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**Journal
des débats
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Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 14 December 2000

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 14 décembre 2000

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Orders of the day.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): Ballot item number 55, order number M64, second reading of Bill 64, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities. Mr Crozier.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We were led to believe that the order was the other way around. Is that something that needs to be corrected or do we move on with that?

The Deputy Speaker: My understanding is that this is the way it is printed.

Mr Levac: I would seek unanimous consent for a five-minute recess.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Levac has requested unanimous consent for a five-minute recess. Agreed?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would be prepared to go ahead.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed. Then we won't need the five-minute recess.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT
(HISTORIC VEHICLES), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(VÉHICULES ANCIENS)

Mr O'Toole moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 99, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act with respect to number plates for historic vehicles / Projet de loi 99, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les plaques d'immatriculation pour les véhicules anciens.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Durham has 10 minutes to make his presentation.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It is a wintry day, and so I understand some of the delays with the members being present in the chamber today. But with your indulgence, I want to thank a number of people to begin

with for supporting Bill 99, which really allows the use of year-of-manufacture plates on historic vehicles.

I first want to thank a number of individuals. Gord Hazlett is the author of this book, *Old Auto Tales*, and has been very instrumental in bringing forward this concept, this idea, so I thank Gord. There are a number of other people I would also like to thank, including the editors and members of Quill and Quail, "Canada's leading Model A Voice" in the province of Ontario. It's an interesting publication for auto enthusiasts. I'd like to thank Philip Wilson; their historian, Ross McDowell; their president, Ross Walter; Ian Lavery; as well as Philip Wilson and Josie and Jim Campbell; from Huronia Wire Wheels chapter, Jim Campbell and the secretary, Josie Campbell; and a number of people.

I am very surprised and quite impressed with the attention to this particular bill taken by the historic vehicle enthusiasts, and also from the *Old Autos* newspaper, which is produced periodically and circulated to members. I want to thank them for running my petition, which has been read innumerable times in the House and supported by many members on all sides of the House. That's just some of the body of support that I've received among many e-mails and other correspondence that I've had. I'm going to read a few.

This is from the past president of the Austin Healey Club of Southern Ontario, Ian Allison:

"I recently read an article in the *Toronto Star* indicating that you have introduced a private member's bill that would allow owners of 30-year-old classic cars to have YOM plates registered for their cars.

"We of the Austin Healey Club of Southern Ontario would like to thank you for your effort and to give you our club's support from our 142 members."

So there's clear support there. These people range in age, they range in location, and there's nothing partisan at all about this.

Another very enthusiastic and very active collector and restorer is a fellow by the name of Lennis Trotter. He's an architect. He writes:

"Dear Mr O'Toole:

"Re: Year of manufacture plates for classic cars

"As you may recall, I wrote you about a year ago regarding the use of refurbished plates on antique or classic vehicles.

"I am pleased that you have seen fit to introduce a private member's bill in support of this concept and hope Bill 99 will be passed in the Legislative Assembly.

"Many Ontarians share an interest in the restoration and perfecting of vintage vehicles. To these enthusiasts, the option of registering their vehicles with year of manufacture plates would be a popular choice. I understand Bill 99 would also produce revenue for the province ... without additional costs to the government.

"I know Ontario's antique car, truck and motorcycle enthusiasts will welcome your private member's bill and I wish you every success in ensuring the bill receives final reading."

From Roy Fice, good support here:

"As you know, owners of antique and classic vehicles take great pride in restoring their cars and trucks in complete detail. Allowing the plates from the year of manufacture would be popular with many enthusiasts because plates from the year the car was built would make the restoration complete."

That's the general tone from Dave Lumsden as well, from Ancaster, Ontario, who e-mailed me. He goes on in some detail on how the regulations will unfold in the future.

For those listening today and those participating, I just generally want to thank them. But I think more importantly I want to thank John Parker, a member in the previous government, the 36th Parliament, who initially did a lot of work on this particular private member's bill. For that I'd like to thank him.

I'd also like to thank David Turnbull, the Minister of Transportation, and Diane Betts, his able executive assistant, as all staff quite honestly do a good amount of the work in this place and we get a good amount of the credit.

For members on all sides, I'm sure they have constituents who support this concept, and I expect to hear from them on that.

Last but not least, certainly I want to thank my legislative assistant, Greg MacNeil, who has done an extensive amount of work and consulted with many of the people who have sent us e-mails or petitions. He has certainly tried to make sure that everyone's been embraced as supportive on this. As members know, I introduced the bill on June 20 of this year and since that time I've received overwhelming support. Those who forgot about the bill over the summer holidays would have been reminded of its presence on the order paper by the hundreds of petitions that my colleagues and I have tabled in the Legislature over the past few months; ad nauseam might be the way of describing that petition, but nonetheless, it is politics.

1010

I know I speak to members on both sides of the House when I thank all those for the time they have taken to present, read and support the petitions. I would also like to thank many of the people I've already thanked. These include Ian Lavery, Ross Walter, Ross McDowell, Gord Hazlett, Roy Price, Lennis Trotter as well as Jim and Josie Campbell, who I've thanked before.

The list is really too long to mention, but many of the people responsible for this initiative are in the gallery this

morning and I'd like to thank as many as possible. Some have been delayed by the storm. They must be stuck. Their antique vehicles aren't able to withstand these weather conditions. They are certainly here in sentiment and some may be watching at home. I see Ian and a couple of the other members in the gallery, so thank you very much for joining us.

"The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act to allow number plates to be used on historic vehicles if they are Ontario number plates that were issued during the year of manufacture of the vehicle.... Historic vehicles are defined" by current legislation "to be motor vehicles that are at least 30 years old and are substantially unchanged or unmodified from the original manufacturer's product."

In other words, the owner of a 1931 Model A Ford would be permitted by this legislation to register and use a 1931 Ontario licence plate on that vehicle. The legislation also stipulates that the licence plate would have to be in a condition satisfactory to the Ministry of Transportation and its number could not duplicate the number of any licence plate currently in use.

This would effectively create a fourth option for antique owners in Ontario. In addition to the regular licence plate, the vanity plate and the historic vehicle plate now issued by the ministry, antique vehicle owners would be able to use plates issued when the vehicles themselves were made. This really is the point of Bill 99.

Over the past several years, I've consulted with members of countless car clubs and at chapters not only in towns and cities across Ontario, but across Canada. Some of these clubs include the Specialty Vehicle Association of Ontario, the Antique and Classic Car Club of Canada, the Model A Owners of Canada, the Dodge Lovers Club, the Lincoln and Continental Owners Club, the Northern Rambler Car Club and many others too numerous to mention.

When bringing this together, as simple as it may sound to some, there are jurisdictions in Canada, like Alberta, that already do it. We felt it was time Ontario extended the same opportunity to our constituents.

The message I've heard from these clubs is very clear: the year of manufacture plate allows antique owners to ensure that the restoration of their vehicle is complete in every detail. I've quoted a number of letters, and those letters are pretty much unanimous in support. Of course there will always be a wish or a desire to improve, to make it less expensive and more accessible. We have done the first step, which is to get this as a legitimate use in the restoration of vintage vehicles.

Remind ourselves that Ontario is the industrial heartland of this country. Certainly in my riding of Durham, where the General Motors headquarters is located and where I worked for 30 years, I can tell you there are many people who as a hobby and as a way of life have a great affinity and affection for automobiles. There is quite a nostalgia trip attached to all this for the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Even the 1960s and 1970s vehicles will now qualify. Many of them are in everyday use in good weather.

