stay here and to work harder. I know the legislative rules say we should only sit an extra week. What I'm saying is that this member, this caucus, this cabinet, this Legislature should be prepared to work harder and to not go home until we're able to accomplish a lot more. That's why I support this important resolution and that's why I urge all members of the House to give it speedy passage.

**1910**

**Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington):** I'm very pleased to rise in support of this resolution before the House tonight. In my riding of Guelph-Wellington we have a company called Mike the Mover. I don't know why it popped into my head tonight. I guess it's maybe because Mike's a special name on this side of the House, because obviously it's the name of our great leader. But Mike the Mover is a moving company in our riding and their motto is so apropos to what we're talking about tonight: "We Love To Work." That's what this is all about tonight. We're debating here in the House a motion to extend December sittings.

In talking to the chief government whip earlier on, I was surprised, and I asked him, "Will the opposition members actually be opposing this particular motion?" He indicated to me, "Yes, indeed they will be." I'll be

curious to know if the Liberals and the NDP oppose sitting an extra few days to address the issues of the House and the legislation that's before it.

It seems shocking to me that people who are elected by constituents all across this province would demonstrate by actually debating in the House here that they don't want to stay for an extra few days—and we're talking about days—to discuss matters of importance to the Legislature. We're here to establish laws and to establish policies which govern this province. That they would want to go home before the government business is completed is, quite frankly, astounding to me.

We were given a document earlier tonight that indicated that 24 bills had been presented and had passed first reading here in the House; 15 remain to yet pass third reading. My colleague from Nepean-Carlton mentioned a number of them. Part of my discussion could be to go through these bills in their details, to talk about what is yet to be discussed by the Legislature—obviously extremely important: a made-in-Ontario tax, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, accountability in corrections, the Human Tissue Gift Amendment Act. That they would want to leave before this particular piece of legislation is passed is unbelievable to me. Transportation delivery service, replica guns—

**Mr Caplan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Could you check to see if we have a quorum, please?

**The Acting Speaker:** Would the table check for a quorum, please?

**Acting Clerk at the Table (Mr Tom Prins):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Acting Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Guelph-Wellington.

**Mrs Elliott:** Thank you, Speaker. We do have people here in this House ready to work. As I said before I was interrupted, it's astounding to me that people across the House in the Liberal Party and the NDP want to even debate that we shouldn't stay to complete government business. I would be very interested to ask their constituents how they feel about this.

As I knew we were going to debate this tonight, one of the assistants in my office, Vijay Chauhan, who has been with me for some time as my legislative assistant, and I were discussing what it is that we would want to talk about tonight. One of the things we thought might be useful would be to look, for example, at my riding in detail. When my constituents send me here from Guelph-Wellington, they have an expectation of how I'm going to behave in this House, what kind of representation I'm going to display on their behalf.

Here in this Legislature we come from all points of Ontario and sometimes we don't know each other's ridings particularly well, so I thought if I described to my colleagues here in the Legislature what my riding is like and how the people in my riding would feel about this kind of debate, it might perhaps give a different perspective on the situation we're in tonight.

My riding is called Guelph-Wellington. It primarily encompasses the city of Guelph, a city of about 100,000 people. When the ridings were reconfigured and reduced from 130 to 103 to match the federal ridings, it then included two rural sections of the riding: a township called Puslinch and a township called Guelph-Eramosa. Tonight in the dining room we had representatives from the Dairy Farmers of Ontario. They were very interested to recognize that my riding also has some rural representation in it, which it didn't have before. I pointed out to them that what the Dairy Farmers of Ontario do and what matters concern them were always of importance to me in my riding, because for many years the city of Guelph has been recognized as a key leader in agricultural interests by people not only in Ontario but across the nation. That's primarily because our city of 100,000 or so has, as one of its jewels, the University of Guelph. Its nickname in the city is "Moo U" because it was originally based as an agricultural college, and over the years has evolved into a world-class university that is recognized all around the world for its agricultural expertise, its expertise in biotechnology, in so many areas of research. In fact, it is the university with which OMAFRA, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food for the province, has a very special research relationship. That has been earned over the years by the excellent quality of work done at the University of Guelph.

Its president is now Dr Mort Rodzanski, and I know the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities highly regards the advice that President Rodzanski offers to her. The university, last year and I think the year before that, was recognized as the number one comprehensive university in Canada. This year it slipped a little bit, to number two, but I think that will just be impetus for it to work very hard to be number one yet again.

The city which is the centre of my riding has its name from "Guelph," which is actually a German name relating to the royal Hanoverian family. In fact, the nickname of the city of Guelph is the Royal City, because we've had both a king and a princess come to visit. There are those in the city who say it's time that our moniker was changed and that we should become known as the City of Music. Very few people would know, other than people from Guelph, that we have a very, very strong relationship in music. We have a number of sponsored festivals, such as the Guelph Spring Festival, which is primarily a classical and jazz festival. We have the Hillside Festival. We have the Guelph Jazz Festival, which was mentioned by commentators in the Toronto papers this year on a number of occasions as being probably the best jazz festival in Canada, perhaps in North America. And it's only in its fifth, perhaps sixth, year of existence.

Guelph is an interesting city and has all these little undercurrents of culture and art that have been thriving. As we're here debating whether or not we should stay to discuss government business, I think it's fair to say that the city of Guelph, in fact the entire riding of Guelph-Wellington, is an area that has particularly prospered under the Harris government times.

Before I ever became involved in politics, I was actually a teacher originally and then I was an entrepreneur. The strongest impetus that got me involved in politics was that, as an entrepreneur, I could see that essentially Ontario was going to hell in a handbasket under the Liberal and NDP governments. It wasn't the kind of future I envisioned for my children. It certainly wasn't the kind of thing that I felt my constituents as a whole wanted. They weren't constituents at the time; they were just colleagues and friends who saw that trouble was the future for Ontario and it wasn't what this great province deserved or should have as its future. That's how I got involved in politics.

Our city is uniquely placed geographically in that we are very close to almost anywhere. People who have come to live in the city remark that we're 45 minutes to an hour away from almost anywhere, whether it be the big city of Toronto or Lake Huron. We are very close to Kitchener, obviously. In Kitchener, Cambridge and Waterloo, we are part of Canada's technology triangle.

My colleague from Nepean-Carleton, Minister Baird, was talking earlier about a number of businesses in his riding which have focused on high-tech industry. That is certainly also the case in my riding of Guelph-Wellington. When we weathered the recession, which was made deeper by the failed policies of the NDP government across the way, one of the things that helped us so much in our riding was the great diversity of businesses we have. We have outstanding businesses like Linamar, which is a large auto parts manufacturing company, but we have a very broad range of businesses that, because of their diversity—obviously many have an agricultural bent—have helped us weather the kind of storm that the recession ravaged in so many parts of Ontario. We were very, very lucky.

#### 1920

Having said that, because we had a good base coming out of the recession, we have seen a government like this government that I am so proud to be a part of establish an economic climate that has been so conducive to entrepreneurs taking a chance with their money, starting businesses, hiring people, venturing into trade around the world, which has proven for our community to be of immense benefit. The only words, as I said earlier, that describe how our community is managing are “thriving and prospering.” We've had new companies like Denso, for instance, which is a Japanese-based company. Their first Canadian plant was established in Ontario because of the policies of our government, and it was established in Guelph.

If you were to drive down the streets of the city of Guelph—as a friend who recently visited here from Scotland remarked, it felt like home for her because it very much reminds people of Scotland. It was in fact established by John Galt, with the Canada Company relationship. He brought a number of people not only from the United States but from Scotland, and many of them were stonemasons. When they came to Guelph, they discovered they had a wonderful treasure of

limestone, so many of the buildings in our beautiful city were constructed from quarried limestone. It is indeed quite lovely. We have, obviously, like so many communities, a local architectural conservationists' association that works to preserve these, but it's not very hard work in our community because people take great pride in the buildings we have. We have this gorgeous architecture that surrounds us, but there's something about that Scottish background and that heritage that I think has translated somehow into the work ethic of our city as a whole.

We've had a number of different names over the years. “Cosmopolitan countryside” was one they tried that they thought maybe suited the city of Guelph because we have this urban centre and then we have these rural ties here and there, all over. But I think one thing that people have remarked upon as they've come to know the city, even though we're 100,000 people plus if you consider the rural surrounds, is that what we have been able to maintain in a very strong way is that we still have a very small-town heart. It doesn't really matter where you go in the city of Guelph, you're still in a city; you have all the big-city amenities. But you still have the ability to bump into people, no matter where you go, who know you, who recognize you. We still have one daily paper, so we have a common point of communication to everyone. We also have a paper that publishes twice a week. But we have still been able to keep those strong, vital links that have made us a very strong and, I dare say, a very happy and comfortable city. If you are in Guelph, you have a sense of beauty and peace. The city itself was established around two rivers, the Speed and the Eramosa. In fact, people have noted that when they come to live in Guelph, they develop what they would often describe as a green conscience. We're a very environmentally conscious city.

I was very amused to hear all of the discussion and acrimony that occurred, and actually still isn't over yet, over the city of Toronto trying to find a place to put its garbage. Of course, the big discussion was, “Will we truck it to the Adams mine or will we send it to Michigan? What the heck will we do with all this garbage?” In my city years ago—in fact it was my former business partner of many years ago who was actually instrumental in getting this underway and I was certainly part of the committees that made it happen—we established a city-wide composting project so that all of the organic waste in the city of Guelph becomes compost, never finds its way to a landfill site. Quite frankly, we're surprised and a little bit disgusted that jurisdictions across the province haven't had the gumption or the common sense to find a way to deal with their garbage in a much more responsible way like the city of Guelph has. I think that's because we have, for some reason or other, always had a very green conscience.

I've been waxing eloquent about all the lovely things about our community that make us a very happy, prosperous and thriving community, and I can say that when people come to talk to me about how things are going in

the province, they are for the most part very pleased with the policies our government has put forward.

Now, I do want to take an opportunity to mention one thing. I'm wearing red today, which is not a normal colour a Conservative member of provincial Parliament would wear. We're always teased if we wear red; we're supposed to wear blue. This is just not our colour. But it's particularly significant for me because my counterpart in the riding of Guelph-Wellington is also a Brenda. To my knowledge, this is the only place in all of North America where we have two representatives, both Brenda, both the same age, both blonde, both about the same height. She always blames the other Brenda. It's "the Brenda" and "the other Brenda," depending on which one you're talking to. She almost always wears red. This is a real challenge for our constituents. Last weekend, after the federal election was over, in going down to the market and to the library and doing my normal errands on the weekend, I cannot tell you how many people came up and congratulated me on my re-election, even though I had not been in an election. This had nothing to do with me.

**Mr Caplan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker. I would seek unanimous consent that all members from Guelph henceforth be named Brenda.

**The Acting Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: the member for Don Valley East raised the point. Members from Don Valley East should all be named Caplan.

**Mr Caplan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: They are.

**The Acting Speaker:** That is not a point of order.

**Mrs Elliott:** My colleagues from across the way on the Liberal side of the House are teasing me because I brought this up, but it's actually been kind of interesting having the two Brendas. We tease each other about it. The interesting thing is, we've actually come to an agreement, Brenda Chamberlain, who is a Liberal member, and I. We have had constituents come to us whom we know quite well and who speak to us in earnest about a very important issue and suddenly we see this look of horror cross their face as they realize they are talking to the wrong Brenda. So we have come to an agreement that we don't explain to the constituent that in fact they're talking to the wrong Brenda. We nod and we smile and we say, "Yes, we understand." We make a point of speaking to each other about the issue for this poor constituent's peace of mind that the matter has in fact been brought to the attention of the appropriate elected official.

To my colleague's point of order, a couple of people have said that actually our newly elected mayor is indeed a woman as well. Her name is Karen Farbridge. For the record, I would like to congratulate Karen on being Guelph's first woman mayor. We've been teasing her that we thought a petition should be passed that Karen should change her name to Brenda as well and it would just be much easier for all of our constituents.

Having said that, we're here in the House tonight to debate a motion as to whether or not we should, in this Legislature of Ontario, stay for an extra period of time, probably another week, to debate matters of importance to the Legislature.

I took a few moments to tell you about some important landmarks and people and businesses in my wonderful riding of Guelph-Wellington. When you go into public life, you're not sure what it is. You usually go because there's a policy or there are matters of economic importance that are triggering you to go, but I think for my part one of the greatest pleasures that has come to me being a member of elected office is having the opportunity to meet the most interesting people, that I would never have had the opportunity to meet; to go into businesses and companies and factories which you drive by all the time. You see a façade and you have no idea what's going on. People, in my riding at any rate, are endlessly interesting and fascinating. They get up every morning and they all share the same values. They want to do their very best to take care of themselves and their families.

### 1930

When they elected me as their representative, they thought they were electing someone who had the best interests of their riding as a whole at heart and that I was part of a team, led by our leader, Premier Harris, who had those same goals and values that they shared. I work very diligently to do my best to mirror the kinds of values they share and the desires they have. I do not embrace the ideas from the Liberal and NDP members across the way that government should do everything for everybody all the time. In my view, that's wrong. That robs people of their desire to be self-reliant, to be creative, to be individual and to be independent. I think we've got it right on this side. We know that our job is to establish an economic climate that allows them to flourish, to do things for those in our society who can't do things for themselves well.

When people say to me, for instance, "You're a Conservative; therefore you must not have a social conscience," they don't understand that when we're here taking care of the business of the province, we are actually enabling those services to be delivered to people who can't find ways to support themselves, whether it be in health care or in education or in social services. So a strong foundation based on a wise and sound economic policy is absolutely fundamental to a healthy economy and to a healthy province.

I am endlessly grateful to be part of that. I am eternally grateful to have the opportunity to represent my constituents in Guelph-Wellington, whether they're out in Puslinch, as part of that kind of Scottish-like terrain that is so rocky they call the stones their Puslinch potatoes, or out in Guelph-Eramosa, which is acres and acres of beautiful, rich farmland, or down in the middle of the city, which is a thriving, bustling community. Every day I come down here to Queen's Park eager to do my bit to support this government and its policies,

because in my view they are the right things for Guelph-Wellington and the province as a whole.

So if my colleagues across the way from the Liberals or NDP are saying to me tonight that they don't want to stay for an extra week or two to finish the business of the government, then I oppose that. I am very supportive of our House leader's motion. I will speak in favour of that, as I have tonight, I will vote in favour of it, and I will urge my colleagues to do the same.

**Mr David Young (Willowdale):** I'd like to thank the member for Guelph-Wellington for her comments, which I think very much capture the essence of what the government is attempting to do here this evening.

The reality is that the business of governing is one that often includes unexpected challenges, and this term is no exception to that. There have been a number of pieces of legislation that have come forward in front of this House that one could never have expected to be necessary, but circumstances have arisen that have caused us to need to discuss them.

Before I go on to talk about those various pieces of legislation and the obligation of the members of this assembly to thoroughly debate them and ultimately vote upon them, I'd like to just pause to reflect upon a criticism that occasionally we hear from the opposition benches, and beyond on occasion: that we as MPPs do not spend enough time in this building, that we don't spend enough time actually debating bills. I say to you that it's very interesting, and frankly puzzling to me on occasion, to hear that suggested when one understands that members on both sides of this assembly spend a great deal of time in this building, including into the evening hours, as is evident from our presence here this evening, and beyond that spend a great deal of time in our communities. One of the unfortunate parts of being here for as many hours as we are through this fall legislative sitting is that on so many occasions we are obliged to turn down invitations from our constituents to attend at events, events that range from celebrations local or provincial in nature to honouring individuals in our community who have distinguished themselves because of their activity either in business or in the name of volunteerism or in local schools. Unfortunately, time and time again we are obliged to say no, as difficult as it is to do, and instead be here to debate these matters.

But that is the balancing, that's the weighing that each and every member has to do, that we as a party and we collectively as legislators must do, in order to fulfill the numerous challenges that exist. I should say to you that I'm not here to complain; I am not here to lament. I am here to say that it is a privilege to serve in this assembly and that each and every one of us should, and I think in most instances we do, respect the fact that we are here as servants of our voters, that we are here because we are privileged. So we have this responsibility.

In this legislative sitting we have debated numerous bills, ranging from the technical standards bill to the Labour Relations Amendment Act, which was the subject of some considerable debate here, to the electronic com-

merce bill brought forward by the Attorney General. That is a bill that has been replicated in other parts of North America, a bill that is going to become more and more relevant as we talk of the involvement and the importance of the Internet, because as useful a tool as it is, and it is indeed a very useful tool, it is also a mechanism that, if not properly controlled and regulated, could lead to fraudulent activity taking place, and in some instances has. I compliment the Attorney General for coming forward with that legislation in a timely fashion. As I say, because of what we see in other jurisdictions, it's quite clear that we in Ontario were leading the way.

We debated a racing commission bill here. The energy board amendment act was in front of this Legislature and was the subject of some considerable discussion, as was the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act.

I don't know where my friends opposite stand on that particular bill, but I say to you that there are some very important provisions in there to deal with the regulation of motorized vehicles in this province. There are some provisions that may well extend beyond the regulation of snowmobiles to other types of motorized vehicles. In the insurance industry, I know there was a hue and cry after a recent decision left some considerable doubt about the definition of a snowmobile, as to whether or not under the Insurance Act it was an automobile and thus subject to the provisions of what is commonly known as Bill 59. Those provisions include a threshold that prevents people from suing unless their injuries are serious and permanent; they include a \$15,000 deductible for injured plaintiffs and a \$7,500 deductible for Family Law Act claimants under that legislation. For a very lengthy period of time citizens of this province expected that snowmobiles would be characterized in that way. That was true not only under the current legislation; it was true under its predecessor, which is commonly known as Bill 164, a piece of legislation introduced by the New Democratic Party when they were the government, and it's just as true of the Ontario motorist protection plan that was in existence when the Liberals were in power. So for a very lengthy period of time it was expected, it was believed, that snowmobiles were to be treated as automobiles when it came to this issue. As I say, a recent court decision has brought some doubt to that issue. I'm certainly glad that as a government we're proceeding forward to bring some greater definition and certainty to snowmobiles and other motorized vehicles.

We also talked at length about the McMichael collection, and legislation was passed with respect to same. That was an issue about which many on both sides of the Legislature had a great deal to say.