It's something that will be celebrated across the province. As a final reminder, Ontario this year I believe will produce more automobiles than the state of Michigan. I think it's important to realize the importance of the auto sector and its history, not just from Sam McLaughlin but many others who have built this great province we all enjoy.

It's these enthusiasts who keep that up and remind us of the history, the heritage and the traditions of the automobile in our society today. With that, I know there are other speakers who want to comment on this and I'll relinquish my time. I'll leave it with one second.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): Speaker, I'll be sharing my time today with the member for St Catharines.

I just want to stand and commend the member for Durham and let him know that I will be supporting this legislation. I want to talk about licence plates from an historical standpoint. First off, I think we use the word "automobile" all the time, but often we may not know the origin of that word. The word "automobile" comes from the Greek word "autos," meaning self, and the French word "mobile," meaning moving. Hence the word "automobile."

The member spoke of the importance of the auto industry to this province. The first Canadian manufacturing plant opened in Windsor in 1904 when a group of businessmen started the Ford Motor Co of Canada just across the border. This branch plant was the beginning of the automobile industry in Canada. As it's important to that member's riding, it is to mine too. I have the Ford St Thomas assembly plant, which is the only plant in North America manufacturing the Crown Victoria and the Grand Marquis. We have a large Magna plant, which is building all the truck frames for General Motors through a process called hydroforming.

But I think it's important too that we talk a little bit about the history in Ontario. The first car owner that we know of in Ontario was a gentleman by the name of John Moodie, who in 1898 imported a car into Canada. In my own riding there's a reference to an automobile appearing on the streets of St Thomas in 1899, so for over 100 years automobiles have been driven in the streets within my own riding.

Ontario was the leader when it came to identifying vehicles in the form of licence plates. In the registration of vehicles, Ontario was the first province in Canada. The idea was that the money was needed to begin the development of a suitable highway network and to set up a system to administer and enforce vehicle laws.

In this Legislature, in June 1903, an act to regulate the speed and operations of motor vehicles on highways was passed. I want to thank Jean McQuattie from the legislative library for her effort in helping me prepare for this morning. Part of this legislation read as follows: "Every resident of this province who is the owner of a motor vehicle, and every non-resident owner whose motor vehicle shall be driven in this province, shall pay to the Provincial Secretary a registration fee of two dollars for

each motor vehicle. The Provincial Secretary shall issue for each motor vehicle so registered a permit properly numbered stating that such motor vehicle is registered."

That's an interesting thing. Maybe we should start that as a way to generate some more revenue with all these vehicles travelling through our province, that we should have to register them on their entry into Ontario. It could be new revenue and much needed one for our roads in this province.

The legislation also went on to say, "The owner of each and every motor vehicle ... shall carry and expose on said motor vehicle the permit issued as aforesaid by the Provincial Secretary. He shall also have attached to or exposed upon the back of every motor vehicle, in a conspicuous place, the number of said permit...." There's another thing we could do to save some money in this province. I don't necessarily think we need to continue to have two plates on our vehicles. Most provinces and the majority of states are only using one vehicle plate. You can see that they had the foresight in 1903 that we only needed plate on a vehicle.

It's interesting too when you read the newspaper. Hansard doesn't exist for 1903, so we have to rely on newspaper accounts. On June 4, 1903, the debate was not so much about the registration of vehicles—by the way, the initial licence plate, when it was first issued in Ontario, cost \$2. The great debate was the speed limit in the province. At that time, the speed limit in Ontario was seven miles an hour. The debate that took place in this Legislature, and it was quite heated, was whether or not to move the speed limit up to 10 miles an hour. That ultimately did happen.

Again reading from a 1903 article on automobiles: "A short discussion of automobile legislation must not be overlooked. The automobile frightens many horses, especially in rural districts, and reckless speeding has sometimes proved dangerous to pedestrians."

Talking about the legislation, "The framers of such legislation, however, usually seek to put the speed limit of an auto at a ridiculously low figure. Naturally, the majority of the legislators have never been in an automobile and have merely seen them pass at a speed which sometimes looks dangerous."

1020

We'll talk a little bit about the evolution of the licence plate in Ontario. The first plate was designed by a member of the Hamilton Auto Club. It was in the shape of a shield and made of leather, with metal house numbers attached. These early leather plates are extremely rare today. In total, we know that there were 713 of these early plates issued.

The evolution of the plate began in 1905, when rubber plates were issued. In 1906 Ontario went to two plates and a pair of rubber plates was issued, and 1911 is the only time in the history of the province that we had a porcelain licence plate. It was found, though, that the porcelain chipped very easily and for that reason porcelain was no longer used. In 1912 we went to flat steel, in 1921 it

was embossed steel, and we continue with the embossed steel today.

Up to 1954 the length of a licence plate varied based on the number of characters, but from 1955 onward the standard 6 by 12 size was adopted. Something else to think about is that you used to have to go in every year and pick up your new licence plate. It was in 1983 that staggered registration took place.

We've seen a lot of slogans and graphics over the years on plates: "1867 Confederation," "Keep it Beautiful," and in 1982 "Yours to Discover" was adopted on licence plates in Ontario.

They tried reflectorization on plates in 1939 but it wasn't until 1994 that we went to reflective plates in this province.

The Prime Minister of Canada has a special plate. His plate is CAN 001. The Ontario Premier's plate is ONT 001.

I could go on and on. I just want to thank a few people: my barber, Ray Fowler—as I would get my hair cut Ray would remind me of the importance of this legislation; Dave Granger of Bradford, who has an auto restoration business, provided me with some information; Ian Lavery from Toronto, who is here; and I mentioned Jean McQuattie.

I think it's important that we support this legislation. If anyone is in the antique business, you should start buying pairs of plates because I think they're going to be quite collectible.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I'm delighted to participate in the debate today. I have to say that it's an amazing place we work in. Where else could you come to work and in such a short time learn so much about the history of licence plates in Ontario, the materials they were made of and the sizes of them? I enjoyed the member's speech and I commend him for working with leg research and others to pull that together. It was very interesting.

I come at this not from a historical point of view but from I guess a very pragmatic point of view and a little bit of personal experience. I wholeheartedly support the member for Durham's bill. I've received correspondence from individuals in my riding who are members of vintage car clubs and I have had the opportunity and the joy on various community occasions and ceremonies—the Beaches Easter parades and other sorts of things—to participate along with the car clubs and to be able to ride in some of these amazing vehicles. To see the kind of care and love that goes into the restoration is phenomenal.

I've had an opportunity to see that at close hand as well. My significant other is a bit of car enthusiast himself and he has a 1964 Corvette. It's a nice car. It's a sort of powder blue convertible—lovely. When he purchased that you couldn't, from my perspective, call it a car. It was on a trailer and in pieces, and lovingly, painstakingly over many years, bit by bit that car has been restored. Of course someone who is a real enthusiast will know and understand that to restore a car is not simply to put it

together and make it look like it did. It is to go, part by part, and find the factory part that was manufactured at that point in time for that car, for that model, so that the whole thing is factory vintage. The true enthusiast's dream and hope is that at the end that's what they'll have. So can you imagine, having gone to all that trouble, that you are fortunate enough to locate a vintage licence plate from that year and are not able to put that finishing touch on the car as well? I think the bill is appropriate. It's pragmatic, and it makes sense.

I want to pay a bit of tribute to the member for the work he has done on this and the work by the former member Mr Parker. While it sounds so simple and common sense, I know from having spent some time on the government benches and in the cabinet the difficulty in working something like this through the bureaucratic streams of government. I don't say that in a pejorative way. I understand very much the role of the rules and regulations we have within the Ministry of Transportation. But it would seem that this project took an awful lot of work through the backrooms to ensure a proposal could come forward that the ministry could accept, that they could support and that they could find a way to have complement the existing licensing system. As the member has said, probably more could be done, but this is a good first step.

I applaud the work of all the folks in the vintage car community who have spent the time to send their comments and their hopes and desires for this legislation to members of the Legislature, and the work they have done to support Mr O'Toole and Mr Parker in pursuing this issue within the Ministry of Transportation. I think the kind of commitment that takes is evidence of the kind of people who are involved in these communities, the commitment they have to the restoration of vehicles, to the maintenance of these pristine, historical preservations—I can't think of the word I'm looking for at this point in time—a demonstration of our past. I think they're an amazing group of people.

I've had a chance to go to some of the various car shows, even some of the not necessarily vintage shows but things like the Barrie Automotive Flea Market, where you see a great range of vehicles that come forward and are shown. The pride that people display and the fellowship that develops in these clubs as they travel all around the world to bring their cars to shows is quite amazing.

I'm delighted to support the bill. I'm not going to speak at length. I think it's very straightforward, it's supportable and I think we should move to the vote as soon as possible. Mr O'Toole has known my complete support for this bill since his introduction of it, and I'm delighted to be here today to demonstrate that support.

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I also rise to support Bill 99, with respect to number plates for historic vehicles, also known as the O'Toole-Parker bill. I've also had a number of constituents contact me, including well-known experts in the field like Tom Stackhouse in Norfolk and Fred Thompson in Haldi-

mand. These guys really are legends in their spare time. Mark Hone of Townsend, in my riding, wrote me a letter that I wish to quote: "As the owner of an antique car—a 1966 Mustang—I have a personal interest in the movement of Bill 99 through the Legislative Assembly. During my car's restoration, I have kept all parts as original as possible, and feel that as a final touch, a number plate specific to the year would add a nice completed touch."

With respect to old plates, I bought these maybe 25 years ago. They're a matching set. I would ask permission to hold this up as a prop. I've been waiting 25 years for the O'Toole-Parker bill so I can attach them to my car, which I bought close to 40 years ago. They're not as shiny as the new ones, and I know there's a visibility and safety issue. I feel this can be accommodated with my vehicle. I have a 1941 Dodge. It's a five-window coupe, flathead six. Some of you may remember those back in your drive-in days. We have so many memories.

1030

Ms Lankin: I wasn't born then.

Mr Barrett: I wasn't born then either. But from the safety and the visibility issue, I know that I plan on installing truck lights under the back bumper, down on the frame. They won't really impact the appearance of the vehicle, but they are there when I'm driving at night and need to signal a turn or hit the brakes.

With these plates, it's not legal for me to drive on Ontario's highways. I was chatting with Sheldon Priddle of the Summer Nights Car Club. He explained to me that at so many of these shows—we had a show in Waterford this fall; well over 1,000 antique and classic cars showed up at this event—the drivers come in, take the new Ontario plates off and install the old ones for the day. Then they have to do that again so they can drive home. I think we can get around some of that, in a sense, red tape issue.

As we've heard, enthusiasts who decide to restore antique cars go through a great deal of work. They spend large sums of money, and this money is spent in the local area. We know this down in my riding. I received a letter from Milt Chesterman of the Tillsonburg area, who belongs to the Historical Society Of Antique Cars. He explained that antique car owners do a lot for the local economy and generate a lot of work for a lot of people.

Old cars are also big business when it comes to fund-raising. These car shows, rallies and other events oftentimes are used to raise money for local children's charities. For example, Summer Nights, a car club in the Tillsonburg area, has raised a great deal of money for Camp Trillium at Rainbow Lake, which provides recreational opportunities year-round for children suffering from childhood cancer and their families.

Anyone who has an older vehicle understands what a conversation piece it is and the smiles it brings to the faces of people. Older generations admire the car and immediately begin to reminisce about younger years. I also find, when I drive my 1941 Dodge around, that it's a real hit with kids on bicycles, for example. They always want to know the year it was made—again, another

reason for the antique plates. They would tell people right off the bat the answer to their first question: what year was that old car or truck made?

Preserving this part of our history does not come at a small price, however. Many car buffs travel North America looking for just the right car or the right price and end up bringing parts back in a bushel basket, putting these vehicles together really from scratch.

In my opinion, it really is a bit of an eyesore when driving down the road to see the brand new, flashy white licence plates on a vintage vehicle. I feel it ruins the authenticity, and I believe it's high time we allowed year-of-manufacture licence plates in Ontario. Car enthusiasts really have never asked our government for anything. They really don't ask for much, other than, "Just don't lean on my car."

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to start by following up on the member from Haldimand's reference to people not leaning on my car. In fact, that is the case. You'll notice that when there are parades, the people who have antique cars will have people put their feet up on them or lean on them or poke around them. Of course, they've spent literally thousands of dollars to restore these vehicles. It's not just the money they've spent but the time that has been spent on them and the pride they have in these vehicles, and I think they are to be commended.

I've had some letters come in on this matter from various constituents asking me to support this bill, and I think it's a very good bill to support. I talked to Jane and Bill Bickle on the weekend. They are enthusiasts. They went right across the country this year in a 1931 Model A roadster. In the Christmas card they sent out to their friends, they describe part of the tour across the country. They had to fly out there and essentially drive it from Victoria to St John's, and of course they had to take it across the harbour from the island to the mainland on the ferry. But it was an interesting trip for them. They said that Brian Tobin greeted them as they were coming into St John's—I guess he was still Premier of Newfoundland at that time—and led them into St John's. So it was quite a trip for them, and I know that for the Bickles and others like them this is a major hobby.

It's a good bill for the member to bring forward. Often we get involved in here in partisan clashes, and I always thought the private members' hour should be devoted to legislation of this kind, which arises from people bringing to our attention certain matters they would like to see dealt with.

I'm going to read the letter from Bill Bickle. I have a similar letter from Eugene Lampman in St Catharines; they would be the same:

"Please add my name to the number of antique vehicle enthusiasts who would like Ontario to offer year-of-manufacture licence plates.

"Many of our American friends and residents of Alberta are able to complete their restorations of historic vehicles by adding appropriately restored vintage plates that are registered and validated as normal plates.

“This addition of a bit of Ontario ... history to our restored vehicles would be a crowning touch to the enthusiast’s accomplishment.

“This is a good idea whose time has come and I am hoping that you will promote and advance Bill 99 for the good of all automotive enthusiasts who keep our rich automotive history alive.”

Similar letters have come in from others, and I’m glad to see that. I know, as all members of this House do, that on days where there are parades or special days in our community, those who own these vehicles are kind enough to have them on display or perhaps even utilized in a parade. They add so much. They are a real treat for the kids out there who perhaps have never seen a vehicle of this kind, have seen only modern vehicles, and of course they are a real treat for the kids’ grandfathers and great-grandfathers, who get to have their memories restored as the vehicles go by or as they are on display. They are always extremely popular.

This is quite obviously a major investment. There are other people who have a hobby of collecting licence plates. A friend of mine by the name of Bob Cornelius in St Catharines collects licence plates from all over and from years gone by. The member for Durham has pointed out, appropriately, that we’re going to see nice licence plates. There were some people who had raised the issue of having a nice car and these tattered old, broken-down licence plates that nobody could read. Well, anyone who understands the restoration of vehicles understands that those individuals who have them don’t want an unattractive licence plate, so we certainly know that they will keep them in tip-top condition.