Frankly, I invite that sort of healthy debate. That's why we're here. I certainly hope my friends opposite aren't intending to oppose the motion that is in front of the Legislature today. Surely, as valuable as their time is, as valuable as the time of the government members is, it is understood that our primary responsibility is to be here, is to serve our constituents, whether it's our local riding or whether it's provincially, and to ensure that the

legislation that needs to be passed is passed. That's why this government is quite prepared to extend the time to sit later into December even though for many it will mean some considerable disruption to their family lives and their social lives. But it is of the utmost importance that the government fulfill its responsibility, and certainly the opposition, even though I appreciate that it is their job to oppose—in fact they seem to readily adopt the adage “Whatever it is, we're against it.” It is their responsibility as well, though, to ensure that important legislation—

1940

**Mr Caplan:** On a point of order, Speaker: Could you tell me if there is a quorum please.

**The Acting Speaker:** Would you check and see if there's a quorum?

**Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman):** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Call in the members. This will be up to a five-minute bell.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Willowdale.

**Mr Young:** I was talking at some length about the need for us to continue this legislative session. I sincerely believe that for a number of reasons, and I'm going to talk about some of the legislation still pending that we're going to be debating in the House.

I also want to reference the fact that we have had other bills that have come through the Legislature, and one that I am most familiar with is, of course, the property tax legislation. It was introduced and ultimately passed in this assembly, and it is legislation that will continue to provide protection for taxpayers across this province. It ends the days of double-digit tax increases which people in this province saw in years past, and it brings some considerable stability to the municipal tax system.

I know that many of those watching may well say “You talk about stability, yet we recently received an OPAC—Ontario Property Assessment Corp—notice that suggests that the value of our property, be it business or residential, has increased or decreased.” I think it's worth taking a moment to talk about what that means. It clearly means that is the value of the property as assessed by the Ontario Property Assessment Corp in June 1999. They took a snapshot of every property across this province and have reported on that to municipalities and to individual property owners. Why is that necessary? It's necessary because for decades within this province we operated with an antiquated tax system. In some municipalities that meant we were using assessments that were as old as six decades, in that neighbourhood. Other municipalities had done assessments in a more timely fashion and they might be five or 10 or 12 years old. But what came of that, before we introduced this legislation and its predecessor, were situations throughout the province where homes, businesses on the same street—similar homes, identical homes on the same street in the same municipality receiving the exact same services—were

paying markedly different taxes, in some instances twice as much, and the only reason for that was they had been assessed at different times and there had been no overall assessment, no opportunity to have your home or your business valued.

Study after study in years past by government after government, and regardless of their political affiliation, whether they be New Democrat or Liberal or Conservative, they weren't prepared to tackle this rather contentious yet very important and relevant issue. We did. We did because it was the right thing to do, because every expert, every politician, if asked, would answer that that was what was necessary. So we went about reforming the system, and this piece of legislation that we introduced, Bill 140, that was debated here at first reading, second reading and ultimately third reading is now the law of this province. It brings some certainly, some uniformity, to the process.

In terms of the future, we know there is a budget bill yet to be debated in this assembly. It's a bill that is going to allow for a made-in-Ontario tax solution to be achieved. Up until this time, a resident calculated their Ontario taxes as a percentage of their federal taxes. With the passage of this bill, if the Legislature decides to pass it, there will be a change. What might seem an insignificant change is in fact a very significant change. It will be a change that will cause the residents of this province to be able to get the direct tax savings that this government intends to pass on to them. It will end the bracket creep that has existed for so long in this province, and it is a process that is being undertaken in most of the provinces for very similar reasons.

I want to mention one point that has come up on a number of occasions when discussing the budget bill, in particular the made-in-Ontario tax form. I want the viewers to know that they will not be required to fill out another lengthy document, another tax form, as I believe they do in Quebec, as some fear might occur. Although details are yet to be determined, in reality what it will mean is perhaps another one or two lines—or one or two different lines, not necessarily more lines—on the type of tax form you've been filling out for years, and it will be arguably more simple and it will be much clearer to the taxpayer what tax they are paying and to whom they are paying it. That level of transparency can only be welcomed by the people of this province, and I believe, with the greatest respect to all members of this House, must indeed be welcomed by each and every member of this assembly, because it is a sensible, fair approach to taxation. People should know what they're paying, who they're paying it to and why they're paying it. For so many years in this province and in this country we haven't had the opportunity to do that.

I am very pleased bill has been introduced. I am certainly very hopeful it will pass. If I go back to where I started, that's why it's so important that we extend the House calendar motion into the month of December—so that we can complete that.

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** I'm not about to say tonight that I want to go home, because I rather like this place. I think this is an ideal opportunity for us to make sure that we keep the government accountable. That's what I'm going to do tonight, because I'm going to slam the government on one area where they have totally let down the people of this province, and that's when it comes to agriculture.

But before I get into agriculture, I want to talk a little bit about one area that is very near and dear to my heart. It's an area that affects 1.5 million persons in this province, and that's the question of persons with disabilities. This government has abandoned persons with disabilities. Mike Harris promised in writing on May 24, 1995, that within the first term of office the government of Ontario would enact an Ontarians With Disabilities Act. This government loves to stand up and say, "Promise made, promise kept." Well, promise made, promise not kept. You have let down 1.5 million persons in this province. You can talk; you can stand up and say that Bill 83 was the Ontarians with Disabilities Act, but it wasn't even close. It was a joke. It was a three-page piece of paper that did nothing about removing barriers for persons with disabilities in this province. As a government, you should be ashamed at how you have let down those people. I can assure a million and a half persons with disabilities in this province that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party are committed to ensuring that that legislation is put in place.

1950

**Mr O'Toole:** That means nothing.

**Mr Peters:** It does mean something. It means something to a million and a half people with disabilities, and you think it's a joke. So many of you think it's a joke, and it's not.

Something else I'd love to hear from this government: tonight I heard the Minister of Community and Social Services talk about 800,000 jobs created. Two days ago the Minister of Finance, Ernie Eves, talked about 725,000 jobs created. They can't get their numbers right. It just doesn't add up. You on the other side are not up to the job. You can thank the American economy for what has happened in this province, and thank the good work of Paul Martin and the federal Liberals for the policies they have put in place to encourage job creation and economic growth and development in this province.

I want to talk about another area that I know is near and dear to your heart, Speaker, and I appreciate that you're the only member who is willing to talk about archives and the importance of preserving our written record for future generations. I commend the Speaker for putting forth the motion to declare Archives Week in Ontario, because the government of Ontario has let down the Ontario archives. They've let down municipalities in this province with the downloading that's taking place.

There are important municipal records—our municipal history goes back to the Baldwin Act of 1849. This government, through its ill-fated venture toward restructuring, has seen an unprecedented number of municipalities

in this province disappear. Archival records have been lost forever, and there's no commitment from the government to the importance of archives in this province. I think that's sad.

Another area I would like to speak about tonight is a really serious problem. I represent the riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London. Elgin county encompasses 100 kilometres on the north shore of Lake Erie. Every year we're losing hundreds and hundreds of acres into Lake Erie as a result of erosion, but there's no commitment from the Minister of Natural Resources, no commitment from the Minister of Agriculture, no commitment from the Minister of the Environment to do something as we watch this very valuable resource disappear into Lake Erie. There's no commitment from the Minister of Municipal Affairs as we see this valuable resource of agricultural land disappear as a result of urban sprawl.

That leads me to what I'd like to speak about tonight. As critic for agriculture, I think that with 60,000 farms and countless men, women and children who devote hours and hours of their day and their week to the business of agriculture and the agri-food industry, there needs to be a voice for agriculture in this province. It's very obvious that there's no voice on the government side. There's no voice from the Minister of Agriculture, there's no voice from the cabinet, there's no voice from the backbench in support of this important industry. I think that's sad for the number two industry in this province.

We need only to look back at the very foundations of this province. What built this province? It was immigration, the individuals who came to this province, cleared the land and opened the land up, farmers who built this land and created municipalities. The agricultural resource of this province is at the root of the beginnings of this province. Unfortunately and sadly, it's something that has been totally neglected by this government.

I want to tell you that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party recognize the importance of agriculture to this province. We realize agriculture plays an important role in the economy, and not only from an agricultural standpoint—my colleague John Cleary, the critic responsible for rural affairs, is here tonight too. Rural Ontario has been abandoned by this government because of the mentality of made-in-Toronto solutions for the rest of Ontario. I encourage my colleagues on the opposite side to listen to this: what's best for Toronto isn't necessarily best for the rest of this province. Unfortunately you've been driven by an agenda that's controlled by Bay Street, and you've been driven by an agenda that's controlled by this small group of people around the Premier of this province, which is known as the centre. The centre, the Premier and Bay Street have abandoned rural Ontario, they've abandoned the agri-food business and they've abandoned the farmers of Ontario. I think it's shameful that your government has done that, shameful that that aspect of our economy, the root of the economy of this province, has been abandoned.

Agriculture is not a priority with your government. It's obvious when you look at the cuts to agriculture that have taken place since you were elected in 1995. Mike Harris promised no cuts to agriculture. What happened? We've seen an unprecedented cut in funding to the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We've seen cuts to agricultural offices. We've seen cuts to outreach programs. We've seen a mentality that they're going to be replaced by the Internet. Let me tell my colleagues on the opposite side that we've got a long way to go to ensure that rural Ontario is connected, but there is no financial commitment from your government to do that.

There's no vision for agriculture on the government side, no vision for rural Ontario. I don't know how you can fail to recognize the important role the number two industry plays in this province. We've just heard that the Big Three auto makers are talking about a downturn. But as there is a downturn, every one of us, 103 people in this Legislature tonight, the pages and all the staff, have to eat. We've got to ensure there is a commitment to the agricultural industry in this province, and that commitment does not exist from the other side.

Speaker, you, as the representative from Perth-Middlesex, know there is a crisis in the agricultural community today, a crisis we haven't seen for a long, long time. Some things are beyond our control as politicians. We cannot control the weather. But as politicians we have a role to play when adverse weather conditions take place, that the agricultural community knows the government is going to be there, standing behind them. But not this government, not the Mike Harris government that has abandoned the farmers of this province.

People are hurting in this province, Speaker. They're hurting in your riding, they're hurting in Garfield Dunlop's riding, they're hurting in Ted Chudleigh's riding. But do you know what? They hurt in Steve Gilchrist's and Raminder Gill's ridings too. Whether we're urban or rural, we depend on agriculture. Every day we go to the corner store or to the grocery store. We need agriculture, and we need a strong agricultural economy in this province. Unfortunately, be you urban or rural members of the Conservative caucus, you've abandoned the agricultural community in this province.

The Speaker and my colleagues John Cleary and Sean Conway and other members of this Legislature can realize this, because we've seen the economic impact studies. The Speaker even made reference to an economic impact study in a statement in this Legislature. We've seen, first hand, the important, powerful role agriculture plays in our communities today, but it falls on deaf ears on the government side.

You don't realize that agriculture is the number two industry in this province. But is it a priority? No. Is it put into silos within government? Yes, it is. You've got agriculture and food doing something, you've got environment doing something, you've got municipal affairs doing something, you're got economic development and trade doing something. Is agriculture viewed as a

priority? No. Is agriculture viewed as a priority among your caucus and cabinet and, most important of all, by the Premier? How often have we heard "agriculture" come out of the Premier's mouth in this Legislature? Not very often—very rarely. When was the last time the Premier of this province met with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture? It's been a long time, and that's wrong.

If Frank Stronach were to call the Premier today he'd have a meeting tomorrow. If Jack Wilkinson, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, were to call the Premier's office, he'd be waiting a month, goodness knows how long, and that is wrong.

**2000**

We need a government that is committed to agriculture. We have heard in this Legislature and through the agricultural publications across this province since June 1999 that agriculture deserves its fair share from the federal government. And do you know what? I'll stand up today and commend Ernie Hardeman for his efforts in ensuring that the farmers of Ontario have received a fair and equal share of funding from the federal government. Lyle Vanclief and the federal Liberals have recognized that they have to provide a fair share of financial support to all provinces equally across this country. I commend the minister for doing that and I commend Lyle Vanclief for doing that, but—

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** He hasn't paid the money.

**Mr Peters:** He does pay, but you don't pay. You don't pay. I don't even want to talk to you about it right now. You just listen to me, because maybe you'll—if you speak up to me right now like you're speaking, why don't you speak up within your caucus? Why don't you speak up to your cabinet members like you're doing right now? It's easy for you to do, but you don't do it. You don't speak up, and that's the problem. You don't speak up for agriculture in this province. You love to speak up and talk to the ag critic, but you won't talk to the Minister of Agriculture. Come on.

I talk about the fair share. Every province in Canada now is receiving a fair share of funding from the federal government. But what this government and this minister have failed to recognize is that that 40% commitment that needs to be made by the provincial government—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Peters:** It's not a maximum commitment; it's a minimum commitment. I would urge the member, Garfield Dunlop, to speak up and ask the minister, Ernie Hardeman, is 40% a minimum or a maximum?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin):** The member for Simcoe North, order. Let the member who is speaking speak, please.

**Mr Dunlop:** I'll make my comments about it later.

**Mr Peters:** I truly wish the member for Simcoe North would speak up, as he is with me tonight, to the Minister of Agriculture, because the 40% contribution that the provincial government makes to agriculture is not a maximum, it's a minimum. We need a Minister of Agriculture, we need a Ministry of Agriculture, to recognize

that there is a crisis within the agricultural community in Ontario. We need a minister to recognize—like the Minister of Agriculture in Alberta has, like the ministers in British Columbia, in Quebec, in Newfoundland—that the 40% commitment is not a maximum, it's a minimum. We need members like the member for Simcoe North to speak up within their caucus. We need members like the Minister of Agriculture to speak up at the cabinet table, and we need leadership from the Premier of this province for the agricultural community. That leadership is non-existent.

I want to tell you that Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party of this province are going to keep this government accountable. We're not going to allow you to relegate agriculture to the backburner in this province. We need agriculture kept in the forefront because agriculture is the foundation of this province and agriculture is an important part of the industry that fuels this province. That recognition, unfortunately, doesn't exist.

Let's deal with another issue: the agricultural operations act. My leader, Dalton McGuinty, asked twice today—asked the Minister of the Environment, asked the Minister of Agriculture—where is the agricultural operations act? This is a piece of legislation that the farmers of Ontario want, that the municipalities of Ontario want, that the citizens who live in rural Ontario want. The minister has talked about this since February 2000. Where's the legislation? The minister couldn't even answer the question today. Had I had the ability under a late show to ask—I wasn't satisfied with the minister's answer today, because the minister didn't give an answer. Where is the agricultural operations act? We need to have province-wide standards for agricultural operations. We do not need to have the checkerboard approach to agricultural operations in this province that exists right now. This government is negligent in not ensuring that this agricultural operations act is a priority among government today.

Without this legislation, do you know what has happened? Your government is pitting urban against rural, and that is sad. We had the Dairy Farmers of Ontario here today, and I hope some of you as urban members on the opposite side start to get a better appreciation for the challenges facing rural Ontario, a better appreciation for the challenges facing the agricultural community in this province. I hope the message that the dairy farmers put forth today gets through to you, but that you know that the Dairy Farmers of Ontario are only one component of a very important agricultural community. We need urban members on the government side to stand up for agriculture, and that's not what you're doing. You sit back and let Ernie Eves and Mike Harris and Guy Giorno cut the Ministry of Agriculture, cut the Ministry of Rural Affairs, and you don't realize the damage you're doing to rural Ontario. I don't know how to get it through your skulls that agriculture is important to this province. You don't recognize that.

I want to tell members on the opposite side, and I've been telling this to members on my own side, that the

Liberal caucus and the Liberal Party of Ontario understand agriculture. The Liberal Party of Ontario supports agriculture. We recognize the important role it plays. To heck with you, because you don't care and I'm not going to stand here and try to drum through your skulls the important role that agriculture plays. It's not worth my while, and I feel sorry for the farmers of Ontario with your attitude.

I listened to the member for Guelph-Wellington speak tonight. She talked about the role that the University of Guelph plays with 1 Stone Road. Where's the member for Guelph-Wellington standing up and speaking for the University of Guelph? The member has visited the animal health lab. This is a lab that's responsible for food safety in this province. This is a division of ag and food that has seen its budget flatlined. They have not seen any increases. They have not seen any increase in new technology. That member has toured that facility. Where is she? Why isn't she speaking up around the caucus table and the cabinet table for that? She's not, and that's a sad day. That's a perfect example from the member for Guelph-Wellington to show the lack of commitment that exists within this government.

I know there's not a quorum present right now, and I don't want to stand up and ask for a quorum call. There are only two members in the House right now, and there should be many more.

But let's talk about Agricorp. It was pointed out by the auditor that there was serious mismanagement of funds, a serious lack of direction from the Minister of Agriculture and the Ministry of Agriculture. We've got Agricorp tomorrow before the public accounts committee. I'm not going to talk about it tonight, but I'm just putting the government side on notice right now that we're coming at you on Agricorp, because you failed the farmers of this province and you failed the taxpayers of this province with the way your minister and your ministry have dealt with Agricorp.

Let's talk about the whole farm relief program that was put in place in 1998 as a safety net for the farmers of this province. Do you know what? Your government has totally messed up this program. There have been so many changes and rule changes that have taken place that farmers don't know what is right and what is wrong. That responsibility lies with the Minister of Agriculture.

**Mr Caplan:** Point of order, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Before you do, I just want to remind members that you're not to reference the absence of other members in this House. It's against the standing orders.

**Mr Caplan:** The member for Simcoe North asked me to check with you whether or not we had a quorum.

**The Acting Speaker:** Is a quorum present?

**Acting Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Further debate?

2010

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** As I begin, I would like to ask for unanimous consent for the following: to split the time that our caucus has between—

**Hon Mr Baird:** You don't need consent.

**Ms Martel:** —I do for this one—myself and yourself, Speaker, but also to split that time over two periods this evening because, as you will know, Speaker, you are our other speaker and you are in the chair.

**The Acting Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent? No, we don't have unanimous consent. Thanks, Raminder.

**Ms Martel:** If it would help that the members would know it wasn't me who called for unanimous consent, I would ask for it again, because the Speaker is in the chair and he won't be able to speak until a later date, when he comes out of the chair, so we can't do this back to back.