The bill does that, and that’s very good for us. Not many people have a chance to take that 45-day trip that the Bickles took from one coast to the other in their 1931 Model A Roadster, but they probably envy them and love to hear the story of it and see some of the photographs and movies and hear tapes taken as a result.

I want to say as well that we have a history in our own community of St Catharines with the automotive industry. McKinnon Industries became General Motors. We have TRW-Thompson Products involved in the making of parts, and Dana Corp, Hayes-Dana as we called it, involved again, and many other industries which of course assist and are part of the automotive industry.

I want to indicate my strong support for this bill. I know my colleagues will be supporting it very strongly, and I believe this is an initiative that will be accepted unanimously and will be a real asset for the people of Ontario.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am very pleased to speak to this bill, Bill 99, from my colleague from Durham. It’s interesting, I think, that maybe he asked an antique to speak about an antique bill. The first car I ever bought was a 1932 Ford Roadster, and I want to assure you it was not brand new; it was bought in the mid-1950s. But it was an interesting little vehicle with a rumble seat. I often think that they only had rumble seats for a certain length of time, the fact being that you couldn’t do much in the rumble seat, nor could you carry

much in the rumble seat, so they had to make the cars a little bigger and have a regular back seat in them.

1040

So I know a little bit about some of the older vehicles. I learned to drive on a 1951 Ford; I drove one for a while. My dad had a 1938 Chev, which he drove for about 20 years, which he won at the local exhibition. At the moment, I have a 1952 24-volt army Jeep, which someday I’m going to restore.

I think this type of bill is something that car enthusiasts and antique car buffs have wanted for many years. When you look at what these individuals do, going all over the country making sure they get authentic parts and authentic equipment for those vehicles, why are the licence plates any exception?

In the great riding of Peterborough, they have a rally and a show every Wednesday night during the summer. It attracts cars from all over the area. If you look at these vehicles, I suggest to you that they’re probably better maintained than most vehicles or some of the much newer vehicles on the road. Certainly a number of people from the various clubs in Peterborough, guys like Charlie Dunford and Bill Haslett and Norm Blodgett, have urged me to make sure I support this bill and encourage all in the House to do so, because if there’s one thing that is on those vehicles that is not authentic, I think it’s a bit of a downer, not only for the car buff but for the vehicle itself. We designate buildings in this province as heritage, and they must have everything in them authentic to the time. If they are repaired, they have to be repaired in the way they were back when they were built. There is no reason in the world not to allow this to happen.

Again in the great riding of Peterborough, General Motors is probably the biggest employer. Certainly the automobile business, whether it be old or new, is very important to my riding. So I thoroughly support this bill and I would encourage everybody else to do so, because I think it is long overdue. When you look at the number of plates that many antique car enthusiasts have sitting in boxes that they can’t use, or indeed those who are still out trying to find the licence plates for their particular cars, I think it is important and they should be allowed to do it, and I support this bill very much.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I’m happy to support the bill as well. I think I’ve always owned an old car. I’ve owned two Model A’s. When I grew up in London, Ontario, I had a Model A. I remember that when I moved to Toronto, good friends of mine, Lyle and Simmone Atkin, allowed me to store my old Model A in their barn. They had, I think, four boys. Years later, I was looking over in the corner here one day at the Premier’s OPP security guard, Larry Atkin, and Larry is the son of Lyle and Simmone Atkin. So it’s kind of a small world, that a long while ago I left London, Ontario, stored my Model A in their barn, and years later who is the OPP security chief for the Premier but the son of the people whose barn I stored my Model A in?

Today I have a 1967 Beaumont, a really neat old car. My wife often wonders what it’s doing under that cover.

She thinks it's rusting; I think it's just aging nicely. I don't know whether or not I'd have to declare a conflict; all of us here seem to own an old car. But I'm pleased to support the member's bill. I look forward to putting this on my car and surprising my wife as I fire the Beaumont up in the spring and drive it out with my brand new plate on, looking for all the world like I know what I'm doing.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): It's a real pleasure for me to be able to stand and support this bill. I've had a number of phone calls and letters from constituents asking that I support this.

I would like to point out that what we're talking about here is that we're going to allow number plates to be used on historic vehicles if they are Ontario number plates that were issued during the year of manufacture of the vehicle, are in a condition satisfactory to the ministry and show no numbers that duplicate the number of any other existing permit, and it only applies to cars that are 30 years old or older.

Many of us can think back to the days when we used to watch parades go by and see the old putt-putts. We'd say, "What is that car?" Of course as we got older we bought some of them. I didn't. I can't afford it, not like Gerry Phillips or Gary Stewart here. In fact, Gerry Phillips probably bought it in the year of issue.

Aside from that, if we hearken back, we look to the old vehicles—the Stutz Bearcats, the Model A and Model T Fords, the Packards, the Studebakers—and many of these had historical significance, particularly if you look at the Studebaker. Many of you will probably remember that the Studebaker was an old Concord. It was an old carriage that was pulled by a horse before the motor vehicle came into being.

The young pages here will be able to look back 10, 15 or 20 years from now and say, "I remember the Oldsmobile." As we all know, the Oldsmobile is not going to be produced after next year.

I can think back to the cars I drove in the 1960s, which I would love to have today. I think they were a whole lot better than the cars that are manufactured today. I had a 1964 Plymouth that lent a whole new meaning to speed. I had a 1966 Dodge that lent a whole new meaning to sports luxury. When you look at the loving care that antique car restorers put into these vehicles today—they treat them like children—why shouldn't they be allowed to have a licence plate from the year of manufacture? This has so much meaning, so much significance.

I really want to compliment the member, John O'Toole, for bringing this bill forward.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I too would like to support Bill 99, brought forward by John O'Toole and, of course, John Parker, who is sitting here on the sidelines today watching this.

As you look at antique cars, it is evident here this morning that there's such a love of these vehicles from right across our province. I was very interested to hear Mr Peters's comments on some of the history. I didn't realize some of the things you brought forward. You'll know my brother-in-law, Ron Shaw, who travels down through your part of the province all the time. Back in

September, I think, he was down to a Ford reunion held in Detroit—these people truck these vehicles all across our province.

Earlier, Mr Wettlaufer mentioned about the Oldsmobile no longer being manufactured after next year. I have a friend in my riding, a fellow by the name of Jerry Walters. He bought a 1904 REO. It was actually the original vehicle. It was a truck version. It had a whisky company—I think it was Seagram's or something similar to Seagram's, one of those types of companies—on the side of it. It was used as a delivery van. He's had it completely restored. The REO was named after Ransom E. Olds. This is a 1904 vehicle. He puts it in all the local parades up our way.

I also want to commend all the people who take such an interest in their communities. We have an Elvis rock-and-roll weekend every year in Orillia. About 9,000 or 10,000 people come out to this dance.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Collingwood's got a better one.

Mr Dunlop: I think the Orillia one is pretty good. Over 200 antique cars line the streets. It's such a show to go and see the care and hard work people put into this so they can display their cars along the streets. Of course, in the evening we have this huge party. There are Elvis impersonators playing 1950s rock-and-roll music and all that sort of thing.

1050

It's interesting to see what people do and the love people have for these vehicles. I think it's so important that we do everything we can as a government and as legislators in this House to make sure that we keep this trend going for many years into the future so we can show the young people the type of vehicles that were originally here at the turn of the 19th century and what we'll see as we go into the 21st, 22nd and 23rd centuries.

The Deputy Speaker: Response, the member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: In the limited time left, I would like to certainly recognize Wayne Plunkett, an antique plate collector in the gallery today who has taken an interest. Thank you for coming out.

I would just like to sum up by saying that in Durham region the seventh annual autofest, Autofest 2000, was held at the GM headquarters, and they had visitors from all over North America and in fact the world. Most recently General Motors commissioned the restoration of one of the 1908 McLaughlin Buicks by a fellow by the name of Harry Sherry of Sherry Classic Autos, from Warsaw, Ontario, who did a spectacular job in the restoration. It's really quite a work of art.

This summer a very good friend of mine, Arnold Kerry, rebuilt by himself a 1950 Buick and in fact drove it across Canada. Jim Grieve, who's the owner-operator of the IGA store in Port Perry, annually drives me in each of the parades in one of his three or four classic cars. It's something very near and dear to their lives and certainly my life, and it's one small thing we can do to pay some respect to the people who keep the history alive.

Gord Hazlett has done an article in *Old Autos*. In fact, he was instrumental in organizing a review here at Queen's Park and I want to thank him for that. It's a very good article capturing the history.

Toby Barrett, one of the members who spoke today, has brought these licence plates. No, I did not make this while I was doing time. These are just examples that will bring history and the vintage plates and the vintage vehicles all into the modern world and times. In fact, in five years we might have electric cars and start a whole new genre of auto enthusiasts.

I thank all of the members for participating and I look forward to their support on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker: I thank the member for Durham, particularly for his co-operation and assistance this morning.

SAFE STREETS AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ DANS LES RUES

Mr Crozier moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 64, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fundraising activities of legitimate charities / *Projet de loi 64, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la sécurité dans les rues et le Code de la route pour reconnaître les activités de financement des organismes de bienfaisance légitimes.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Essex has up to 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I too want to thank Mr O'Toole and the members of the Legislature for the unanimous consent this morning on what was some misinformation on my part, and the fact that Mr O'Toole and his colleagues were prepared to proceed with the debate. Otherwise I might not be here speaking. I appreciate that.

I also want to thank this morning two gentlemen from the cystic fibrosis association who joined me in a media conference earlier: Mark Fitzsimmons, who is captain in the Toronto fire department and chair of the national board of directors of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada; as well as Yves Savoie, national executive director and executive director, Ontario, for the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada. They will be joining us this morning for this debate.

The Safe Streets Act was first passed about a year ago, and I acknowledge and understand the government's position at that time in that it wanted to control the activities particularly of what are called squeegee kids on the streets, as well as aggressive panhandling. My bill, I say to the members of the House when I ask for support of it, is to correct an inconsistency that's developed all across this province. It's having a significant effect on the fundraising activities of charities, and I would just

name a few. I mentioned earlier, just a minute ago, that the firefighters across Ontario collect \$600,000 for muscular dystrophy every Labour Day weekend with their roadway boot drives. Shinerama, a student-run street campaign for cystic fibrosis, raised \$380,000 in Ontario last year, in 1999. The Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada expects to lose about \$750,000 annually because of the way the Safe Streets Act stands at the present time. Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children raised \$5,000 for their Herbie fund last year. Under the Safe Streets Act as it stands, this fundraiser is illegal. There are Goodfellows all across the province, Kinsmen and Kinette Clubs, the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Students Against Impaired Driving, the Windsor Regional Hospital burn unit and so on who have been detrimentally affected by this act.

We're merely trying to correct it. Bill 64 is very simple. It's a one-page bill that wants to do two things. It is to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999, and to amend section 177 of the Highway Traffic Act. What it merely says is that the activities carried on by these charities, as they apply to their fundraising activities, can be held if they meet two simple conditions: that they are conducted by a charitable organization recognized by Revenue Canada, and that they are permitted by a bylaw of the municipality.

I've had support from a number of municipalities across the province, and I'll only give a couple of examples.

Fire co-ordinator Max Hussey, of the regional municipality of Waterloo, has written on behalf of the Waterloo Regional Mutual Aid Association:

"I would like to express our support for private member's Bill 64...."

"The firefighters raise a substantial amount of money each year for muscular dystrophy by holding road tolls.

"We believe this is a very worthwhile cause and this yearly event should be exempt from the act."

The town of Tecumseh in my riding has written that they passed a resolution on their meeting Tuesday, November 28, "That the council of the town of Tecumseh supports the request from Bruce Crozier, MPP, respecting his private member's Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act."

Just to outline the problem that this has caused, I'll read part of a letter from the town of Leamington, my home town. It is written by Brian R. Sweet, the director of corporate services.

"After the passage of the Safe Streets Act by the present government, the Leamington council had no choice but to withdraw its approval and support of these two charitable events" held in the town, that being the Kinette Club's daisy drive and the Leamington firefighter's boot drive. "Even though the municipality has never received a single complaint in the many years that these organizations were conducting these fundraising events, the municipal council had to stop the activity."

I add as a footnote that the municipality has been informed by their insurance that if the firefighters in Leamington, for example, were to conduct such an event

and not be exempted from the Safe Streets Act, liability insurance would not be valid for the town.

I also want to quote from a couple of news articles, one, the Eganville Leader, where the Killaloe OPP were recently asked for their approval for a toll booth. They were informed by Staff Sergeant Jim Graham that as far as he understood the new Safe Streets Act, fundraisers like the toll boot are no longer allowable by law. I quote, "My understanding of the legislation is that nothing like that toll boot is allowed."

1100

Also from the Eganville Leader in May of this year I quote, "So with this Safe Streets Act it is now illegal for such organizations as the Eganville fire department to hold its annual toll boot fundraiser, an event that has been held for the last 10 years to raise money. It's strange: have you noticed in recent years how the province has squeezed us out of more and more methods of raising money, yet at the same time has given us all kinds of new lottery opportunities to support?"

My point there is that I don't really think that the province, the government, had any intention of squeezing charities out of fundraising events. I think, with the passage of the Safe Streets Act and its original intent, that we then suddenly found ourselves in the position where it had a much broader scope. When police departments looked at this act, they found themselves in an untenable position.

Attorney General Jim Flaherty, being the top legal officer in our province, said, rightly so, when asked about this last November, "They will have to obey the law." I agree with that. Laws are there for a purpose. Laws are not there to be broken by intention and laws are not there so that police departments will be told in some instances to look aside. Even if they use the discretion they have, all it takes is one complaint and then that's the end of it.

Jim Parent, president of the Windsor Goodfellows, said, "If that becomes law," and it did, "It would kill us." Staff Sergeant Dave Rossell, a spokesperson for the Windsor Police Service, said, "We can't pick and choose which laws we want to enforce and those we don't. We may be put in the position where we would have to enforce."

That is the position we're in today. What I'm asking my colleagues in the Legislature to consider today is that by two simple amendments to the Safe Streets Act—it will still have the same impact that was intended when it was first passed and supported by this Legislature—by exempting registered charities that have permission of the municipality by bylaw under the Safe Streets Act, these charities will be able to once again continue to raise money for those who need our help and whom we can help the most by supporting the likes of Goodfellows, the firefighters and other charitable organizations in the province. So I ask the members for their consideration and support.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I'm pleased to rise and speak to the bill this morning, Bill 64, the Safe Streets Amendment Act.

I probably shouldn't be this way but, lately, whenever I see a private member's bill from the opposite side, I look at myself and I say, "Why are they doing this?" Maybe I'm being overly cynical but—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: I know, Rosie.

The Safe Streets Act that we passed last year fulfilled the Blueprint promise to stop aggressive solicitation and squeegee kids. It was to make our streets safer.