**The Acting Speaker:** Do we have unanimous consent?

**Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East):** I'd be happy to take his place in the chair.

**Ms Martel:** He'd be happy to have you take his place about 11:30 tonight, Mr Gilchrist, if you don't mind, so he can speak.

**The Acting Speaker:** Agreed? Agreed.

**Ms Martel:** Thank you. I'm pleased to be here this evening participating in this debate on extending the hours. Of course this motion will pass. The government will use its majority to ensure that is done. That's really nothing new. For as long as I have been here, we have been sitting till midnight at the end of June and at the end of December. However, if I look at the legislative calendar, I really don't see that the government has enough legislation on the books right now to actually carry us for the next two weeks, so I can only assume that the government is going to find itself in a position of having to time allocate all of the bills that are remaining, and that's why the government believes it needs the extended hours. I'd only say to the government, if they could manage their legislative agenda a bit more successfully, we probably wouldn't have to sit over the next two weeks. But there are others, and the government caucus can blame whoever needs to be blamed for that.

In any event, what we should be talking about over the next two weeks is health care, because health care continues to be a huge priority not only for Ontarians but for Canadians. It certainly continues to be a priority in the riding that I represent, which is Nickel Belt, and frankly across northern Ontario. I want to focus on a couple of issues tonight that have everything to do with health care and express my serious concern that the government is not doing anything on any of these fronts. If the government were seriously committed to health care, as the Minister of Health is wont to say in this assembly, she should spend the next two weeks doing something about all of these issues, or even one of these issues.

The one that I would begin with has to do with comments the auditor made yesterday in his report on the public accounts. I want to call on the government to

come clean with respect to the amount of money this government has actually spent on hospital construction last year, this year and over the next two years. It's interesting that the auditor talked about the government's trickery in this regard. I'm sorry that the Chair of Management Board has left, because he did not want to answer this question yesterday when he had the opportunity to do so. I assume he didn't have an answer and that's what happened. The auditor was very clear that the government is engaged in just a little bit of trickery around this particular issue. In his special report yesterday he talked about this government's approach with respect to multi-year funding. He says the following: "Our view is that this practice distorts government financial reporting," the key word there being "distorts."

He gave one example which I will repeat—he actually gave five—with respect to hospital construction, which I think is an important one. Our community and many others have had a forced amalgamation of hospitals, and our community finds itself in the position right now of having to raise over \$40 million as our part of the local share for this forced hospital restructuring. So I certainly think the government should come clean with respect to the amount of money it has actually allocated for hospital construction, because this minister has told our community that all of the funds have been allocated, there's nothing else, there's no more, despite the fact that our hospital is a regional centre, and a regional centre across northeastern Ontario, for trauma, for neonatal, for cancer, for heart etc. So we have argued that this government should give us more, up to 85%, but this government doesn't want to do that and argues that it has already spent \$1 billion in capital funding.

This is the example that I'd like to use, this \$1 billion in capital funding that the government alleges—and that's the key word, "alleges"—that has been spent in capital construction last year. The auditor said the following:

"As one example of this transaction," that is, this multi-year approach, "the government announced in its May 2000 budget that \$1 billion in capital grant funding would be provided to accelerate capital projects recommended by the Health Services Restructuring Commission." Ours is one of those.

"The determination of the \$1 billion in grants was based on plans submitted by each hospital prior to March 31, 2000, outlining their proposed major capital projects over the next four years." That's key.

"The government signed agreements which each hospital to fund 70% of the cost of the ... projects. Because both the signed agreements and cabinet approval for the transfer were in place prior to March 31, 2000, the government recorded the entire \$1 billion as a liability and expenditure for the 1999-2000 fiscal year. The actual funds were advanced to the hospitals shortly after the budget announcement in May 2000."

The auditor made it clear at the press conference yesterday that in fact there are two problems with this approach. Number one is that this funding for capital

construction extends over a period of four years, not one. But the government, with its trickery, showed all of that spending to have been completed by last year. The second problem, and this is a very serious problem, especially for our community, is that this money, this \$1 billion, will only be spent if the individual hospitals and communities can actually come up with the 30% of the local share that is necessary for the project. I've already explained to you the problem our community is going to have, given the excessive amount of money we have to raise as our 30% share.

The point is that the government has certainly engaged in any little bit of trickery by trying to say it spent \$1 billion in capital last year. In fact, it did not, and the auditor clearly told the media yesterday that even he had no idea how much the government had actually spent on capital construction as a result of the way the government had construed the books—cooked the books might be a better description.

So I'd like the Minister of Health to come clean, to table in this assembly the amount of money that was actually spent on capital construction last year. I suspect it was zero, since the money wasn't even flowed to the hospitals until May of last year. I'd be interested in finding out how much has actually been spent this year. I bet it wasn't much more, because I bet many communities like my own are having great difficulty finding their 30% local share to ensure that these projects go.

It's interesting that the point the auditor made, both in his release and to the media yesterday, was that he firmly believed the practice of charging multi-year funding to current year's operations must cease. I understand that he has put the government on notice that they cannot continue with this unacceptable form of trickery, not only with respect to health care but with education and with the Ontario Innovation Trust, and that the government will actually have to show clearly every year, each year, year in, year out, the actual amount of money that was spent that fiscal year. I suspect if that had been done this year, we would have found that very little money, if any at all, had been spent on hospital construction last year, at the end of 1999, and probably very little spent at the end of this fiscal year.

My second concern has to do with the complete lack of response from the Ministry of Health to a very serious doctor and specialist shortage in my community. You will have some familiarity with this dossier, Speaker, because your community has also been involved in these negotiations. The fact is this: on May 17 there was a very large meeting that took place at the Sudbury Regional Hospital which was attended by the chiefs of staff from my community, from yours, Speaker, and from Thunder Bay, North Bay and Timmins by teleconference. So it was the chiefs of staff of the five regional hospitals in those communities, and in our community some other members of the medical staff as well. This was held with an ADM from the Ministry of Health, the regional health director for Sudbury and a number of other civil servants. The point was to try and impress upon the ministry

bureaucrats there to then impress upon the minister here that northern communities have a very, very serious problem right now with respect to a huge exodus of physicians and specialists from our community.

#### 2020

In Sudbury, at that meeting in May, this was the story in our community: since January 1999 our community has lost 15 doctors and specialists. That included our only full-time thoracic surgeon and our only hospital-based neurologist. In addition, 22 family doctors had withdrawn their hospital privileges over that 18-month period because of their heavy workload, leaving at least 30% of Sudbury's population as orphan patients, meaning if they came and were admitted to a hospital, their family physician would not be able to provide them with services.

The government officials who attended that meeting, Speaker—and your community was represented because the same thing is happening in Sault Ste Marie; it's happening in all major northern centres—said yes, they understood the problem, and yes, they promised they would give concrete recommendations to the Minister of Health by November 30 so the Minister of Health could act on this crisis. Well, I raised in a statement today and I'll raise it here again tonight that November 30 has obviously come and gone and we have heard nothing from the Minister of Health with respect to concrete recommendations by the government to deal with this crisis. The silence is deafening.

What is worse, Speaker, is that in my community, and I suspect in yours, Sault Ste Marie, the situation since the time of that meeting on May 17 has actually deepened and grown much worse. The chief of the medical staff from the Sudbury Regional Hospital this morning provided me with the following information. We have 14 full-time emergency room physicians right now and we need 20. The present group trying to manage emergency departments is completely overwhelmed and we still have far too many patients considered orphan patients. One specialist in each of the following—obstetrics, general surgery, oncology, paediatrics and orthopaedics—has also left since May, so six more specialists who were not foreseen to leave have actually left in the six-month period since this crisis first began. We still have no thoracic surgeon in place, no hospital-based neurologist in place. The chief of staff estimates that our shortage of specialists is about 30% worse than the provincial average and the hospital also estimates that we have between 15,000 and 20,000 people in the area who are without a family doctor. That's the situation today, December 6.

It has been a week since the government promised it would have recommendations, since the government promised it would use provisions in the government-OMA agreement, for example, to recruit and retain specialists and physicians to our community, and nothing has been done. I say to the Minister of Health, November 30 has come and gone, and where are you and where are your recommendations to deal with this crisis? It is a crisis for people who don't have a physician. It is a crisis

for people who require specialist care are now being flown all over northern Ontario or to southern Ontario to get the care they can't get in the north. If the government thinks that its agreement with the OMA is so good, then how is it that not one of its provisions have been implemented by this government to solve our problem? We wait to hear if the Minister of Health will do anything, despite the promise that was most clearly made to my community and yours and the three other major centres in northern Ontario.

Speaker, this brings me to the point of the physician shortage generally across northern Ontario. I spoke to some specifics in my own community. I'm sure you could speak to specifics in yours. But it raises the very serious issue of the investigation going on now with respect to a northern medical school. You will recall, Speaker, that almost a year ago—it was last Christmas—a report was released by Dr McKendry, who recommended to this government that it seriously investigate the possibility of a medical school in northern Ontario to deal with what has been a very serious problem both in terms of recruitment and retention of physicians and specialists in our community. I supported Dr McKendry's work. I thought it was very important work because it reinforced that clearly we have a physician shortage coming very quickly down the track facing us all in Ontario. The second thing he made very clear is that any number of initiatives have not worked in northern Ontario with respect to attracting and retaining physicians and specialists in our special part of the world and the government ought to look at a different approach to resolve that problem.

So this minister appointed an expert panel, led by—I believe his name is Peter George; I apologize if it isn't. They now have an expert panel that has been underway since about July investigating this very matter. This panel's report has been delayed and I am quite worried about that, because I worry that what will happen is that a recommendation will be made close to Christmas or indeed after we are gone and there will be no opportunity to have an important public debate in this Legislature with respect to the importance of a medical school in northern Ontario.

I get ahead of myself, because I'm assuming the expert panel will make the right decision and will actually recommend a medical school in northern Ontario. But I'm worried about that because I understand that the chair and the vice-chair of this expert panel are attached to medical schools in southern Ontario, so there surely isn't any incentive for them to urge the government to set up a medical school in northern Ontario when they might feel that would drain financial resources from the five medical schools in the south. I was quite concerned that the government set up this panel and put in place a chair and vice-chair who obviously have an attachment to a medical school somewhere else and may not be so independent in their thinking as to recognize the importance of a medical school in our special part of the province.

Be that as it may, Lakehead and Laurentian Universities together have made some excellent presentations both to the expert panel and to various cabinet ministers in this government. The two universities together have worked very, very hard to put together a proposal to clearly demonstrate to the government that a northern medical school in our special part of the province would work and would work in the long term to deal with this very serious problem of recruitment and retention. In fact, they were very clear to say that the government should build on the two family residency programs that are already in place in northern Ontario: one at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay and one at Laurentian in Sudbury. For a number of years those two programs have worked to train, at the tail end, GPs for our community.

I was very pleased to be part of a government that funded the family residency program in Sudbury, where I, as Minister of Northern Development, provided the capital funds and our colleague Frances Lankin provided the operating funds for that program to be established. But we have seen, in terms of the training of physicians that has gone on in those two centres, that 75% of the graduates actually stay in northern communities to deliver health care to our citizens. So it's got a phenomenal success rate in terms of retention, and they are two programs we could build on for a medical school in northern Ontario.

I put my plug in now to the minister. I don't know what the expert panel will say. I hope it isn't that we should just fund more spaces at southern medical schools, because that will not solve the problem in the north, and anyone from the north will know that. I hope the expert panel will have enough vision and, frankly, enough courage to say that if we are going to deal with this serious chronic problem of a lack of doctors and specialists in the north, then we have to train those same doctors and specialists in northern Ontario too, because that is the only way we are going to end this critical problem we have had.

I hope the expert panel will demonstrate that courage and vision. If they don't, then I hope this minister will demonstrate some courage and some vision and agree that it is long past time to continue to throw at the problem initiatives which traditionally and historically have not worked, and that now, since the government certainly has the money to make this a reality, this government should indeed announce a medical school in northern Ontario.

I have no doubt, I have every faith, I have every confidence in those who would be involved in that that it would be a project well worth the \$20-million investment that I understand it would cost. In the long term it would cost the government significantly less, because right now we're wasting—wasting—all kinds of money on incentives that don't work to retain physicians in our community.

If the government is interested in doing anything about the physician shortage in northern Ontario, it could also take off the freeze it has had on the community health

centre program since it was elected in 1995. It would be very nice if within the next two weeks the Minister of Health might do something on that front too, because goodness knows the government has the budget surplus to do something positive in this regard.

In the last five years, I have quite consistently lobbied this Minister of Health and others before her to lift the freeze, because we have a community health centre in our community—and you have one in yours, Speaker; probably one of the largest in the province, and the longest-standing, I suspect, as well, established by the Steelworkers. But the community centre in our community was actually funded by our government. When it was funded by our government, a commitment was made that once the initial site, the main site, was up and running, the government would then flow the operating funds necessary to establish satellites in those francophone communities in our riding where services in French were desperately needed.

**2030**

Unfortunately, when this government was elected it froze that funding, so although a commitment very clearly exists to that CHC that funding would be provided to Sault satellite clinics, the government has yet to provide the important operating funding to allow those two satellites to become full CHC sites. I regret that and I think the government has missed a golden opportunity, not only in my community but with respect to the 54 other proposals for community health centres which exist in the province right now. Those 54 include CHCs which are already in existence and are trying to expand and have satellites, or communities like Elliot Lake and others that don't have CHCs at all and are looking for this as a model to provide health care.

Our CHC has been phenomenally successful. We have physicians who work on salary—not fee for service but on salary. They work in conjunction with a number of other health care professionals, including nurse practitioners, therapists, chiropractors etc. These health care professionals provide not only treatment but a whole series of prevention and health promotion initiatives, so these community health centres are very much wellness centres where people can certainly get treatment, as well they should, through primary care, but also can access a number of initiatives that keep them well, that keep them healthy.

We know, because our CHC has been a classic example and has been very effective as a tool to recruit and retain physicians. In fact, the CHC in my community that wants to expand to a full CHC in the community that's just five miles away from me knows that if they could get the operating funding from this government they could hire three more full-time physicians to work in a community that has been designated underserved for the last seven years. For a very small investment, \$1 million, two communities that are currently underserved could actually get the funds they need to have the physicians in their community so that they would no longer be underserved for physicians.

I say to the Minister of Health again, it's been some five long years now since this freeze has been on. We know CHCs are effective to recruit and retrain physicians to deliver primary care and health promotion. Why doesn't the government, with some of the incredible surplus it has, fund some more CHCs so we can get doctors and other health care professionals into our communities?

I remain very concerned as well about what this government is doing with respect to our critical care air ambulance paramedics. You will know, Speaker, that on October 10 the Ministry of Health issued two requests for proposals for privatization of our air ambulance service. It's important to note that this is a change from what has currently been in existence, because in our part of the world air ambulance service has been provided by critical care paramedics, the most highly advanced, highly trained, highly skilled, and these folks have all been employed as public servants by the public purse.

The government clearly isn't interested in having these trained paramedics work with them any more. The government appears not to be interested in paying them any more or getting the benefit of their highly qualified and professional services, and the government instead has issued some RFPs that would allow this service to be privatized.

I just have to say that it is very clear that this government is prepared to privatize public services at all costs. This is what has become abundantly clear to me through this process with respect to the air ambulance. If you look at the RFPs, and I have, and we raised this with the minister in the House last week, the RFPs make it very clear that this government is quite prepared to put patients' lives at risk. They are prepared to do so, because if you look under the section of flight paramedics and staffing, the government makes it very clear that for a minor financial penalty, that private operator could operate that air ambulance without one paramedic or without both of those critical care paramedics.

Can you imagine, Speaker, if it was your son or your daughter being flown out of Sault Ste Marie to the base in Sudbury, for example? Could you imagine that they would be air ambulated, critical care, maybe suffering because of a motor vehicle accident, a boating accident, a snowmobiling accident, and there might not be critical care paramedics on that air ambulance? This is what the RFP says. I listened with complete astonishment to the Minister of Health last week try and say that that was not true. Well, I've got the RFP right here and it says the following:

“7.2 Reduced Flight Paramedic Staffing. At any time during the term of service, the air operator”—private air operator—“shall have the right to request the ministry, where necessary for operational reasons, for consent to staff each staffed aircraft with:

“(a) one (1) flight paramedic, in which case the ministry grants its consent to the request, the ministry shall reduce the service fee by \$75 per hour or a part thereof ... or

“(b) zero (0) flight paramedics, in which case, if the ministry grants its consent to this request, the ministry shall reduce the service fee by \$150 per hour or part thereof that the flight paramedics are absent.”

You can imagine, for a minor fee of \$75 or \$150, this government is quite prepared to put lives at risk. The patients who fly in these aircraft with these trained paramedics are the most critically ill, the people who need immediate medical care, seriously ill patients, suffering injuries from many of those accidents I described earlier. It's very clear in this RFP, which the minister should read, that the minister is quite clear they should be flying around northern Ontario without any paramedics in the back to care for critically ill patients. That is nuts. That leads us right down the road we have been going down with respect to Walkerton. I urge this minister to take a step back from her philosophy of privatization of anything that moves and try and understand how she is going to put patients' lives at risk by this proposal.

The final issue I want to deal with in the short time I have remaining is an issue that our party has been going at for all of this fall session, and it involves the discrimination that this government continues to carry out against northern cancer patients.

I don't know how we can possibly make the Minister of Health understand what it is like to try and access cancer care in northern Ontario, because she just doesn't get it. Obviously the Premier of this province doesn't get it either. That's regrettable, because he's a northerner and he should know better.

The government has consistently refused to pay northern patients the full cost of their travel, accommodation and food to access cancer care if they're not having to access that care out of their region. We have tried to make the minister understand that the region in northern Ontario that people live in and have to access cancer care in is a huge region, double, triple, four times the geographic size of anywhere else that people in this province have to travel for cancer care.

This government is paying southern Ontario cancer patients from Hamilton, London and Toronto, who go to Detroit, Buffalo, Kingston, Sudbury or Thunder Bay, 100% of the costs of their travel to get to the cancer treatment centre—100% of their food, travel and accommodation. Many of those patients, even when they travel to a cancer centre outside their region, when they go from Hamilton to Buffalo, when they go from Hamilton to Kingston, are travelling less than people in northern Ontario travel one way to get to their nearest cancer treatment centre.

I want to raise again, if only to make the point one more time, a specific case of a woman from Pickle Lake. Speaker, you will remember this case because it was the first case that we raised in this Legislature almost a year ago to the day. My leader Howard Hampton raised it, and it's the case of Donna Graham from Pickle Lake. She travelled 525 kilometres one way from Pickle Lake to Thunder Bay to get her cancer treatment. She did that trip 14 times, round trip, in order to access cancer care. One

time she was lucky enough to fly. The other times her husband had to take off work from the Northern Store in Pickle Lake and drive her. Her travel costs alone were \$6,077. She received a sum total of \$2,200 in compensation from the government. She paid over \$3,800 out of her own pocket.

The important point, the point that the minister just doesn't want to get, is this: Donna Graham travelled further by car one way from her home to the nearest cancer treatment centre in her region than any of this government's re-referral patients from Toronto, London and Hamilton who had to leave Toronto, Hamilton and London and go to Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit or Kingston for cancer care. She had to travel further in her region one way than all of them did when they were re-referred to the cancer treatment centre that was outside their region. Donna Graham couldn't get 100% of her costs covered, and I ask this government, why? Where is the justice in this? Where is the fairness in this? Do you know what's even sadder? Donna Graham died about eight weeks ago, before we could get this horrible situation fixed. When we talked to her husband, he said it was his greatest regret, and hers as well, that this horrible discrimination against northern cancer patients was not fixed before she died, but if there was any way that he could continue with this fight to try to get this Harris government to change its mind, then he would do so.

**2040**

We will continue to raise this matter and we will continue this fight, for Donna Graham and for every other cancer patient out there who has died before we could get this fixed, who is suffering from cancer now and who will suffer from cancer in the future, because there is nothing fair, right or just about a government that would fully fund 100% of the costs for southern Ontario patients to access cancer care, but at the same time would only agree to pay a small portion of travel costs alone for people who also have cancer but who live in northern Ontario.

The government has tried to justify this in any number of ways by saying it's temporary, by saying Cancer Care Ontario is paying for this, by trying to say that it's a problem with the northern health travel grant and we might fix it. This program has been going on for 20 months now. There's nothing temporary about it. It's scheduled to go on for at least another two and a half years because of the excessive waiting lists for treatment in this province. There's nothing temporary, and the government should pay northern cancer patients too.

It's not about the northern health travel grant, as much as the government would like to use that as an excuse to explain why they have done nothing on this important issue. The northern health travel grant is for all patients in northern Ontario who have to travel, for any number of illnesses, more than 100 kilometres. We are talking about a specific program established by this government for cancer. A specific deluxe program that this government established for cancer patients in the south should be open for cancer patients in the north too.

Finally, although the Minister of Health has tried to say this on a number of occasions, it is not cancer Care Ontario that is paying for this program and it is not the Canadian Cancer Society that is paying for this program. This program is being paid for by a special allocation from this Harris government to Cancer Care Ontario. That has been going on since April 1999. That is why we have made the argument that this government should extend this special allocation of funds to Cancer Care Ontario for northern cancer patients too and end the discrimination now.

As I said earlier, for Donna Graham and for so many others who have been financially affected and who look at a government that discriminates against them when they're already battling cancer and shouldn't have to battle a financial trauma as well, we'll continue this fight. Sooner or later, this government is going to have to admit that it's wrong, that it is discriminating against northern cancer patients and it shouldn't do so any more.

I've tried to outline in the time that I've had at least six areas with respect to health care that the government could deal with over the next two weeks if it wanted to do something positive and something concrete for the majority of people who live in this province.

It certainly would make a difference if the government did something on physician recruitment in our part of the province. It would make a huge difference if the government would finally end its discrimination against northern cancer patients in our part of the province too.

I hope the Minister of Health in the next few weeks, as we sit these late nights, will see the wisdom of doing even one of these initiatives and actually fund one of them as well.

**Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke):** I will be sharing my time—I'm not exactly sure, is this not our leadoff?

**The Acting Speaker:** Yes.

**Mr Conway:** So I will take the 60 minutes and I will share it with the shy and retiring member for St Catharines who has to go down and check on his hockey tickets at the bidding. So it's 60 minutes, I presume, and I will share the time with Mr Bradley.

We have before us tonight the calendar motion standing in the name of our friend the government House leader, which essentially tells us we are here until December 21, 2000. I certainly have no quarrel with that. As my father would say if he were here, "You're paid for 12 months of the year's work and it's probably not a bad thing that you show up for at least seven or eight of those months around the Legislature."

I had to think earlier tonight as I was listening to the previous speaker, the member for Nickel Belt—who I thought made quite a good speech about a number of issues affecting her part of the province—how increasingly surreal this place is becoming, and we're not alone. There was a wonderful article in the New York Times magazine the other day surveying the life and legislative times of one Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the retiring senior senator from New York who is completing this month 24

years in that august body. Moynihan was simply making the point how ridiculous the Senate is becoming as a place to debate. I should have brought the article with me tonight, because he says that he's leaving with some regret because it has become a culture war around the place: there is less and less rapport across the aisle; that there are deeper and sharper ideological divisions between members of the Democratic and Republican caucuses.

He tells a story about how basically most of the time, if you go over to the Senate, you'll see some senator speaking to an empty chamber, usually with some props that are made for television. I thought earlier tonight how the member for Nickel Belt had obviously done good work in preparing her speech and really she was speaking to a nearly empty chamber and, dare I say it, most of us who were here—and that was a very small number—weren't paying a great deal of attention to what she was saying. That's becoming the norm, and I ask my friends on all sides, can you imagine, knowing something about the kind of sacrifice that we all make to get here, what a strange and paradoxical state of affairs that is? You work as hard as you all did to win a nomination, to win an election, to come here, and pay less and less attention to your colleagues in one of the places where we're supposed to business.

I'm the first to recognize that there is, of course, more to the business. There is caucus, there is the constituency responsibility. But we are, after all, members of Parliament and an important part of our job, according to political science at least, is that we come on a nearly daily basis when we're in session to meet one another and to debate issues of public concern.

There's a new book by a fellow named Donald Savoie, a noted academic. You may have seen him on television the other night. He has written a book which I would recommend to your attention. It's called *Governing at the Centre*. Essentially, he argues that 30 years ago Pierre Trudeau observed that most MPs were nobodies 50 feet from Parliament Hill. He's arguing, based on a lot of very good evidence from former ministers of the crown, that in fact today in the national capital of the Canadian federation, about 75% to 90% of the cabinet ministers are nobodies at the cabinet table.

It's a really interesting state of affairs, because I know there is within our culture the idea that one gets elected to Parliament, certainly in Ontario, in the hope and prayerful expectation that someday, sooner than later, the phone will ring and some unelected person who is an aide-de-camp to the Premier or to the Prime Minister will call and say, "Mr Coburn, Mr Conway, Mr Martin, you are summoned to the treasury bench," and then meaningful political life begins for the honourable member.

It's interesting. According to a very recent survey of the Canadian parliamentary scene—and I quite frankly am inclined to believe the argument and the evidence advanced by Professor Savoie in his book—not only are MPs increasingly nobodies in the parliamentary precinct, but a majority of ministers are non-entities at the cabinet

table. We are going to have to ask ourselves the question: is there any hope for renewal and reformation of this deeply troubled institution?

**2050**

I like the place, strange as it may seem after 25 years. I find it interesting to be here. I enjoy the debate. I thought this afternoon all of the interventions on Bill 147, the Amendment to the Employment Standards Act, were quite good. But I feel more and more like a truly rare bird, and perhaps that says a lot more about me than it does about my colleagues. I simply make the point that we're going to debate tonight, I guess until midnight, a motion that is going to pass inevitably. It doesn't seem to be much more than giving an opportunity for honourable members to walk the picket fence of riding or individual concerns, and I will do that myself in a moment or two.

Let me start by making some passing observations about a couple of items, one of which will be electricity. Before I get to that, I wanted to make a comment or two about the Minister of Finance's second quarter report to the Legislature—to the people of Ontario—which was released earlier this week. I must say, as I indicated earlier today, that it's a very impressive report. We have been told, and the evidence is pretty clear, that well into the second and third quarter of fiscal 2000-01, provincial revenues are robust, to say the least. Growth appears this year to be someplace between 5.5% and 6%. What does that mean? It means very simply that Ontario provincial government revenues will be \$2 billion above budget plan. We are going to take in this year, at current rates, about \$64 billion worth of revenue. That's a very handsome amount of money: \$15 billion above where we were when the current administration took office five and a half years ago.

**Mr Dunlop:** Keep saying that.

**Mr Conway:** Oh, no, listen. I think these are some of the best numbers we've seen in post-Second World War Ontario, and we should all be happy, because having been around for a while, I can remember when the obverse was in front of us. I remember those days in 1980-81 when Frank Miller would come and say, "You know, the news is not good. The revenues are going the other way." And certainly the Peterson and Rae governments between 1989 and 1993 faced an even more vivid example of that same painful reality.

I say to my friends in the current government, it should be their prayerful hope and expectation that those days never return. The carping opposition will publicly and privately hope they do, but certainly anybody in government would hope they don't return.

**Hon Mr Klees:** The revenues were up in the Peterson government.

**Mr Conway:** The revenues certainly were up in the Peterson years, absolutely, but they turned sharply the other way in late 1989. In fact, I was also looking here at the expenditure line. Program spending under the Mike Harris government is up about \$7 billion.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** Oh, well, listen, there's not a government that's not going to point with pride to the efficacy of the appropriations and there are few legislatures that are going to stand in the way. I simply make the point that revenues are up this year by over \$2 billion above the plan, and over the five and a half years of the Harris government they're up now about \$15 billion. I think they've moved from \$49 billion to \$64 billion.

Interestingly, the spending has moved quite briskly as well. Program spending is up by over \$7 billion. It looks like, according to the documents tabled this week, the Ontario provincial debt will have crested last year at someplace around \$14.5 billion, up about 23% since the Harris government took office.

**Hon Mr Klees:** We predicted it.

**Mr Conway:** I know you predicted it, and I'm not complaining about it. I'm just observing that we have added over \$20 billion to the provincial debt. Now, we know what debt is, of course. Debt is deferred taxation. Make no mistake about that. The current government has a fiscal policy which is very clear: that tax cuts, in their view, were more important than debt retirement. There seems to be some evidence that in the short term it seems to have worked both politically and economically. I'll tell you something. When you look at these numbers and you ask yourself the question, "What happens if this thing starts to turn south?"—there was some banter here yesterday about those bad old days in the new democracy. I don't say this with any partisan animus, because it wouldn't matter which of us is the Minister of Finance. If those growth rates stop being 5.5% and become 1.5%, and God forbid that interest rates should creep up, the life of the Treasurer of Ontario is going to get very interesting very quickly. It won't take much to turn black ink into red ink. If past experience tells us anything, it won't take much to make a little bit of black ink become a lot of red ink.

As I say, when I look at the phenomenal growth of revenue, it is astonishing. We should be so happy. I didn't bring some of the other documentation—yes, I did. The greater detail that is contained in the 2000 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review indicates again just how staggeringly important is the American economy to us. Fully 93%—let me back up and say 55% of Ontario's GDP now depends on international trade. That's up from 29% 10 years ago. Brian Mulroney, you were right; Don Macdonald, you were right. The Ontario economy in the post-free-trade world has seen its GDP rise on the basis of—our GDP in 1989 was about 28% or 29% dependent on international trade. For us, international trade means 93% of that is with the USA, and almost half of that is the auto sector. But 10 years after the free trade deal was passed, Ontario's international trade, or our trade with the United States, as a share of our economy has gone from about 29% or 29% to 55%. That's a staggering development. It's certainly good in the sense that the Americans are enjoying a boom like they have not experienced in the post-war period, phenomenal expansion over more quarters than ever before. Hopefully, that will

continue. Yes, there undoubtedly were some aspects of domestic policy, both provincial and national, that have helped, but Minister Eves's own data makes plain where the engine is that is driving the growth in Ontario: 55% of Ontario's GDP today depends on international trade, and 93% of that is our trade with the United States, and about 40% to 50% of that is our trade with the Americans in automobiles and automotive parts.

So when we read on the front pages of the financial press, both in Canada and the United States, that things are cooling off at GM and DaimlerChrysler and Ford, we have to be concerned. It looks like it's going to be manageable, and I see that Mr Eves himself was saying yesterday that the R word is not crossing anybody's lips. Let us hope and pray that it doesn't happen. But I just wanted to observe that we have some dramatic increases here.

Just quickly looking at a couple of the line items, I thought members might be interested to know—I'm sure you've all looked at it. I see where our gasoline tax revenues, folks, particularly those of you from rural and northern Ontario—I was struck by the fact that our gasoline tax revenues this year will be \$106 million higher than last year. That's good news: more money to build roads. You know, a lot is being said that we're spending \$1 billion on road improvements, and that's good. But according to this statement, the road-related tax revenues this year to the province are going to be just a little bit less than \$4 billion. We're going to take in \$2.26 billion on gasoline taxes, \$665 million on fuel taxes and \$920 million with vehicle and driver registration fees. I think if you add that up it comes to some \$3.8 billion, and \$106 million of additional gasoline tax revenue this year over last year. So we should be building more roads, we should be improving the highways of southern and northern, eastern and western Ontario.

#### 2100

Do you know something else? We are taking in \$920 million worth of revenue to the province from vehicle registration and driver registration fees. What is this nonsense about making it more difficult, quite frankly, to get tested for a driver's licence? The people of Pembroke and Cumberland and Oak Ridges are making available \$920 million by way of net revenue to the province of Ontario. That's not bad business.

I see in gaming revenues—and this is quite an understated revenue line—we are reporting in the current outlook that we will be taking in \$1.865 billion. I suspect that's about \$700 million to \$900 million less than is truthful, because we're leaving a lot of money in the till over at the gaming commission. God, if there was ever an outfit that deserved either a really good inquiry from the Globe and Mail or, God forbid, this Legislature, it's the gaming commission. Boy, we want to shine the spotlight on the union bosses and what they're earning, but I want to see how the government of Ontario is doing in the mob's business.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Conway:** Yes, I say to the government whip. You know, it's interesting: we want to get out of all kinds of traditional public business, but we want to pile headlong into the rackets business that the mob has occupied for decades. Isn't that a wonderful irony: get out of schooling, retreat from driver testing, but get something called a gaming commission and go and give the mob some competition in a really good business with high margins. Welcome to Ontario in the 21st century.

**Mr O'Toole:** Sean, Sean.

**Mr Conway:** I see my friend from Durham East is somewhat incredulous, but what are we doing? What's our tax policy? Cut the progressive taxes and crank up the gambling taxes. Boy, that must make you popular at church on Sunday morning. That must really go down well with the parson out there in Tyrone, or wherever it is that you go to church.

Let me just take a moment, because my friend Bradley has returned—I want to spend a few moments on a matter of urgent and pressing necessity, and that has to do with electricity. I would submit, and I hope not too self-interestedly, that there is nothing we will have done in the last five or six years that in terms of the economic future of the province will be more important than the deregulation of the electricity sector. It is an extremely important, hugely complicated undertaking. I want to say again that the government of Ontario by the mid-1990s had no option but to contemplate change. To be fair to the Harris government, it set out five years ago, undoubtedly ably led and directed by our friend from Guelph, to pursue a policy the core of which was to insert reasonable competition in the generation of electricity. Would that we had stayed that course, but we've gone in a different direction. We are spending altogether too little time in this Legislature understanding what is going on at the present time with the so-called deregulation.

I see in today's Wall Street Journal an article, "Gas Shortage Likely to Force California to Shut Electricity Plants Temporarily." This is just the latest of articles that are everywhere in the American press, the Alberta press and certainly now with increasing regularity in the Ontario press. Let me just read from this article in today's Wall Street Journal, December 6, 2000:

"Los Angeles

"California is learning there is no 'off season' for the electric industry as an unexpected electrical emergency struck the state despite generally moderate temperatures. The underlying cause of the problem: tight supplies of both electricity and natural gas.

"Yesterday, a top official at the agency that operates California's "electricity grid said there is a 'high probability' that electrical-generating plants in California could be forced to shut down temporarily within the next few days because of insufficient supplies of natural gas to fuel the plants. Such an event almost certainly would trigger rolling blackouts. It would be ironic if a gas curtailment were the force that finally pushed the state into blackouts—threatened but averted all summer—since the

California Independent System Operator had assumed that it was past the worst danger as temperatures cooled.”

It goes on to describe the absolute chaos that's occurring in California, and it's the same in the Pacific north-west. The Alberta government the other day slapped a freeze on their situation. I see the federal government has now launched an inquiry that some of the big players may in fact be gaming the Alberta electricity pool. It's a very serious business. The Ontario Energy Board, in a hearing just a few weeks ago, said on the basis of evidence tendered to it this past summer and early fall, it is their conclusion that customers of Hydro One ought to expect a minimum increase of 13% once the market opens up, presumably some time in the early to mid part of 2001. Natural gas prices are going through the roof. You will know, of course, that there is a growing relationship between the two: 90% of the new electricity plants in the United States are going to be fuelled by natural gas. That's a huge new demand driving up the price of natural gas well into the foreseeable future.

We have a situation in Ontario where, as I say, it was never going to be easy, it was always going to be complicated and controversial, but we're not getting the kind of activity on the generating side. My friend from Lambton today had a statement talking about the groundbreaking at the new facility in Sarnia, and that's a good thing, but we're going to need a lot more of that. One of the assumptions of the new electricity policy, folks, is that with decontrol we are effectively becoming part of a continental energy grid. The American demand is high and getting higher, largely because of economic growth but in some cases because of weather.

We are faced with a situation where we are not getting competition in generation, and what have we got on the other side? We've got this incredible spectacle of Ontario Hydro One, a successor company, out buying up municipal utilities like the Brampton hydro utility the other day, at a price of \$260 million, mostly with borrowed money—to what end? I mean, you heard the auditor yesterday rightly say, “There are some serious financial liabilities that attach to all of this, not just to hydro rate-payers but to Ontario taxpayers.” But I ask the question rhetorically. No one said when we got going down this road five years ago that what we needed was a bigger Ontario Hydro retail in southern Ontario. Why, I ask this Legislature, are we allowing the successor company, Hydro One, to go out with money it doesn't have, that it must borrow, to buy up utilities both large and small at a time when we don't have the money, the utility doesn't have the money, we're worried about rates and, most importantly, we are not making any meaningful progress on the critical question, which is to get more generation activity?