The Highway Traffic Act always prohibited any solicitation while on a roadway. Now the member from Essex, Mr Crozier, brings forward this bill as an amendment to the Safe Streets Act. I wonder if he would have brought forward an amendment to the old Highway Traffic Act. Nothing has changed here insofar as the charities themselves are concerned. Would he have brought forward that amendment under the old Highway Traffic Act? It's a very simple question to myself, and of course I can't answer it.

The minister, Mr Flaherty, has written to the municipalities. In the Toronto Star on April 9, 2000, it was reported:

"Charities across Ontario were concerned the new legislation—designed to combat aggressive squeegee kids and panhandlers—was being used by local municipalities to also ban long-standing fundraising campaigns that take place near roadways.

"Medians and shoulders and sidewalks are not part of the roadway," Flaherty said.

"Flaherty met Thursday with representatives of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada to discuss the problem faced by the charities.

"The letter," said George Henderson, Muscular Dystrophy's Ontario spokesperson, "will help us in situations where municipalities have arbitrarily held up Bill 8 and said you can't do what you've done in the past."

Other charities, including the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, have shared the concerns of the Muscular Dystrophy Association, but I'd like to assure them that nothing has changed from the old Highway Traffic Act. This is not targeted at them. It was targeted at aggressive panhandling and the squeegee kids.

There have been some supportive quotations insofar as this act is concerned and how it may or may not affect the charities.

Ed McNorton, Windsor police staff sergeant, in a November 24, 2000, Windsor Star article, said, "As far as aggressively going out there and kicking people off the street for selling their magazines, no, we're not going to do that. The intent of the law was aggressive soliciting and people who bother people at bank machines or disrupt traffic."

Deb Mineau, senior constable, Essex OPP, in a November 24, 2000, Windsor Star article, said, "The legislation was not intended for organizations such as the Goodfellows. They're not aggressively approaching people."

Chris Townsend, London Chapter President, Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, in a March 30, 2000, letter to

the editor, said, "It is the intention of our foundation and Shinerama committees across Ontario's colleges and universities to continue this successful campaign. In addition to raising awareness and funds for CF research, it is our primary goal that all students conduct themselves in a safe manner."

I think these three quotes point out exactly what we're talking about: aggressive solicitation versus a safe approach. As long as they're not on a public roadway, there's no problem. There wasn't a problem under the Highway Traffic Act; there is no problem now.

I have to say that I cannot support the legislation because I wonder why it was brought forward.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I had prepared notes to go down a certain road, assuming the government would see that there was a small problem with the bill they passed. I was simply going to say, "Thank God they see there is a small problem and they're going to support Mr Crozier and are going to be reasonable about this and say, 'We understand there's a misconception about the law out there and an inconsistency that's happening across the province, so let's make it mandatory that we have that understanding across the province.'" That was what I was going to do. Now I have to stand and ask why the government is going to be against this bill.

First, I want to start in a polite way to say to my friend, to a gentleman who has received support from charities across the province, that he's done his homework. Since January 30, 2000, I believe, the bill became an act. Mr Crozier from Essex has done a yeoman's job of trying to pull this together to ensure that the people of Ontario, particularly those in need, are cared for by charities across the province. I want to say to him, thank you very much for your dedication and for bringing this to our attention. Thank you for doing something that we believe in at private members' time, and any time in this Legislature that we put forth ideas and concepts that we believe will improve the province and improve the legislation that's put forward. In the spirit of understanding, the people who do their homework will understand that this legislation is nothing more than simply trying to correct a small flaw that was found in legislation. Instead, now we're starting to hear the debate of, "Oh, there must be an ulterior motive to this. They don't understand the law. They don't understand what's going on. They're not the people who know how to legislate."

Unfortunately, since we're starting to hear that, I have to go down another road. I'm going to go down that road by simply saying to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo—I think it's Kitchener-Waterloo—

1110

Mr Wettlaufer: Kitchener Centre.

Mr Levac: —Kitchener Centre, sorry—you proved the point. You used three quotes from people who said that it's OK and they're going to proceed anyway, and we've given you quotes from municipalities that have passed bylaws to make sure that you don't go on the roads, that you don't do those activities. It proves inconsistency. I'm going to use your own words against you to

say then that you should support the bill, to make sure there is a consistent understanding across the province.

I want to make sure we also understand that we're talking about what the firefighters are. As the Solicitor General critic, I've become very passionate about understanding how firefighters put their lives on the line every day, day in and day out. The understanding that I have about this group is that not only are they professional and not only do they do their job exceptionally well, but these people are law-abiding citizens. They want to obey the law. They are examples. They set themselves a high standard of professionalism, a high standard of community service. Every police officer I've spoken to so far in my role as critic for the Solicitor General, and the firefighters I've spoken to, including chiefs, deputy chiefs, captains and all of the front-line firefighters, have said to me they support Bill 64 wholeheartedly, so much so that they included Bill 64 in their lobby day to show that they are community-minded and law-abiding citizens.

They have a deep fear, and their understanding is that this is going to stop the boot drives. In essence, it has. Why? Because since January 31, 2000, when the bill was enacted and put into place, over \$200,000 has been lost to the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Why? Because they want to be law-abiding citizens, first and foremost; because they abide by the law of the land. It was pointed out very simply that the law of the land has a flaw. That simple, small flaw is that what was attempted in the Safe Streets Act to take care of one problem actually created another.

Mr Crozier's request is not to repeal the law, not to stop the government from its agenda, this particular issue, which was the first piece of legislation they put forward. What he wants to do is simply amend that piece so that the second part of the law, which reached across the province and not maybe two or three centres around the province—he's simply asking for the government to understand, "Please, go along with us. Understand that there are municipalities out there that have a different interpretation of what the members opposite are saying, including the Attorney General." Just because he says it's so, which I've learned through my year here, it's not always so. Just because he has an idea or a concept or a thought, somebody advised him, it's not always the fact. It's not always the way the Attorney General says it is.

What we're finding out across the province is that it's eradicating the possibility of the Muscular Dystrophy Association raising \$750,000 a year, because they're law-abiding citizens in this group. The firefighters are law-abiding citizens. In the gallery with us today is George Henderson from the Muscular Dystrophy Association and Captain Mark Fitzsimmons from the Toronto Fire Department, who is also the chair of the national board of directors of the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada. The two gentlemen's presence here today is to try to send a signal to you, to make it very clear to you that they have a deep concern about this.

Instead of just simply pushing it aside by saying, "Our opinion is that it's no problem," do us the favour, support

the bill, get it done, on the books, so there is a consistent understanding across the province of how fundraising can and can't be done.

I did a little local research. I want to compliment the firefighters, both professional and volunteer, in my riding, in the small village of Glen Morris, in the town of St George, in Paris, in Brantford. Each of these areas in my riding has used, at one time or another, boot drives. That's where the fire department sets up a little boot drive on the road. They stop right in the middle. Why? Because that's where the traffic is, and the people expect it and the people want it. The firefighters do an exceptionally professional job and their main key is safety. So they set this up in a very smart, appropriate way such that absolutely no one—and here's a piece of history for us—has been injured or hurt during any of these boot drives across Ontario—not one single person.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): They support this bill in St Catharines.

Mr Levac: I can imagine that they support this bill across the province.

I want the members opposite to take a step back and simply understand that there is an inconsistency in your own words. If I listen to you carefully, your own words will consistently show that there is inconsistency across the province, and because of that this bill should be supported. It must be supported so that the activities of law-abiding citizens, particularly the firefighters of our province, which raise millions and millions of dollars, can continue.

They are saying to you, first on the lobby day held just last month, that Bill 64, which has nothing to do with their benefit—they didn't come to us saying, "I want, I want, I want." They came to us with Bill 64 as one of their top three priorities: "For our community, we want you to support Bill 64." I don't think that's very difficult to understand, and I implore the members on the other side, I beg the members on the other side: understand that this isn't about a whack at you, that this isn't about who wins and who loses. This is about correcting a problem in the legislation that has been pointed out to you by members on this side of the House. So I wholeheartedly support this bill, I thank the member from Essex for putting it forward and I implore the government to support this bill.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I wish to speak to the bill introduced by the member for Essex. I congratulate him on sticking up for charities and the wonderful work they do in this province. I will be speaking against the bill, and I speak against the bill because if you refer back to what Bill 64 is trying to do, it's trying to amend Bill 8, also known as the Safe Streets Act. The intent of the Safe Streets Act was to keep our streets clean—to keep our streets safe, rather, the roadway safe. Yes, in my riding—

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): Clean of all those pesky people?

Mr Tilson: Give me a break, you know. The member from Beaches-Woodbine says, "Keep it clean of those pesky people." Those are her words.

The issue in my riding with respect to keeping the streets safe is that we too have service clubs that have these toll roads. They're working with the police services boards, they're working with the municipalities and they have their toll roads off the roadway, at an entrance to the major mall of the community, where it is safe. I would hope that the service clubs and the charities and the other organizations around this province would continue to do that.

I must say that I am critical of the bill because there are two ways in which he's asking for this act to be amended. One is that you must be a registered charity and the other is that you must have approval from municipalities.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): It's a terrible thing, isn't it?

Mr Tilson: Well, the point of the issue is that I thought the province of Ontario administered the safety of the highways and the streets of this province. It's called the Highway Traffic Act. Why are you downloading the issue of safety to the municipalities? I don't understand the requirement of the bill, demanding that the local municipalities pass a bylaw to approve what these charities are going to do. The safety of the streets of this province is on the provincial government, not on the municipalities. Read the act.

1120

As far as registered charities, I don't know why you're discriminating against everyone else. There may be other organizations that are not registered charities under the Income Tax Act of Canada. There may be other charities. There may be other organizations. There may be other non-profit organizations. Your bill doesn't refer to those. Why are you discriminating against those people?

The bill that is being proposed is flawed. The member has mentioned a group from down his way that was quoted in the Windsor Star. Goodfellows, I believe, is the organization. There was a story that ran in the Windsor Star—Windsor is near the riding of Essex—which has the following headline: "Goodfellows not Targets of By-law, Police say." When the Goodfellows take their annual fundraising drive in two weeks, volunteers won't be targeted by police under the province's panhandling legislation unless their actions are the subject of specific complaints. The quote from the Windsor Star is, "As far as aggressively going out there and kicking people off the street for selling their magazines, no, we're not going to do that," said Windsor police Staff Sergeant Ed McNorton.

"The intent of the law was aggressive soliciting and people who bother people at bank machines or disrupt traffic," according to Essex OPP senior Constable Deb Mineau.

Interjections.

Mr Tilson: The members who are heckling over there, if they were to read Bill 8 and look at what the intent of the bill was, it says specifically sections 2 and 3. Read those sections. They don't apply to the people you're talking about. They clearly do not apply.

Mr Levac: The intent.

Mr Tilson: Read the section. He keeps blathering over there. I didn't interrupt him when he was shouting at me.

To imply that the Safe Streets Act deters fundraising by such voluntary organizations is certainly to misconstrue the intent of the act. Safety on our government's side is of utmost concern: safety of those who are approached and, importantly, safety of those who wish to participate in fundraising campaigns.

Voluntary organizations, charitable organizations, registered or not, can still raise funds in the traditional manner. They are only limited by this government's concern for the safety of those concerned.

Mr Crozier in his bill is attempting to amend the current act by classifying those who should be allowed to campaign on the roadways and those who should not. In drafting the Safe Streets Act, the government made a careful and deliberate attempt not to introduce such discriminating qualifications.

I hope that members would read again Bill 8 and vote against this particular bill that Mr Crozier has introduced.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The squeegee bill passed on April 1, and we had warned the government during very short committee hearings and during debate that we feared it was going to adversely impact charities. We were told by the government on numerous occasions that that was not the case, that we were to take their word for it and rely on their interpretation of the legislation.

One of the arguments that was made was that prosecutors would exercise their discretion in a way that they wouldn't crack down on charities because that wasn't the purpose of the act. Then something happened that I don't think even the government anticipated. Before the charities could go to the streets to engage in their charitable work, they first had to go to the municipality to get permission to do so.

It was at that point that legal counsel to the various municipalities all across Ontario said: "You know what? We can't grant that licence," or that permit, whatever it may be. "Why? Because we are going to be running afoul of the squeegee bill."

We argue here on both sides occasionally, "Here's what the law means." The parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General will say it means X and I will say it means Y, but the way we as legislators resolve things is either to amend legislation during the debate process or amend it afterwards if a provision has resulted in something this government was not anticipating.

One way this government has tried to deal with the problem is by—in an unusual move—the Attorney General of Ontario, in April this year, writing a letter of interpretation to all those charities and municipalities saying, "Your legal opinion is wrong. This bill should not impede charitable activities." I would say, with all due respect—the Attorney General's legal opinion is one that is brought before the courts—that while he's not always wrong, the Attorney General, like Attorneys General past, is not infallible. There are a number of occasions on which the Attorney General has told this House that the

law said this, and it did not. The efforts to try to strike down the firearms act is one example. Most recently, the Ontario Court of Appeal held that judges' secretaries could form a union because it doesn't violate judicial independence. The Attorney General had argued to the contrary, but the Ontario Court of Appeal had the last word on that.

Here is an opportunity for us to fix the legislation. Maybe the municipal council's opinion is wrong, but that's not for us to say. Charities, in fact, are not getting the permits and are not getting the necessary permission to move forward. So what's happening? We know that in London the squeegee bill nixed the University of Western Ontario's annual fall Shinerama, which last year raised \$380,000. Muscular dystrophy, we've already heard, expects to lose some \$750,000 annually in Ontario. We've heard the Ontario firefighters' boot drives to raise funds have been banned by the bill. Lastly, Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children raised \$5,000 last year for the Herbie Fund through a similar promotion. They were told they have to find other alternatives. Again, we can argue what the law means. The reality is that the law is being interpreted in a way that charities are not able to go out and raise that money, and we're talking about \$1 million a year.

The parliamentary assistant argued, "Look, Mr Crozier, your bill is flawed." I know my colleague would be more than happy to have this bill go to committee to have any fine-tuning that needs to happen. But I fear this is a bit of a false argument and that the government doesn't want in any way to concede or brook any change when it comes to a bill they've brought forward.

I would say this is how we fix bills, in private members' business. Here's an opportunity for the members to say, "You know what? Obviously this is hurting charities, particularly outside the city of Toronto. This one-size-fits-all solution for a Toronto safe-streets issue has had the adverse effect that charities are losing \$1 million a year."

If you want to amend Mr Crozier's bill, he's happy for that. But let's pass it, let's support it. Who could not support it? The legal arguments made have been rejected. Would the Attorney General send the question of the way the provision should be interpreted to the Superior Court and let a judge decide? He refused to do that. All he was willing to do was make a legal argument through a letter. I say the Attorney General should appear before a court to make that argument, so we can get a final judgment, or the Attorney General or the members here ought to agree to this bill, so we can fix the act. Obviously the government's intention when they passed this legislation could not have been to knock down \$1 million a year in revenue from charities.