**2110**

Some 70% of your electricity bill is the price of generation, and that's where we started out to get some activity. We're not getting nearly enough activity. We've got to get much more generation capacity into the system if we are to have any hope of bringing prices down over

time. Prices are going to go up; they're going to go up sharply for all classes of customers, unless the government is forced in Ontario, as it was in Alberta and elsewhere in the United States, to intervene.

As I take my seat—I know my friend from St Catharines is getting a little worried—I simply want to say again, the electricity policy of this government is not the one it advertised, is not the one Ontario needs, is absolutely guaranteed to complicate an already complicated subject and, most painfully, is going to drive up electricity prices for residential, farm, commercial and industrial customers in the immediate future to a very painful degree. I ask my friends in the government, when are you going to hold your cabinet to account for what it is doing that it shouldn't be doing and for what it's not doing that ought to be done, most especially protecting customers of this vital resource?

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** Continuing where my colleague from the city of Pembroke left off, I want to talk about a few issues that I thought under this calendar motion would certainly be relevant, particularly to the people of the Niagara region, at the risk of being somewhat parochial.

I want to indicate first of all, I suspect there are many members of this Legislature who are encountering some of the same problems I'm encountering.

I should tell the member for Gloucester, by the way, that he was successful earlier this evening. Despite the fact that he perhaps didn't think he was going to be, he was successful in a certain matter this evening.

I want to talk first of all about the shortage of doctors. This is a problem we're all going to face. I look around the Legislature and I see people, particularly from areas that aren't major metropolitan areas, who should be worried about doctors. What you have to look at is, everybody in the province, think about your own family doctor and how old that doctor is today. Think of the specialists in various areas. These are experienced individuals, but they're also individuals who may be somewhat closer to retirement than you think.

If we look at the ophthalmologists in the Niagara region, we recognize there's already a shortage of ophthalmologists, and we have a billing cap on those who are there. Some people will say, “Isn't that justified? They shouldn't be able to bill forever for the services they provide.” But what they don't consider is that we simply don't have enough ophthalmologists. So those who are there must do even more of the work than they otherwise would have. You'll see that the Ministry of Health will talk about any specialists and say, “You have this many specialists in your area.” What you have to determine is how many of those people are working full-time, how many of those people are actually full-time ophthalmologists or surgeons of some kind. You'll find very often that not as many as you think are. I was told by one reliable source that one third of the ophthalmologists are over 65, one third are between 55 and 65 and one third are under 55. We graduate in Canada, never mind in Ontario, fewer than 20 ophthalmologists a year.

As we have an aging population, we recognize that people are going to experience more problems with their eyesight, with their hearing and general health problems. We have an aging population, particularly in the Niagara region, but also, I suggest to you, across the country, so this is something governments are going to have to move quickly to address.

It isn't going to be cheap. This is why I worry. I know members of the government sometimes find us over-critical on this side. I'm particularly critical of tax cuts of the degree and dimension that this government has implemented, because I think we're going to need that money for our health care system. Without a doubt, we're going to need it for the health care system. I think most people in this province, yes, we all like a tax cut but, given the choice, would prefer that the government make massive investments in the health care system. I think they're going to be needed.

In the Niagara region I get calls at my constituency office. I cannot produce a doctor for these people. I can't even say that the government can produce a doctor. I can't say, "Phone the Minister of Health and she will tell you tomorrow that you have a doctor." It's something we have to address. It will not get better; it will only get worse, unless we start graduating more and more doctors and having more come into the system one way or another. That's not only family physicians; that's people in certain specialties. The answer is not the billing caps, unfortunately, they put on, when you have too few physicians or too few specialists.

There was an article in Maclean's magazine this past week that mentioned the Niagara region and other areas, because we have people now who have macular degeneration, people who need operations for cataracts and others reasons, people who could actually lose their sight if they did not have an operation or some medicine available.

That gets to another point: there are drugs and procedures available today that are admittedly expensive, but they will save people's eyesight and they may in some cases even save lives. It seems to me again that most people are more prepared to invest the dollars they have in that kind of system that will save someone's eyesight than they are in a tax cut which allows many people at least to buy something, perhaps an item we would consider to be a luxury rather than a necessity.

We certainly require as well for our CCACs, as we call them in this House—they're the central organization, the community care access centres which channel people who need long-term care into the appropriate long-term care. The funding is simply not keeping up with the kind of demand we have. Again, to be parochial, I'll talk about the Niagara region, which has per capita more people over the age of 55 than any other part of the province of Ontario, to my knowledge. It may be second in Canada. So it's essential that we provide that funding.

There was what I think was a wrong decision made in a couple of ways. This isn't the only government that's made that decision; don't get me wrong. I have never

been a proponent of massive deinstitutionalization in the health care system, and I know that goes against what a lot of the gurus thought 10 or 15 years ago, that we've got to get everybody out of an institutional setting. Well, that's fine if you have the support systems in the community, but there are also some people who are under the illusion that those support systems would be cheaper than keeping people in an institutional setting. It's not the case. Now we face a dilemma. For instance, I know this is controversial, but I think of people who have severe psychiatric problems, and we're not talking about the old movie that perhaps a few of us in this House would remember as kids, called *The Snake Pit*. You'd have to stay up late at night now to see that about 4 o'clock in the morning when they're replaying a very old movie. It's in black and white, not even colour.

**Mr Conway:** Was it a talkie?

**Mr Bradley:** It was indeed a talkie. But it described conditions in what they then would refer to as a psychiatric institution.

Well, I'm going to tell you, it changed considerably. There are some people who had the stability of a home, where they didn't have family or their problems were extremely severe. Those people are out on the street now. The members from Ottawa who are here today—members from any community—know that we have a tremendous problem with people who are unfortunate enough to suffer from schizophrenia, and their families as well. I'm sure all of us get a call once a month at least from somebody who is beside himself or beside herself over a member of the family who simply cannot function unless that person has adequate medication to keep that person stable. Talk to some of these psychiatric patients yourselves and they will tell you, "As long as I'm on my medication, I can function in society. I can have a job. I can be a positive part of society." But some who are not on medication have some severe problems.

It ended in one particular case in Ottawa, a high-profile case—we have Brian's Law as a result in this House—of someone who was killed by a person whose psychiatric state was not as it should be. That's happening all over. There are people who phone my constituency office to say, "My son or daughter will be dead in two years," and unfortunately the prediction comes true.

**2120**

I know there are arguments on both sides of the issue. I don't want to pretend there aren't. We don't want to go back to a situation a century ago where people were confined to what we called "mental institutions" and kept away, and the family and others had oppressive powers. But the pendulum has swung so much the other way that we have to provide help for these people and sometimes it isn't on a voluntary basis. The legislation recently proclaimed by the government goes part of the way toward that, but it is a miserable problem for a lot of people. If you think about families, extended families, I can't think of a family in Ontario that wouldn't be in some way affected by a relative or a close friend who is in this situation. It's something we have to address.

Again, it requires an investment of funds. I wish it didn't, but it does.

I look as well at the ambulance service in our area. I raised the question a week ago today with the Minister of Health about the chaotic ambulance dispatch situation in Niagara. There have been a lot of stories about it since. The Leader of the Opposition, Dalton McGuinty, asked the question in the House as well about inquests in specific cases.

What we've had there is this thinking—and again, I know there are some proponents here who believe in megacities. I'm not one of them. Some of my colleagues believe in megacities and some do not. If we canvassed the three caucuses in this House we'd probably find different opinions. My local newspaper, the *St Catharines Standard*, can turn virtually any issue into an editorial saying that if only we had a megacity, the problems would be solved.

Let me give you an example of where I don't think that mega-thinking has worked, and that is in the ambulance dispatch centres. With an ambulance dispatch centre, you need people who know the local area. The Niagara region is lumped in with Brantford, I believe, Hamilton and other communities around, and you have a central dispatch centre. It was thought this was going to be the very best thing we could have. Well, we find out that the people who work there don't always know the street system. They don't know the historical markers. They don't know the hospital system. Therefore, we have ambulances which have gone to wrong places, been wrongly dispatched. We've had people who may have suffered irreparable damage to their personal health or people who may have died as a result of the system being far from perfect.

I asked of the minister if she would have, as the regional municipality of Niagara has requested, an independent audit done of the dispatch system. The purpose isn't to point fingers. If the audit says, "There's a major problem and it's in the following areas," and we have a Conservative government of Mike Harris in power, my goal is not to point fingers. Frankly, what's not important is whose fault it was in the first place. What is important is how we address the problem. You do it by an outside look: not somebody from the Ministry of Health and not somebody who has a lot of conditions placed on them as to what they can look at. It should be a wide-open inquiry. It should establish what the problems are and, most importantly, come up with recommendations that the government will implement on an immediate basis. That's what I want to see. I'm not pointing fingers at the Premier, the Minister of Health or anybody else on this issue. I think it's too important an issue to fiddle around with in that way. We simply have to address it properly.

A lot of these issues are difficult to deal with. I don't want to pretend they are not. I hear people who are extremely critical of this government, as I am from time to time, but I want to say that those problems are not easy to solve and I don't ever want to pretend that they are.

We have some recommendations from over here. Sometimes they're helpful to you; sometimes you may reject them. But I hope that at least you're open to ideas on the other side. I hope that you're open to perhaps fewer exercises of cutting taxes and more of investing funds. I know people call that spending in many cases. I like to think of it, when it's proper, as an investment.

This government has made some investments in what I consider to be productive areas. Not everything this government does is wrong. Our job in the opposition is to be critical, is to probe the weaknesses, is to expose what we feel are problems. Members of the government have an obligation to present the government point of view. I understand that's the way the House works. I don't really object to people who do that. I expect cabinet ministers, when they answer in the House, to be perhaps defensive in their answers, but I expect when they go behind the closed doors of the cabinet that they may well share with their colleagues their personal concerns about what's happening in the province. That's as the system should work.

Let me touch on perhaps a few other parochial items that may affect others. The Queen Elizabeth Way is jam-packed right now. When I try to come in in the morning with the 12 boxes of stuff in the car, as though I'm going to get home and get it done and come back—that's always a forlorn hope, I might add—it is just a jammed situation.

Is the solution to continue to build more lanes? That's good on a temporary basis.

*Interjections.*

**Mr Bradley:** Yes, there are others. The member for Scarborough would know that she has coming through Scarborough a major—what is it, 12 lanes now, or 14 lanes, when you consider the collector lanes?—a huge highway up there. I think there's a need for some public transit, like GO Transit. I'm not unrealistic; I don't expect that GO Transit should have the same service from St Catharines to downtown Toronto that it has from, for instance, Oshawa or perhaps Mississauga and Oakville. They're closer; there are bound to be more trains needed. But I do think there's a need for an enhanced service. If it can be done co-operatively between the federal government and the provincial government, good, I'm glad to see that. But I think there should be another option for people who want to come to medical or business appointments in Toronto or for tourist reasons. GO Transit would be very helpful. There may be a need for a mid-peninsula corridor. Certainly the local folks in our area at the municipal level believe that to be the case. I know the government will want to assess that carefully.

The government has to be careful how it makes its commitments in expenditures. I understand that and I'm not one who is saying the government ignores us if they don't proceed the next day when we make a request of that kind, because it is the government's role to assess what all the needs are in the province and then choose on a priority which needs must be met. But in transportation, I think the government should be back into the field of

assisting with public transit, at least in the capital field, if not in the operating. I preferred the system previously. I was once chair of the local transit commission and I appreciated the assistance that was provided by the Davis government, which was in power then, to both the operating and the capital costs of running a public transit system, which allowed an alternative for those who wished to use that kind of transit instead of their own vehicles.

I look at the hospital situation. You've heard me talk about the Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines for a long time. I want to tell you, I hated—you know something? There are some predictions that you don't want to come true, but they do. I said at the time, when they were finished—there was a lot of gloss put on it and there were some high fives and a lot of celebration when they didn't shut the doors. I said at the time that what I could foresee was a glorified walk-in clinic. And now we hear announced this week that they're going to take the kidney dialysis out of the Hotel Dieu Hospital. They've become famous for it. It's exactly where it should be. They're going to take chemotherapy, the oncology, out of the Hotel Dieu Hospital.

**Interjection:** What are they going to do with it?

**Mr Bradley:** They're going to try to fit it into the general hospital in the other part of the city. I don't want to pretend there will be no service, but I think our city can use two hospitals.

I also don't want to say they can duplicate all their services; they can't. We can't afford to duplicate services. But I think there's a place for two emergency wards. One may be more sophisticated in what it can provide than the other, but two emergency wards. I think there's a need for a hospital to handle what we call regional services, such as oncology, such as kidney dialysis. Another hospital may handle the heart surgery and heart problems, and pediatricians may work at one hospital. In other words, there has to be a division of what they have. I don't want to pretend that there wouldn't be. But I'm deeply disappointed, though I must say I could see it coming. They wanted me to keep quiet. Some people said, "You can't be critical, because the door of the hospital is open." I would say that is a definite problem and I hope it can be resolved in another way.

2130

I want to look as well at privatization. I guess it affects everybody. One of the real problems we've had is with people trying to get drivers' licences. It's particularly kids, and I know there is a specific problem. It's the phasing in—we call it that—of the graduated licence system. Everybody at once started to need those tests, and they've become pretty onerous, to get them. I wonder how many people of my vintage could pass today the test that the kids have to pass when they're finished their five years. It would be pretty difficult, I think, for many of us who simply had to drive around the block and parallel park and do a couple of other things, compared to what they have to go through today. That's a good system. I don't want to say that's not a good system. It may have

some wrinkles that have to be ironed out, but it is a good system.

I want to go back to the issue of the unicity for a minute. I want to commend the Minister of Municipal Affairs to this point in time. He has not forced a unicity on St Catharines and on the Niagara region. As long as you delineate who is responsible for what and you ensure that the regional government has those responsibilities that should be regional and the local government has those responsibilities which should be local, I think that's the way things should be. I don't want to lose the identity. I know people say they won't lose the identity; you do. And it's not the panacea. The Minister of Municipal Affairs now has the book that I recommended to him, called *Merger Mania* by Dr Andrew Sancton of the University of Western Ontario, who pointed out that there are very few examples of real savings with a unicity, and you lose a lot of that local content.

The Conservative Party in Ontario, to its credit—and it was criticized years ago for this—tended to understand the need for local communities and for certain decisions to be made at the local level. I think that is positive. I don't want to see duplication. I think it's dreadful when you see that. But there is a need to preserve those communities, and if we can make sure they're efficient and delivering the services as they should, that's as it should be. I'm sure the member for Erie-Lincoln agrees with me and must be on the inside resisting the tendency of some to have a megacity. I can tell you I have people in my own community who don't agree with me on this, particularly the editorial board of the *St Catharines Standard*, which, as I say, can turn any argument on any issue into a need for a unicity in Niagara. But I beg to differ with them, and I differ with some of my former council colleagues and some on regional council who think a unicity is best for all. I'm not saying there's never a need for some kind of restructuring, but I don't think a unicity in Niagara at this point in time is the answer.

**Mr Conway:** What does Dr Kushner say?

**Mr Bradley:** Dr Kushner is also opposed to it. He is on city council now, re-elected. He actually has been on city council so long—Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University, a prolific writer on matters municipal and economic. He's an economics professor; far too small-c conservative for me, I might add, but he does make some compelling arguments. He is one, for instance, who didn't believe that the city of St Catharines should sell its hydro system. If you sell it, yes, you get the money right away and you've got it for all these projects or you can pretend you're lowering taxes, and then you raise hydro rates and say, "See, we lowered taxes," but the hydro rates go up. So Dr Kushner has been a positive member of city council, as have many other members of city council who have served for some period of time.

I wanted to talk about Mobility Niagara. That was a service for people who have a hard time getting around, people who are physically disabled. It collapsed about three or four months ago. I think it's a good service. I spoke to Brad Clark, the parliamentary assistant, about

the possibility of that being perhaps a pilot project on getting people to non-urgent medical appointments, for instance, so you're not tying up ambulances for those purposes but you're allowing people to have essential services using a mobile system out there. There's always a cost component. I'm not saying there shouldn't be a cost component, but it should be affordable for those people who have to use it.

I want to say as well that the QEW widening is causing some problems in our area, some disruption for people. For the life of me, I often wonder why we have to keep widening some of those roads. The QEW now goes to the edge of St Catharines. We have Highway 406 that heads to the south. It's a four-lane highway for a period of time, to the outskirts of Welland. Then the QEW goes through St Catharines. If you start changing the ramping system, if you start widening the highway through, it's very disruptive to those who have their homes right there, and I don't know what you really gain. I don't know if you really gain that much. It may be that the mid-peninsula corridor can take some of that traffic that would normally go to Buffalo—and it's actually truck traffic—off that highway and ease it. We want people to be able to get to Niagara Falls, which has a lot of attractions. In addition to the casino in Niagara, it has many other attractions. I want to commend, by the way, the Niagara Parks Commission and the city of Niagara Falls for endeavouring to have as wide a net as possible for the purposes of tourism.

**Mr Conway:** Who plays Bugsy Siegel down at the Niagara Casino?

**Mr Bradley:** As members of this House know, I have never been a fan of casino gambling; in fact, I think it's destructive of our society.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:** I agree with the member there. I think he was talking about the slot machines in the corner stores. They have those in some provinces. A lot of the provinces are rethinking—

**Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton):** Not in Ontario.

**Mr Bradley:** No, not in Ontario, and that's good. I know they wanted it. I know that they wanted the video lottery terminals in every bar and every restaurant—in every corner store, probably—of every town, village and city in Ontario. But perhaps I played just a little bit of a role in persuading the government—I suspect many government members played a role in stopping that from happening.

Then we had the new Mike Harris gambling halls, the 44 so-called charity casinos which were going to be around Ontario—none, I hope, in Oak Ridges. You see, I always found it interesting that many people who took a moral stance on many issues did not take a moral stance on who this affects, the terrible effect it has on families.

You watch the commercials they have right now, and the commercials are not your fault, but I've watched the one where the guy sneaks out. He ties the bedsheets together and he's escaping from his wife to go out and

gamble. Do you know something? That's not far from the truth in many cases.

**Hon Mr Klees:** Or it's the wife.

**Mr Bradley:** And vice versa. You're right, it can happen both ways. I hope they've stopped those commercials. Certainly Woodbine had those for its situation.

We shouldn't be moving in that direction. I know some people say you tax the foolish and they'll say if it's a volunteer tax, we don't have to tax everybody else. But you should see the havoc it wreaks on many homes. I see them now through the back door in the racetracks, and I wonder how many people now are watching the races and how many are playing the slot machines. The big advertising in Fort Erie is "Fort Erie Racetrack Slots" That's the big attraction, as people come in and throw their money in and away it goes. People make their choices, I guess, but I think there are more productive ways to spend that money on essential goods and services.

It's not this government alone. Governments across this country and North America—and I understand why; there's a great resistance to other forms of taxation—have gone to this form of taxation. I think it's tearing at the fabric of our society, and I hope the slowdown I've seen is going to be something that will grind to a halt. I'm not about to tell the minister who is responsible he has to close all the casinos. I'm not an unrealistic person. I just hope that we don't see any further expansion of those opportunities and that we assess what we've already done.

The member for Guelph is here and she would be very familiar with this situation: I think the province should get into the regulation and inspection of retirement homes. That's not cheap, I understand that. She would know from the representations she had—I had some people who came to me and I said that the parliamentary assistant was going to be conducting a review. What the government came up with is a minor step forward, but it doesn't take into account those homes that are simply not great. We know who is in them. They are people whose families have abandoned them very often or they don't have anywhere else to go, so they go to the retirement homes and the situation there is abysmal in many cases. I have seen it and I have had complaints about it. I think we have an obligation as a society to regulate those homes, particularly because there are very vulnerable people in them, often seniors.

**2140**

I think that one of the steps that the member says has been taken is a step in the right direction, but I think we have to look at all of the homes. I suspect the people who will register for that and who are part of the organization are operating homes that are acceptable. I'm worried about the others that I see out there and people who can't themselves protest very much.

I worry about the assessment situation in the province. People now are getting huge increases in assessment. I guess I'm going to hear more from those who got an increase than those who had a decrease. It's understand-

able. It's always the case. Few people are going to phone to say thank you to the government for decreasing it because they'll say you should have done it 20 years ago. But there are some pretty onerous cases, some pretty substantial increases. I think what is needed overall is the use of more progressive taxes at the provincial level to compensate for the downloading that took place. In Niagara it was estimated last year the net difference was \$18 million. In other words, the additional costs to Niagara, over and above what the province had taken, was \$18 million. That's going to be reflected in property taxes or in what we call user fees, and they do not take into account a person's ability to pay.

I want to say as well I was heartened by the fact that there was some considerable support for saving agricultural land in the Niagara region, particularly prime agricultural land with good soil and where there are good climatic conditions. I know one thing: if you're going to save the farmland, you have to save the farmers. Even though I'm an urban representative by and large—I have some farm people in my riding, but by and large it's urban—I'm a very strong supporter of assistance to farmers. We don't pay in this country what you pay in other countries for food. A farmer cannot get what he or she needs from the price of food very easily. So when there are support programs, I think those of us who are in the urban areas, who predominate in this Legislature, have an obligation to provide appropriate assistance programs to farmers, because once you lose that land, it's gone forever. You're not going to get it back again, and it's important that we have it.

I want to say as well, and probably in conclusion because I think I'd like to deal with a number of other items but this is an important one to me, I have watched the poorest people in our society being denigrated. I am not a left-winger when it comes to this issue. Members of my caucus know that when it comes to welfare fraud or issues of that kind that I am as small-c conservative as you are going to get. Not all of the measures the government has taken have been wrong. When you're trying to help people to get back into the work system, that's good, whether it's through educational assistance, whether it's through giving job opportunities to people, genuine job opportunities. There is a compelling reason to do that, to help people back.

I was told by a government member—I won't say which one—that we're on the wrong side of this issue; I should understand politically we're on the wrong side of this issue. In political life, sometimes you have to be on the wrong side of the issue; that is, you have to be able to stand up for those who cannot stand up for themselves. It is denigrating to say to one segment of the population, people who are unfortunate enough to need social assistance, that they must be tested for drugs.

I know that plays well in some quarters. Perhaps the polling shows that it does. But there are times in our society where, despite the political attractiveness in taking a certain course of action, we must resist because it is right to resist. I hope the government will rethink that

policy so that we don't have further denigration of people who are the most unfortunate and poorest in our society.

I would like to move adjournment of the House.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry?

All those in favour say "aye."

All those opposed say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 2145 to 2215.*

**The Acting Speaker:** If there are two of us standing, one of us is out of order and it's not me.

Mr Bradley has moved adjournment of the House.

All those in favour will please rise.

All those opposed will please rise and remain standing.

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 14; the nays are 25.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion lost. Further debate?

**Mr Dunlop:** I'm pleased to take part in the debate tonight on the House calendar motion to extend the meetings into December. I'd like to split my time with the member for Scarborough Centre. She would also like to say a few words.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** If some of you want to make your way out quietly, that would be quite permissible. And now if we could have our attention solely on the member for Simcoe North, because he has the floor.

**Mr Dunlop:** As we talk about the workload a member has here in the House, we obviously have to go to a further week in December to get a lot of our legislation passed. That's very important to the citizens of Ontario.

I'd like to make a few comments tonight on a lot of our municipal partners that are having their inaugural meetings at this time. I've had an opportunity over the last few days to attend a number of inaugural meetings in my riding. In fact I have—

**Mr Peters:** You're no friend of municipalities.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order. I think it's bad enough that the member for Simcoe North has to put up with the noise from his own caucus. He shouldn't have to put up with the yelling across and I have no intention of changing the rules to allow that. The Chair recognizes the member for Simcoe North.

**2220**

**Mr Dunlop:** Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. I heard some comments from the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London, who continued his fearmongering against our government today and refused to acknowledge the fact that the federal government hadn't made its fair contribution toward the farm relief program. He got quite mad. It was obvious he was quite ticked off when there was some heckling toward him.

I want to get back to some comments on some of my municipal partners, some good friends and former colleagues in the municipal governments in my riding. As I

said earlier, I am fortunate in that I've got one city, two towns and six townships in the riding of Simcoe North. As well, I'm fortunate in that I have two First Nations groups: the Beausoleil First Nation and Mnjikaning First Nation of Rama.

I want to commend some of the people who have run for public office in my riding. For example, in the city of Orillia I'd like to compliment Mayor Ron Stevens. Ron is former mayor of the township of Severn. He has 20 years experience in municipal politics and this year decided he'd like to take the opportunity of running in the city of Orillia. He is a businessman in the city, has done a very good job in business and is a very hard-working person. I was able to attend his inaugural on Monday night.

As well, four of the members of the former council, Councillor George Morano, Counillor Maggie Buchanan, Councillor Wayne Gardy and Councillor Tim Lauer, are all returning. This is the first time in many years that the city of Orillia has had a ward system. They also elected this year Francis Smith, a former police officer in the city of Orillia. He is also a former member of the separate school board in Simcoe county. Also elected were Ann Marie Alexander, Ken McLaughlin and Doug Downey, a young lawyer in the city of Orillia.

The meeting on Monday night was very upbeat. I was very pleased to be invited. They have a very positive attitude toward the future. They've had very little in the way of tax increases in about the last eight years. They've done a very good job of controlling taxes and have cut down on a lot of their debt in that time as well. I compliment the city of Orillia.

The township of Severn council, which I used to sit on, is having its inaugural tomorrow night and I'm pleased to be invited to that. I'm also pleased to congratulate former Councillor Phil Sled. He's the new mayor. He was successfully elected on November 13. Sitting with Phil at county council will be Judith Cox, the new deputy mayor of the township of Severn. Judith is a neighbour of mine in the community I live in, Coldwater, and she's looking like she'll do an extremely good job as deputy mayor.

Returning councillors are Mark Taylor, Shirley McDougall and Bruce Stanton. As well they've elected two new members: Doug Beach and Brian Humphries from ward 5. I'm pleased to see these people on council. They're already getting out to a lot of public functions, and although their inaugural is not until tomorrow night they're very well organized. I'm pleased to see that with Ron Stevens and I leaving the township of Severn, they've got some good people replacing us and taking over.

Early Monday morning I had the privilege of attending the inaugural of the township of Ramara. Dr Tom Garry has over 25 years' experience in municipal politics. He's a medical doctor in the small community of Brechin. He has been returned by acclamation this time. That meeting was a very upbeat type of inaugural. They're doing some good planning. They are talking about some future negotiations with their neighbours, the city of Orillia, the

township of Severn and the township of Oro-Medonte, in the hope of finding further cost savings to help the taxpayers in that township.

I'd like to mention that Dan McMillan was successfully elected as the deputy mayor of the township of Ramara. They have two new members. Two young fellows had been elected, Basil Clarke and John O'Donnell. It's their first time on municipal council and they've got a very positive attitude, along with former members Neal Snutch and Nadir Jamil. Nadir is a pharmacist in the town of Brechin, and Marilyn Brooks is returning. So I think it's very nice that we've got these type of people on council.

Like I said earlier, I have a number of municipal councils. I for one, with a municipal background—I know not everybody in the House may have as strong a feeling toward municipal councils as I do, but I think they are good partners. We have good friends on councils. For the councils I'm working with, I had a very strong, positive feeling on everything I talked about the other day, and everything before and after the meetings. I was pleased to see the attitude and the ability of these people in making decisions. They've got good fiscal plans in place; they are looking for any way they can to save the taxpayer further dollars. At the same time, they are putting programs in place that are important. They are looking at their water systems and their sewer systems and their fire departments and all the things that municipal governments are responsible for. They're looking at it in a very, very positive way.

I've been at a couple of other inaugurals. I'm going to one tomorrow night in Severn.

My wife is going to be acting on my behalf. It's the first time she's been to an inaugural council meeting representing myself, and she'll be attending the township of Tay, where she'll say a few words. She's a little nervous about going to this meeting, but there are a lot of good friends and colleagues on the township of Tay council. Returning is Jack Hunter as the mayor. David Walker has come back after missing a term. Michele Gouett, Blair Whittaker, Scott Warnock and Michael Ladouceur are all part of the 2000-03 municipal council.

I know the time goes on with the calendar motion. We need to see a lot of this legislation pass before Christmas. I'm certainly not afraid to sit here until Christmas Eve. I know that it's very important to the citizens of Ontario. These are issues that affect public safety, that affect financing and that affect the health and security of our citizens of the province of Ontario.

I will now bring my comments to an end, and I'd like to turn the final minutes over to the member from Scarborough.

**Mr Gilchrist:** I'm pleased to add a few comments to this important motion because it bears noting that in our first session we set a record for the most days that Parliament ever sat in a year. I'm very proud of that accomplishment.

I'm similarly proud of the fact that, despite some of the suggestions from members opposite, we have sat

more hours in committee than any government in the history of the province. In fact, I remember seeing a chart that showed that during our first session we'd given a considerable number of hours of debate to all aspects, second reading and third reading. Perhaps the most glaring distinction: we had an average of almost two hours of debate for third reading. The average under the Liberals had been five minutes. Five minutes. I mean, it's just as different as day and night.

I am very proud of the fact that whether it's in this chamber or in town hall meetings, in meetings with our chambers of commerce and with small business or with individuals and groups, we have demonstrated a willingness to take the time and apply the effort to make sure that when we come forward with legislation, it is soundly debated and thoroughly researched. We canvass the opinions of people all across this province, pro and con. At the end of the day, we're confident that the end result, after third reading, meets the test of being the best possible solution to the issue at hand.

I know the House leader for the government is facing the challenge of dealing with a number of very important pieces of legislation over the next few weeks. I would be surprised if a single member opposite did not share our interest in seeing bills such as the bill that would regulate the sale of imitation firearms—I know the Liberal private member's bill had followed a similar vein, so it would be somewhat ironic if they would suggest we should truncate debate, we should cut it off and not have as much time applied to that bill in this House as we could possibly muster before rising at Christmas.

#### 2230

There is of course an act, Bill 132, that provides for the first time ever the option for community colleges to issue degrees, not just diplomas. We heard in the committee hearings, the three days of hearings that we just went through here in the building, that every community college supports this initiative. Every one of them believes the time has come for us to be able to offer degrees that are every inch the standard that graduates in the United States or in Europe would be offered. We must recognize that we are competing in a global marketplace. We cannot disadvantage our students. The fact of the matter is, the course content in our community colleges already is on a par with many other institutions around the world, but they have been unfairly constrained from using the word "degree," from offering an applied degree and giving their graduates an equal footing out in the workplace. We think the time has come to fix that. Bill 132 will do just that.

Of course, we have a bill that will continue in second reading debate for the made-in-Ontario tax system. I can tell you, I could use the whole 20 minutes in rotation to talk about the various tax initiatives we've pursued. Why anyone would want us to abbreviate the discussions on that bill is beyond me.

I would challenge the members opposite to show me the people in their riding who have faced a tax increase since we were elected. That would be a very tough

challenge to meet, because every single Ontarian has benefited from tax cuts, whether it was the average 30% income tax cut or any of the other 166 tax cuts that we have brought in in the last five years, whether it is small business or big business, whether it is someone who derives their income from a cellphone business or from a salary that they earn at someone else's company. Here in Ontario we have gone further than any other jurisdiction in Canada to remove the odious tax burden that was stifling initiative, that was driving people out of our province, that was quite frankly lowering our standard of living. The reality is, we have put vast sums back into the pockets of the taxpayers in Ontario.

**Mr Chudleigh:** Putting debt on our children.

**Mr Gilchrist:** For too many years, unfortunately.

As we cut our taxes, the federal Liberal government, in some case to the penny, applied tax increases knowing in advance, because our budget had come first, what we were planning to do for the next tax year. Many people—

**Mr Caplan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Do we have a quorum? Please check.

**The Acting Speaker:** Would you check and see if there's a quorum present.

**Acting Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is not present, Speaker.

*The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.*

**Acting Clerk at the Table:** A quorum is now present, Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough East.

**Mr Gilchrist:** I know it is absolutely against the rules of this House to mention that someone is not here. So I guess in citing the converse, I hope Mr Caplan, the only Liberal who is here, had an opportunity to perhaps marshal his thoughts for the response that will come after our speaking rotation.

The fact of the matter is that our government, having cut taxes 166 times, has actually seen our revenue increase by billions of dollars. Our research shows that every jurisdiction in the world that has ever cut marginal tax rates, going back to John F. Kennedy, a Democrat in the United States, has actually seen an increase in their tax revenue.

Our opponents would rather have more people paying more tax. On our side, we have actually taken hundreds of thousands of Ontarians off the tax rolls. So you have the reality that we have fewer people at that end of the spectrum paying tax, everyone above that income bracket paying a lower level, but because so many more people are working—830,000 more people are working in Ontario—almost the population of Peel region and Durham region combined in five short years has gone from being unemployed to having a stable job. In a province whose economy has grown faster than not just any other jurisdiction in Canada, not just greater than any jurisdiction in North America, our GDP has increased by a greater amount every year for the last four years than every industrialized nation in the world.

Math class was a couple of decades ago, but I seem to recall that you can't do better than being number one. I am chagrined every time I hear from my colleagues opposite the doom and gloom that is the hallmark of their comments. If they would at least recognize the success stories that are out there and temper their universally negative comments that way, they would be accorded a lot more respect by the members on this side of the House.

The people of Ontario have figured it out. They proved that in the 1999 election. They're proving it by going out and, I'm sure, having this Christmas shopping season even bigger than the one before. Every year we're setting records. Consumer confidence is at an all-time high; business confidence is at an all-time high. Vast new investments are being made, whether it's in office buildings or shopping centres, or people just buying new or bigger homes. Every part of our economy is growing, and that's why we believe we should be in here right up to the very last sitting day before Christmas, doing whatever it takes to make sure that every one of these important bills is moved all the way through third reading and gets royal assent. It is critically important that we don't lose the momentum we've built up in the last five years.

This isn't about philosophical differences in the chamber. This is about making sure that 11 million Ontarians continue to see their lives advanced in ways that go from better health care to the best-quality education to actually having more money in their pocket. That is the goal the members on this side of the House have. I have to believe that in their heart of hearts even the Liberals and the NDP would share those goals. It is critically important. We have made investments in first and second reading and on some of these bills have had extensive committee hearings. We must have this extra week to move these bills forward to third reading. We must make it clear to individuals and to businesses all across Ontario that we're going to apply ourselves every minute it takes to eliminate barriers to increase prosperity in our province, to continue to make sure that when a problem is identified, this Legislature comes up with a solution in a timely fashion. We can't afford to wait until next spring. We can't afford to take any kind of a break. We've got to do everything possible to make sure Ontario remains the best place to work, live, invest and raise a family.

2240

**Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie):** I appreciate the opportunity tonight to put a few thoughts on the record, first of all about this motion that's on the floor to extend the sittings to December 21, and then to share some thoughts on some other subjects, which members of all parties have done this evening, that I think are of concern and of interest to the population out there as we struggle to maintain, in this precinct, good government.

I'm not sure what this government wants to bring forward before December 21. Everything they've brought into the House since we came back in the fall has been ultimately and finally time-allocated, so we really didn't

have the kind of debate that we're used to in this place, nor were we afforded the opportunity to take these pieces of legislation out to the public, which was the standard procedure of previous governments over a long period of time, so that we might hear, from those whom we govern or speak on behalf of, what they think of these particular pieces of legislation, and then bring them back and have further debate after hearing those comments so that we might put in place that which speaks to legislation that supports the common good, that which serves all of us who call Ontario home.

There are a few things on the agenda over the next couple of weeks. Most of them are time-allocated. From what I understand from our House leader, there are some holes in that schedule. We're not sure what the government plans to bring forward to fill those holes. We're concerned that it will be more legislation that will have a very severe impact on the lives of all of those we represent and want to make sure we serve in their best interests. We're wary and afraid that, given the track record over the last five and a half years, and particularly over the last couple of months, they'll bring that legislation in and, because they push the envelope up to a couple of days before Christmas, they will time-allocate as much of it as they possibly can and then push the rest through, knowing that there a lot of people around the floor here who are going to be anxious to get home to their families to celebrate the season that is almost upon us.

That concerns me. It's not a good way to do business. It's a habit that I think has fallen into place in this place over quite a period of time now. I don't think it's a good way to do business. I think the business of this province should be done in a more thoughtful and timely manner, where each side has a fulsome chance to put their thoughts on the record. I think we need to be doing business in a way that takes what we propose here as regulation that will apply to everybody and bring it out for public consultation in the intersession, which was the way we did it when we were government. I remember every intersession looking forward to getting out there to various and sundry communities across this province to meet the people, to hear what they had to say about different initiatives we were bringing forward so that we might then develop some amendments and bring them forward and have discussion about them with the opposition and ultimately put in place legislation that was in the interests of the common good in this province. However, that's not the way we've been operating over the last short while.

I can only guess that the reason we're extending the time that the House sits to December 21 is because this government has a couple more pieces of legislation they want to bring in, probably time-allocate and then jam through just before the Christmas break. I don't think that serves us well at all. As a matter of fact, I think we've seen some of the fallout of that kind of legislative process in this province, none being more visible and dramatic and obvious than some of what has happened within the Ministry of the Environment and the ultimate deaths of

people in the community of Walkerton. But that's not what I want to speak about tonight.

I want to speak about the economy and the lack of effort by this government to actually take advantage of, yes, some of the good things that are happening out there to stabilize the economy of this province so that everybody benefits from it, so that everybody feels confident and secure about their future, so when there is a downturn, as there ultimately will be, particularly if the US economy that we're so dependent on goes into the tank in any significant and serious way—and I'm led to believe by reading some of the papers that there are beginning to be signs that that is what is beginning to occur—we in Ontario, who have an abundance of natural resources, including the gift that we are, the talent that we've developed collectively in ourselves, in our communities, in the people that call Ontario and Canada home—if we're not tapping that, and organizing it in a way that will serve us in the long term, will help us develop an economy in the long term that is sustainable, that includes everybody, that includes the abilities and the giftedness of each of the people who call Ontario home, and at the end of the day rewards all of us appropriately such that then we can then live lives with some dignity, some security and some confidence that, even in our old age, we will still have some comfort and be happy that our children will have jobs and be able to look forward to participating in the economy in the way that we've seen evolve over some number of years now.

However, Mr Speaker, I have to tell you that I am concerned. I'm concerned because this government doesn't seem to have any vision where the economy is concerned. It's a very simple approach that, yes, so far, particularly in the 905 belt of this province and the larger centres, has worked for some people. But it's not working for people in northern Ontario, and I suggest to you that if you talk to anybody who lives in rural Ontario or represents constituencies in rural Ontario, they'll tell you that it's not working really well for them out there either. Farmers in rural Ontario are our main producers, are our main economic engines, and if you talk to them today you'll find that they're anxious, nervous and worried about the future.

I have to tell you too that as I walk around the city of Toronto when I'm serving in the Legislature I meet a lot of people as well. I read in the papers the letters to the editor and I find that there is, even though a good economy is happening in this part of the province, a lot of nervousness about what it means in the long haul. People who used to have good, secure jobs, taking advantage of some of the natural ability that they brought to that job, taking advantage of some of the education and training that they were afforded by way of the publicly funded education system that we put in place in this province—they're more and more anxious that the job that they had or hope to have may not be there for them, and if it is there, it may not be there for very long, because a lot of the very good, secure jobs that came with a good paycheque and some benefits that would help with the health

care of loved ones, that came with, at the end of the day, a pension package, are few and far between. People are worried about that.

That's the kind of economy, because of the lack of involvement and leadership and understanding of this government, that we're turning our province over to, and I have to tell you it worries me. But I'm not the only one worried about it. I recently participated in a forum with some people about the economy that we're in and at that forum there was a distinction made with the economy that everybody seems to be infatuated with at this moment, that certainly this government is supporting almost to the exception of anything else, and that's the economy that we call e-commerce, what I often refer to as the virtual economy. Jim Stanford, an economist with the Canadian Auto Workers, has a way of describing the current frenzy over what he calls a paper economy which has no basis in our everyday reality. On the one hand you've got hyper-inflated Internet company stocks going through the roof, and on the other hand you have a stagnating real economy that is characterized by lingering job and income insecurity. I suggest to you that's the kind of malaise that exists in many of the very vibrant and vital communities, particularly in rural and northern Ontario, that used to be the backbone and the foundation upon which the economy of this province was built, and I suggest to you that will once again in the not-too-distant future be the reality. But if, as a government, we do not understand that and do some things to make sure we maintain that economy and help it adjust to the present reality, it will be very difficult to bring it back to its previous state.

#### 2250

Some may wish to think the paper economy is the embodiment of nirvana, but the majority of our economic resources in the new millennium will continue to go to the production of goods and services. We mustn't lose sight of that fact. The real question about the new economy is this: does it improve our quality of life, our standard of pay, our security for the future? If people are being honest with themselves and with each other and ask themselves those questions, I think they will begin to realize that it's not as some across the way would paint it.

The answer obviously greatly depends in some sense on who you are. If you are John Roth, CEO of Nortel and Canada's leading advocate of low taxes, especially on stock options, you will get \$20 million in after-tax profits due to this year's federal and provincial tax cut changes. So if you're John Roth, you're pretty happy with the new economy and you're pretty happy with governments' new tax rules within that new economy. If you were among the top 20% of income earners in Canada in 1998, you had a much better year and decade than anyone else. After-tax incomes rose by 4.1% between 1997 and 1998.

On the other hand, if you're poor, the depth of poverty is getting worse, not better, even amid growing prosperity. If you were a single mother with no employment income in 1998, your average income fell between 1997 and 1998 from a measly \$7,456 in 1997 to a paltry

\$6,513 in 1998. People in the bottom 20% of the income scale experienced a real income decline of 12.6% over the past decade.

This is the fundamental contradiction inherent in the new economy. Amid the hype over the dot-com economy and *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* television programming, we have the stark reality of poverty, and of ever-deepening depths of poverty.

There are a whole lot of people who are not sharing in the prosperity the way they did in previous decades when the economy was good and employment was on the rise. The 1990s marked the era of the non-standard job, where self-employment was the single fastest growing job niche, followed by temporary and contract work. What we're seeing in this new economy is the rise of economic Darwinism, where only the financially fittest make it to the finish line and get to claim the prize. The new economy is about who gets included in this era of prosperity and it's about who gets left out. Some people may even make the link between violence against women and increasing poverty.

A person I spoke to, living with a disability, pointed out that the majority of unemployed or underemployed workers in Ontario have disabilities. They are simply not being invited to share in the wealth of jobs that have suddenly been created. Mr Speaker, if you've been paying attention to some of the discussion that's gone on in this House over the last few weeks, particularly in question period, you'll understand that some of us are frustrated by this government's lack of understanding of the need for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act that actually gives people with disabilities some opportunities to take advantage of some of the possibilities that are out there for them.

The lack of leadership in that area is symptomatic of this government's lack of leadership in almost every area where the economy is concerned and, in particular, in making sure we're taking advantage of all the abilities that are out there in the people who call Ontario home, maximizing the potential for us to use the resources we have to create an economy that is good for everybody who lives in Ontario.

Jim Stanford, the CAW economist, points to the role of monetary policies in the new economy and governments' deliberate maintenance of high unemployment to keep productivity levels in check. "God help us" Stanford quipped, if "an outbreak in mass prosperity might occur and someone other than a CEO might get a raise!"

People point to the need to pressure governments and corporations to hire for real jobs in this new economy, rather than simply funnelling profits into the never-ending spiral of stock options and hyperinflated paper economies. A lot of people would prefer to have a full-time job with benefits rather than the insecurity of contract work or even self-employment. In the United States, for instance, economic prosperity quickly translated into real job growth and self-employment numbers declined rapidly, but that hasn't happened here in Canada because there is no leadership at the government level where the

economy is concerned. It's simply, "Follow the leader. Take advantage of whatever falls off the economic plate of the US and ride the coattails," but don't learn anything from what they're doing there or what they're doing in some other very successful jurisdictions across this world.

Whether you want to work at home or in a full-time job somewhere outside the home, the one thing we all share in this new economy is a desperate need for stability: for social stability, for stability in our communities and for economic stability within our families. We're surrounded by so much insecurity that we're telling 20-somethings to start squirreling away money into RRSPs so they can have something when they're forced into early retirement and have no public pension to rely on.

Clearly there is something very old and familiar about this new economy. It is still about the same power relationships that characterized the Canadian economy long before the great market crash of 1929. Clearly the challenge is to start talking about redistributing power and minimizing the extent of the misery and dislocation that have been growing in Ontario in recent years. The key to economic justice lies in social justice, in a sustainable economy that protects and respects our environment while offering a greater level of security for everyone, not just for the John Roths of this country.

Instead of talking solely of economic fundamentals and corporate profits, we need to shift the debate to fundamentals for people, so that the economic prosperity this province is currently enjoying is something that is shared by everyone. That, sadly, is not the case today.

It wasn't that long ago in this province when the government really understood what it needed to do, when government took its responsibility to give leadership seriously and did some things, for example, in northern Ontario to take out the very deep lows and high highs of the cyclical economy that was happening up there.

We put in place instruments that communities and people in northern Ontario could use. As a matter of fact, governments put in place instruments for rural Ontario too that they could use to take advantage of, to bring people together around economic challenges, so that we could all participate in analyzing the problem and in the end claim some important role in the resolution or the solution we arrived at.

For example, in northern Ontario, we, as a government, a few years ago put in place the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, but under this government it has become a shadow of its former self. The first thing to suffer was a very well connected, dependable, coordinated air service to almost every small community in the north. Places like Kirkland Lake, Wawa, Chapleau and Hornepayne had regular air service, with safe Dash-8s flying in on time, connected to the bigger centres of Thunder Bay, Sudbury and Sault Ste Marie, so they could move on from there in a timely fashion to Toronto and do business.

Any community that expects to participate in the economy that's coming at us today has to have air service, has

to be connected by air to the larger centres if they are going to be able to do business in a timely fashion. Alas, because of the initiative of this government to save \$5 million—imagine, to save \$5 million—they shut down norOntair. That's just one example of the lack of understanding that exists across the way, and the lack of commitment and leadership from this government in making sure the north participated actively and in a vital and vibrant way in the economy we're all moving into in the new millennium.

We were told at that time that the private sector would pick up the slack, which is the answer to so many of the difficulties we face as government here today whenever we bring it to the government. "The private sector will do it, will do it more efficiently, will actually make a profit at it, and we'll all be better served." This is one example that has to be obvious to anybody of where that has not actually happened, because the private sector has not picked up the slack, and most of those communities today are in jeopardy of losing their airport. If they lose their airport, they lose the potential to evolve and develop and diversify their economy.

#### 2300

They also lose access to air service for health care, and it gets even more difficult than that, but I don't have time tonight to get into it. Suffice it to say that lack of understanding and lack of leadership—as a matter of fact, reversing the leadership that government had been giving in northern Ontario—has led now to a very difficult circumstance for a whole lot of very important small communities where people have made investments in homes and small businesses and many other things.

The ONTC continues to try to be relevant, but this government is not allowing it to do that. It's not giving it the resources. An article came out in this week's papers to suggest that even the train that connected Cochrane with Toronto, that so many people who live on that Highway 11 corridor depend on to get back and forth to the capital of our province, is in jeopardy of closing as well now. They're going to put buses in. But we know what happens there. It will be the same scenario as with the airplanes. It will be turned over to the private sector eventually and they'll just do the routes that prove profitable. At the end of the day a transportation system, which is essential to any future we will have in northern Ontario, will be gone. We'll be left dependent on our own resources to get around. This government will have failed and, because they will have failed, those communities will fail. I guess we'll all just pack up and move down to Toronto because that seems to be where all the action is anyway. I don't think, in the long run, that's going to be good for this province.

I just want to put on the record one other incident of lack of leadership. When you consider what we did when we were government in so many of the communities of northern Ontario that were struggling under the strain of the tremendous recession that we felt in the early 1990s, which the member from Renfrew spoke about earlier tonight—our government came in and in every instance

brought people together around the table, gave leadership, brought in the banks and worked out solutions to those very difficult challenges that did not in any way incur countervail action from any other countries—the US, for example—and many of those businesses that we restructured in those days are doing tremendously well today. Some of them are still trying to find their feet, and hopefully eventually will, but many of them are doing tremendously well because government came in and gave leadership, government brought resources to the table and government brought people together.

Alas, this government doesn't seem to understand that that's a winning formula. What they figure will work is if you take enough away from people, if you push people hard enough, if you punish people and you make them anxious and nervous enough about their future, they'll do whatever it takes. But I have to tell you that that's a bad formula. It's a formula that is not being used in other jurisdictions and it won't serve us well. For example, instead of bringing organized labour to the table—as they are doing in the United States and Europe these days, because they understand that they need all the resources they can get their hands on at the table—this government is targeting organized labour and diminishing their ability to participate and play a role. Alas, I think we'll all reap the reward of that.

If this government had some good ideas, had some new initiatives, had some legislation that it wanted to bring in that was going to increase the ability of the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines to get out there and work with people to make sure we're maximizing the potential that we have to involve everybody in the new economy, and to make that new economy work not just for the 905 around Toronto but for every community across this province, I would be willing to stay right through Christmas. But I don't think that's the plan. I don't think that's what they have in mind. I'm not sure what they're planning to bring down, but I sure of this: whatever it is, they'll jam it through and, because they've jammed it through, it won't be well thought out and I don't think it will be good for the people of Ontario.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak. I want to thank you, Speaker, for filling in for me for the time that you have, and I assure you I'll be there in a couple of seconds.

**Hon Mr Klees:** Speaker, in light of the fact that there has been a motion by the Liberals this evening already to adjourn the House, and in light of the fact—

**Mr Caplan:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would draw your attention to the fact that there has been a scant four hours of debate. We have many speakers in this House. We would really like to debate this motion. I think the chief government whip is about to move closure. I think it would be highly inappropriate—

**The Acting Speaker:** That's quite a speculative item at this point and it's not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Oak Ridges.

**Hon Mr Klees:** Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, in light of the fact that the Liberal Party once this evening already has moved adjournment of the House, in light of the fact that there are no NDP members in the House, and we have had extensive debate on this issue, I would ask that you call the question.

**The Acting Speaker:** I want those who are here as well as those who are watching to understand that this is a very important request. It behooves this Speaker, this person serving as Speaker for you tonight, to make an informed, very intelligent decision. I want to assure you that I am capable of doing that but I will be taking a five-minute recess before I give you my answer.

*The House recessed from 2307 to 2313.*

**The Acting Speaker:** I want to address my comments to the minister from Oak Ridges. I'd like to advise you now that I'm not granting the request.

Further debate?

**Hon Mr Klees:** I would like to split my time with the member for Scarborough Centre.

Speaker, I appreciate your ruling, and obviously that is something we're going to accept. I raised the issue with you because earlier in the evening it was the Liberal Party who moved adjournment of the House. The only conclusion I could draw from that was that they were prepared to have the question put, that they were finished debating this issue. As is typical, obviously their motion was not consistent with their intention. I have also observed in this House—and now, although I won't refer to any particular member, because that would be inappropriate—I look at the seats opposite and I see no members from the NDP caucus here. I simply drew the conclusion—

**The Acting Speaker:** You can't do indirectly what you can't do directly. The standing orders of this place state that you do not refer to other people not being here.

**Hon Mr Klees:** I simply drew the conclusion that perhaps there was no further will on the part of the opposition to debate this motion before us. I will say this to you: it is the intention of our government to extend the hours in which this Legislature would sit so we can fully deal with a number of items that are on the agenda. There are a number of bills that we feel are important to the people of Ontario, that we want to ensure are passed into law before we rise for Christmas. I know the member for St Catharines would be willing, in fact, to sit through the entire Christmas holidays. There are probably one or two other members of the Liberal Party who would be willing to do that as well. But that's where the confusion is. If on the one hand they'd be willing to do that, why would they have moved a motion to adjourn the House motion here earlier this evening? If the members of the NDP caucus would be willing to work beyond the set calendar, why are they not here this evening, not a single member?

Having said that, we certainly are willing to do the work of this House. We're willing to debate; we're willing to come back to do whatever has to be done to meet the needs of the people of Ontario, to pass the legislation that is on the calendar, and we will do that. I

am disappointed that the members opposite would not be willing to work with us co-operatively, but that perhaps is the nature of this place.

I'm going to pass the floor to my colleague, who I know will have some very important things to say about this motion.

**The Acting Speaker:** Member for Scarborough Centre.

*Applause.*

**Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre):** I must admit it's very nice to get such a warm round of applause at such a late hour. I'm particularly pleased to join in the debate around the House calendar motion.

I think it is important, as we go through these proceedings, that we visit the amount of outstanding government legislation that still needs hasty passage prior to Christmas. There are several items that I'd particularly like to speak to, if only because I know, for example, the Social Housing Reform Act, which went through the justice and social policy committee last week, actually was addressed by many housing interest groups, ranging from representatives, including my own councillor in my riding of Scarborough Centre, who is the chair of the community and social service committee for Toronto, and many other housing advocacy groups, co-op groups, municipalities, AMO, for example, all of whom came to us and said, "We appreciate the need for you to get on with this. We're anxious to know what the rollout is going to be, what the legislation is going to look like. We appreciate that you've gone through a lot of Who Does What exercises. We want to get on with delivering services at the local level so we can address the local needs of our communities."

**2320**

It is really important for us to pass this legislation so that we can begin with our planning, especially given that there are many new councils across this province that really want to get on with the business of delivering the services for which they are responsible. It is important that we listen respectfully to our partners like municipalities, certainly our social service agencies, and get on with the business at hand.

The Social Housing Reform Act was developed as a result of the Who Does What exercise that was carried out in 1997, when our government restructured the allocation of costs and responsibilities to serve the citizens of Ontario at both the provincial and municipal levels. As you know, the municipalities have been paying the cost of social housing since January 1998. What this particular legislation will do is that it will give the municipalities the say for pay they have been asking for and that they expect us to provide.

The province has direct control of public housing ownership, management and administration. This legislation, when passed, will make it easier to transfer this portfolio to the municipalities. At our committee we heard from many non-profit and co-operative housing deliverers. This bill will harmonize and streamline before those are transferred to the municipalities. This staged

transfer will allow service managers to develop the necessary skills, the experience and the capacity to assume administration of the rest of the social housing portfolio. We know that these are three key benefits that have been identified by our transfer partners and certainly are enshrined in this legislation which we'd like to get passed.

It puts a local service back into the hands of the community so that it more effectively reflects the needs of that community. The municipal authorities can more effectively integrate this service with other locally delivered social services so that their clients can be better and more effectively served. The responsibility for bricks and mortar will be in the hands of local governments where it more appropriately belongs. Having sat on Scarborough council for 12 years, we developed a property standards bylaw that really reflected the housing stock that was within our particular municipality and we understood the need of the tenants and the residents living in that bricks and mortar.

Recommendations for program streamlining and devolution were developed with extensive input from a stakeholders advisory committee, from three working groups, from a social housing committee and from a municipal reference group. The government is actively working to find ways to increase the supply of social housing in Ontario and it is trying to get other provinces and other levels of government to deal with the decline of private sector construction of affordable housing. It is also encouraging the industry to get back into building affordable housing.

I've spoken very briefly on what is a very important issue in my riding of Scarborough Centre. Clearly, it has been identified by the municipality of Toronto as a key priority. They want us to get on with passing this bill so that they can get on with delivering this particular component effectively and efficiently to my residents as well as all the residents across Toronto. I would urge this House to pass this motion this evening.

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** I have been listening to the debate. I've been here for a number of hours and I've had the opportunity to hear members from all parties speak to the calendar motion. There have been references from members of the government that would suggest that members of the opposition, people on this side of the House, would not support this calendar motion. I think it is important that I say to the members of the government tonight that I do intend to support it. I'm quite happy to be here for as long as it takes to present the perspective of the people of my riding. That's what I was elected to do, and I will never shy away from that great honour that I have, and indeed the responsibility that has been placed in me. In fact, I say to the members of the government, I'm prepared to come back here in January and pick up the work of the people of the province.

I think it's important to the people who would be viewing this broadcast this evening, who may have been given the impression that members of the opposition would not be in support of this motion, that I'm standing

before you this evening and I will say to you that I will support it. I take my role and my responsibility here as a representative of my constituents very seriously. Although there have been references sometimes about the irrelevance of this House, I have a very deep faith in the democratic process. I feel very strongly about the importance of speaking on behalf of the people, certainly the people who have sent me here. There are a number of issues that I believe need to be debated, and I believe the perspective of the people of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington needs to be heard.

Also, as a member of the Ontario Liberal caucus and as critic for children, there are a number of issues that I look forward to having the opportunity to address in this Legislature during our regular routine of the day. There are a number of issues that relate to children, especially at this time of year, that deserve our attention.

A couple of weeks ago, Campaign 2000 spoke to the people of Ontario and shared some very disturbing information. It was disturbing to me particularly, as the critic for children, to understand that in these extraordinarily strong economic times during the term of this government, child poverty had increased. We have a lot of work to do as elected representatives of the people. We owe our future, our children—I consider them our future—a most concerted effort to address this shameful reality. It is shameful because we are living in very strong economic times. It was just this week reported in the Legislature by the Minister of Finance that the treasury of Ontario will receive in excess of \$1.38 billion more revenue than had been anticipated, yet we have so many more children living in poverty. I say to the members of this Legislature, indeed we have a great deal of work to do.

**2330**

Again today, the minister responsible for children, as a photo op, announced, or should I say re-announced, the challenge fund. Many advocacy groups for children have certainly brought to my attention and, I know, to the attention of members of the government how the challenge fund will not begin to meet the very serious needs of children in Ontario. We're talking about children who live in poor families, whose families cannot afford to feed them, who must go to food banks in order to have food to eat, who must rely on school breakfast programs for their nourishment. We're talking about children who don't have homes. Families, people with children, are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

So, ladies and gentlemen, we have, as representatives of the people of Ontario, a great deal of work to do. I suggest it will not be accomplished by December 21. I say to the members of the government who are so very anxious to present that they are here to work hard, I'm here to work hard too. I like working hard. I feel blessed that I am able to dedicate the time and energy to this role that I am. I'm prepared to come back here in January to deal with these very, very important and serious matters that relate to our children.

I can talk about a lot of issues of great importance even in my riding. Earlier this evening my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London spoke to the fact that certainly members of the Liberal caucus expected, anticipated, and presented within our communities the probability that we would debate an important piece of legislation we believe will be called the Farm Practices Act. This is legislation that people within the farming community in my riding are very interested in hearing about. They want to know the components of this piece of legislation. They look forward to the opportunity that the larger community in Ontario will have to contribute by way of committee hearings to this significant piece of legislation. It hasn't been introduced in the House yet, so there's a lot of work to do. This is a most important issue in my riding.

Of course, issues that relate to the environment continue to be a topic of concern in Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. I can't tell you how disappointed people in my riding—certainly they were very aware of my private member's bill that would require the Ministry of the Environment to notify municipalities and conservation authorities when permits to take water were applied for from their area. Conservation authorities from across Ontario, municipalities from across Ontario, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, that representative body of all municipalities in Ontario, were in support of the bill. It has been sent to the committee of the whole House. I do hope that when the occasion presents itself, when there is a request to bring that bill forward, the House will be prepared to support it, as the many people in Ontario who have contacted me and, I know, the Minister of the Environment have indicated.

Another significant issue in my riding relates to a landfill proposal. I look forward to future opportunities when I can continue to impress upon the government the importance that the community in my riding places on the promise made by Mike Harris that no community, no municipality, should be forced to accept the waste of another municipality. This is an issue that I'd like to have a good deal of debate and discussion and provide a lot of input on. It's an important issue in my riding, and I'm prepared to be here for as long as it takes to debate this.

We hear so regularly about the crisis in education. I have the opportunity to visit schools, to talk to students, to talk to teachers, to talk to parents. I do it in the grocery store; I do it after church; I do it when I go for my walks after supper. People are very worried. They are very concerned. This government, in my opinion, has a great deal to do to mend fences and to move forward. As recently as today, that arm's-length body the Education Improvement Commission has reported to the government that it needs to work with the partners in education, that it needs to work to remove the animosity in that workplace. This is not conducive to good learning, to good education, and that's what our children deserve.

My leader, Dalton McGuinty, has always been an advocate for students first; and for teachers, that they would be provided with the resources they need to do

their job well. Instead, what have they been given by the government? More pressure, more challenge, more ridicule. These are good people, qualified professionals who are frustrated because they do not have the resources—the time resources, the energy resources, the material resources—to provide for the children the kind of quality education they deserve. They are frustrated. Many of them come from a time and from an experience when their profession was valued, when they were respected within their community and not looked upon with disdain. They're weary now. Yes, there are situations in the province where they have acted, and it may unfold where they will continue to act, in very desperate ways to draw attention to the fact that when you pull resources away from an area so critical to our communities as education, it comes at a price. We have a great deal of work to do to improve the climate within our schools so that our children will have the very best environment in which to learn.

I want to talk a little bit about the health care situation in Ontario. I get calls very regularly in my office; I want to say daily. There may be a day goes by that I don't, but then there are other days when I might get three or four, where individuals in my riding—I had a letter recently from a family who just recently moved to the community of Bath, who are very frustrated that they are not able to access a family doctor. There are members of that family who have somewhat chronic health conditions, and going to emergency rooms or health clinics is not the way to manage their health care. But that is the only option left to them, because there are no family doctors accepting new patients in their community.

#### 2340

We have a serious doctor shortage in my riding and in Ontario, and we have a serious nurse shortage in my riding and in Ontario. I have met with community health nurses and they are burned out. They are concerned because their workload is such that there are not enough hours in the day for them to be able to minister to the sick in the way they've been professionally trained to do. It's very disturbing to these people, who have been trained how to look after people who are not well, when they're not provided with the resources they need, the most precious of which is their time. They need the time to minister to the sick, and they don't have it. They're on a very tight schedule. Sadly, it means that nurses who have been dedicated professionals to community health have found themselves either leaving the health role altogether or looking for more stable working conditions in a hospital setting. But the result of that is that community health is suffering badly, certainly in my riding, and I know throughout the province. We have a lot of work to do to turn that around.

We in the opposition have been working very hard to have the government understand that you need to provide more resources, and present more opportunities for training and encouragement for our young people to pursue careers in the health profession. We need to have our

young people understand why Ontario is a place where they should choose to have their career.

I was very alarmed when I read in the national media on the weekend that representatives from the state of New York have come to Ontario to recruit our teachers. I was very disturbed by that because I am aware that the climate in this province is not an inviting one. How sad it is that our taxpayers have paid to educate our fine young people, train them to be teachers who will now go off—not only teachers; the same phenomenon is happening in the nursing profession and in the medical profession. Our fine young, trained professionals are leaving us in droves to go to communities where they are valued, where they're given signing bonuses, where they're given wonderful opportunity for advancement. What can some of these professionals hope for in Ontario? In many communities the best they can hope for is part-time employment with full-time hours and no benefits. So we have a lot of work to do to improve conditions so that our well-trained young people, our well-trained professionals, will want to stay home in Ontario.

There was reference made earlier this evening to organized labour and the many pieces of legislation that have impacted that segment of our society in Ontario. I've met with labour representatives from my riding, these hard-working men and women, these people who live in our communities. They build our communities. They coach our kids at hockey. They are on the ball field. We see them at church. This is another group that feels very disenfranchised by this government. They feel that the work they have collectively done over the years, what they have been able to collectively achieve for the people in their profession, is being slowly but most definitely eroded by the legislation that is passed in this Legislature.

I hope I've provided some sense that we do have a lot of things to talk about. I want to stay here, I suspect for very different reasons than the members of the government. But make no mistake: I want to be here. I want to do my job. I want to represent the people of my riding and what they call me about and what they talk to me about. I want to present the Liberal perspective to the people of Ontario.

It was suggested earlier that we on this side of the House don't want to work together. Nothing could be further from the truth. We believe that we have so very regularly presented the government with valid options for consideration. We've presented amendments at committee that have been totally ignored. So I would suggest it has not been that we don't want to work with you. Our experience to date has been that you don't want to listen.

I conclude my remarks this evening and I very clearly state that I will vote in favour of this motion.

**Mr Chudleigh:** I'm pleased to enter the debate on such a special evening.

*Applause.*

**Mr Chudleigh:** Thank you very much. I'm also very pleased that so many of my caucus colleagues could join me at this very late evening. It's a very special evening,

because of course the Toronto Maple Leafs won with a 3-0 shutout, although that was some time ago now.

**Mr O'Toole:** How's RIM doing?

**Mr Chudleigh:** No, they beat Detroit actually.

**Mr O'Toole:** How's Nortel doing?

**Mr Chudleigh:** I haven't checked the stock market today, so I don't know how RIM or Nortel are doing. It's been such a busy day that we just don't have time to do those kinds of things. I didn't have time to watch the hockey game either, but I understand it was an excellent game, Curtis Joseph performing extremely well on the net and performing at such a level as to obtain a shutout. It is a special evening when so many of us are here at this late hour and Toronto has had victory under their belt.

This particular motion that we're debating is an important one. This government has done a great deal over this past year, and as the year 2000 draws to a close this government has much more to do.

Perhaps one of the more exciting things we've accomplished this year that is just passing started in March 1999 when the Premier announced Ontario's Living Legacy. It was that announcement that brought on the largest expansion of parks and protected areas that this province has ever seen. In fact, the addition of those parks and protected areas that this government brought in brought the total of protected acres in Ontario to a greater acreage than all the other governments in Ontario's history combined. It was a huge expansion. We now have almost 20 million acres of land protected in Ontario. To put that in perspective, if you took all the agricultural land in Ontario, that is, all the land that is under pasture, all the land that grows corn, soybeans and other crops in Ontario, and you doubled that number of acres, that would come close—it wouldn't exceed but it would come close—to the total number of acres we now have protected in Ontario. In fact, out of every hundred acres that exist in Ontario, 10 are protected for the future of Ontarians.

**Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex):** Say that again, because I think some people missed it.

**Mr Chudleigh:** Out of every hundred acres in Ontario, 10 of those acres are protected for posterity so that people who come to Ontario in the future—our children, our grandchildren, their grandchildren, 20 generations into the future—will have that land protected. That is a tremendous legacy for any government to leave to the people of Ontario, and I'm very pleased to have played a small part in protecting that land.

With the announcement of the Ontario Living Legacy, the Premier announced that there would also be nine signature sites. A signature site was a special piece of land, a piece of land that was unique in Ontario geography, something that was especially beautiful, especially unique. One of those nine signature sites was the Great Lakes heritage coastline. I've been fortunate to have had the opportunity to travel the Great Lakes heritage coastline and talk to the people in those communities. The coastline runs basically from Port Severn on the eastern shores of Georgian Bay up that shoreline to Killarney,

across the north shore of Lake Huron. It includes the island of Manitoulin and the island of St Joseph as well. It runs along the north shore of St Marys River, including the islands in the river, and then it sweeps across the north shore of Lake Superior to the Minnesota border on the international border of Pigeon River. It is 2,900 kilometres long and represents some of the most beautiful real estate people can find anywhere in the world. It is a very unique concept.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin):** In the interest of decorum in this place, it would be helpful if the group having a good time on the government side would keep it down and listen to the member for Halton, who has some important things to put on the record.

2350

**Mr Chudleigh:** Thank you, Mr Speaker. I know I'm speaking about the land that centres around your riding. Having travelled that land this summer and last winter, I can tell you what a beautiful riding you come from. You will forgive me if I suggest that Halton would perhaps be the first beautiful riding in Ontario, but certainly yours would run right up alongside it.

We started out with this Great Lakes heritage coast project in a consultative process with the people along that coast, to go out and ask them what they wanted to see, how they wanted to see their coast developed over time. We went out and asked them for that imagination, to challenge them to think about what it would look like in a generation, what it would look like in five generations.

After that first trip, we went back last March, April and May and we met with people in workshops. In the course of those workshops we worked on what their vision was, and that challenged them to imagine what their vision would be for the future. They gave us some very specific answers. We put those answers in a draft report, in a draft document. We then back to the people on the coast and asked them, "Is this what you were telling us?" The consultative process was that we had written down what they first told us and then we went back to them to check, "Is this what you meant when you were talking about your vision?"

The vision of the people who live and work along this marvellous expanse of Ontario's Great Lakes heritage coast: they talked about the feelings they had when they were on the water and looking inland. They talked about the views they had, the visions they had when they were on the land looking out to the water. They talked about the tranquillity. They talked about how they refreshed their souls when they were involved and immersed in this beautiful land. They talked about the beauty of the wild-life they see both on land and in the water. They talked about the beauty and the feelings they had.

We met with people along the coast, such as Pierre Berton. He says, "It's an area of tremendous beauty and potential and we must guard its beauty and the environment and build on its potential." That's a quote from Pierre Berton.

The other thing we heard was a great concern. Over the past five, 10, 20 years growth has come to the area. There have been new industries. There has been growth in houses. There has been population growth. There's growth in tourism up there. It's been small and modest in some areas; it's been more significant in other areas. Concern was expressed among the people who live and work there that this growth was taking away something of the uniqueness of that area. They were concerned that this growth might destroy what they now have along that Great Lakes heritage coastline. One of the things that came out of the discussions was that growth will come, but it is how that growth will come that is important.

That was how we communicated with those people and consulted with them over the course of the year. It was a marvellous experience and I appreciate that opportunity.

Given the additional time we've given to this motion, I wonder if it would now be appropriate to call the question.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm not prepared to accept that at this point. Further debate?

**Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot):** I'm obviously not going to say much of what I was going to say. Since I've got two minutes, I'll go right to my favourite topic and talk about a government that wants to get legislation passed, presumably to move this province forward, that has basically lost the trust of the people in my riding and I suspect in major portions of Ontario. Let me talk specifically about amalgamation because that's a great example.

We've had three experiences with amalgamation that I could share quickly in my next minute and a half. This government took three hospitals that were all operating in the black, none of which had a deficit, with three different cultures, and decided a couple of years ago that they would bash them all together. Then all hell broke loose and we had a \$44,000 deficit because of the shortfall in funding. You ended up restoring the funding and we were all supposed to stand up and cheer. That was one.

The other was the school board amalgamation. In the old Wentworth county school board, we were educating elementary and high school students for \$1,037 and \$1,108 less per student. We had no debt. We didn't come to the province for any money to build schools. At the time of amalgamation we were operating at a surplus. Now we've got community pitted against community around school closings. We have a business education tax that's 44% less competitive than our neighbours, which is driving a lot of the desire to amalgamate in the Halton area.

I guess these forced marriages are difficult at the best of times. Take the Canadian Alliance and the Tories, for example. I suppose that we on the Liberal side will live to fight another day. But even with a marriage that looks like it could potentially come off, you can't get that together. To take municipalities with different cultures and histories and visions of the land, with different hopes and dreams, and just bash them together, particularly

after promising you wouldn't do that, engenders the kind of distrust that Maslow talks about.

I don't know if you know about Maslow's hierarchy of needs, but there are about eight of them. The first one starts—I'll end with this—with trust versus mistrust, when a little child decides whether or not they're going

to hold the parent's hand. I suspect in this House that's the stage of moral development we're at.

**The Acting Speaker:** It being 12 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 of the clock tomorrow morning, Thursday, December 7.

*The House adjourned at 2359.*

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

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# CONTENTS

Wednesday 6 December 2000

## GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

<b>House sittings, government notice of motion number 81, <i>Mr Sterling</i></b>	
Mr Baird .....	6179
Mrs Elliott .....	6182
Mr Young .....	6186
Mr Peters .....	6187
Ms Martel .....	6190
Mr Conway .....	6196
Mr Bradley .....	6199
Mr Dunlop .....	6204
Mr Gilchrist .....	6205
Mr Martin .....	6207
Mr Klees .....	6210
Ms Mushinski .....	6211
Mrs Dombrowsky .....	6212
Mr Chudleigh .....	6214
Mr McMeekin .....	6215
Debate deemed adjourned .....	6216