I urge members to leave aside the partisan sniping on the issue of the squeegee bill. We can talk about the squeegee bill another day. This particular provision and this particular bill—

1130

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to say to the good citizens and decent taxpayers who are watching this program this morning at 11:30 that we're debating Bill 64, a bill introduced by the member for Essex which New Democrats will be supporting. But for the benefit of the good citizens and decent taxpayers who are watching, I want to tell you what Bill 8, the Safe Streets Act, was all about.

That legislation created new provincial offences, amended the Highway Traffic Act and made it illegal to do several things: solicit in an aggressive manner, such as panhandling or ticket scalping, as well as solicit persons in places where the right of way may be impeded, for example, bank machines, transit stops, public washrooms, pay telephones and transit vehicles.

It makes it illegal to dispose of used condoms—think about that for a moment, good citizens—needles, syringes and broken glass in outdoor public places. Just imagine the cops sitting on some street where they think this stuff might be going on, because it could be going on anywhere in Ontario, well-paid cops—presumably they are to protect all citizens from serious crimes—out on some corner, let's say Queen Street or Bloor Street. It makes it illegal to dispose of used condoms, so some cop is looking out for that kind of activity. It's pretty dumb, right?

Mr Levac: It's got to be used.

Mr Marchese: Of course it's got to be used, or presumably used. Why else would you dispose of it? It's got to be used, yes.

It makes it illegal to stop, attempt to stop or approach a vehicle for the purposes of offering, selling or providing commodity or a service to the driver or other people in the vehicle. Basically, that third point is about the Blueprint promise that gives the police the power to crack down on the most horrible of horrors: the squeegee kid. Talk about serious crime. Honest citizens, good citizens, honest taxpayers, good taxpayers, this is the government that introduced Bill 8, a bill designed to have cops keep an eye on the people who are using condoms and then disposing of them, making it illegal. I hope you find it funny, good citizens, because I find it tragically funny.

And the other piece of the law that makes it illegal to panhandle aggressively, making it impossible for firefighters and other charitable organizations to do their good deeds? And the third one, to dispose of the lowlife, the squeegee kids, the ones who frighten the wits out of so many of these provincial Conservative members as they're driving along Queen Street maybe or by the lakeshore as they get on to the highway. Imagine these poor MPPs driven out of their wits by those horrible of horrors attempting to clean the windshield.

Taxpayers of Ontario, stick with me for a while if you're watching this program. You've got to love this government, right? Have you ever seen a wackier government than this, that wastes my time and wastes your money to deal with this kind of stuff?

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): Where is Bob Rae now?

Mr Marchese: Good judge, I respect some of the work you do, so please. I don't want to say anything that might not be polite. Good judge, I tell you this stuff is an insanity. How can you support stuff like this? Come on. You've been on the bench and you know what serious crimes are all about. Good God, sexual assault is a serious crime. Get out there and do the work and deal with that. We've got serious stuff like domestic assault that's hurtful to families and to women and to children. Please, good judge, try to work with these guys. You've been on the bench and you know that's the serious crime you've got to deal with. Violent crime is bad stuff for society and the victims who are affected by it. What about hate crime?

Get out there, good judge, you and the others. Try to convince these people, because you know what this is all about. Convince these others that they know not of what they speak, and that they waste—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Or maybe they do know what they're doing. Because when some of these lawyers out there argue that this may be unconstitutional, this Conservative government loves that. Would that someone would take it to court. Would that some good judge out there might say this is illegal, unconstitutional, because either way this Conservative government wins the battle. Not only are they cleaning the streets from those horrible of horrors, but if someone should dare to take this government to court and they should lose this, they win. Because then they can say, "These courts are just so interventionist. My God, there's nothing we can do any more, as lawmakers. These people, these judges, come and they create their own law. Here we are, trying to clean the streets of the riff-raff, of the rabble, of the lowest of low, and you've got judges here saying that what we're doing is unconstitutional." Then you have Mike Harris coming back saying, "We've got to work on it. We've got to make things a lot tougher and we've got to make sure we put people on the bench who agree with our laws, the kinds of bills that we pass in this place," this Bill 8, the Safe Streets Amendment Act, 1999, that goes after squeegee kids so poor seniors don't have a heart attack as they're trying to clean their windows, and so cops are wasting our money trying to pick some guy up because he threw a used condom somewhere on some street of Ontario.

Good citizens, are you following my discussion here? Because, as you remember, I don't talk to these MPPs; it's a personal discussion with you, because they don't listen.

Here's an amendment presented by Mr Crozier that is, I think, a reasonable request. And you already had two MPPs saying, "We like the charities, but we don't like this bill, this amendment." This amendment attempts to correct a problem, because the law is quite clear. That's why I read it out. It makes aggressive panhandling illegal in certain places, such as bank machines, transit stops, public washrooms, pay telephones and so on.

These charities, firefighters and others, can't do the work they used to do. The law is clear. The letters written

by the Solicitor General and the Attorney General are vague as to their intent. My understanding of what they have done is they have written to municipalities and to the police saying, "Work with the charities." It doesn't say, "If you do this you might be charged," because you will be, under the law. It says to the municipalities, "Work with them."

Some municipalities say, "Sorry. Yes, you say work with them, but the law is quite clear and it says we can't do it." So some municipalities are preventing these people from doing the work they want to do. That's why the attempts by Mr Crozier to put this amendment to make that clear, so municipalities cannot deny them those applications or those permits, and so the police quite clearly know they shouldn't be arresting them or stopping that activity.

It's quite clear; it's obvious, yet you have members—I don't know. They stand up and they make fanciful—not even fanciful. It's not very intelligent, I would say. This is just a modest amendment.

You recall my buddy here, Peter Kormos from Niagara Centre, was the first to raise this concern in this Legislature. He talked about the effect it would have on charities—it was very obvious from the law—and warned the government they ought not to do it because they would lose thousands and thousands of dollars as a result of this law that would disable them from doing this activity, and that many people who depend on them wouldn't have that support. He told them, "You shouldn't do it."

We opposed Bill 8 because it was a dumb, dumb piece of legislation, as a result of which my friend Peter Kormos introduced a bill that would repeal that act. It was called the An Act to repeal the Safe Streets Act, 1999, and in French, which I think is even more pertinent, it's called *les nouveaux Misérables*.

What does it mean? It's a bill that is poorly conceived not only because it leaves charities vulnerable but because it persecutes the poor. Basically the people it persecutes are the poor. That's why it's badly conceived and dumb. It makes of those who are already victimized, those squeegee kids, many of whom have difficult problems—it persecutes them and then says to the charities that attempt to help those very people who are persecuted that they can't. On both counts the law affects the persecuted and those trying to help them.

1140

The obligations of government are disappearing. Not only do you have a government which no longer feels obligated to help those who need the help, but you now have a government that relies on volunteers to raise money, and this bill prevents those volunteers from raising the money that would help the persecuted. Do you follow, good citizens and good taxpayers, how dumb this piece of legislation is? This government is relying more and more on volunteers and relying on the corporate sector, God bless them, to dish out millions of dollars, if they have it, to help those who need it. It is relying on charitable organizations to do more of what governments

used to do in the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Now with this government it's disappearing. Governments are no longer governments. The Conservatives call themselves the non-government government. If governments don't have the obligation to help people, then who is left? If all we have are churches and charitable organizations left to help, but in this particular instance and with this particular law they are prevented from doing so, then who is left?

What we need is to end this attempt by this particular government to continue to pretend they're doing something on law and order when they are in fact doing so very little. Remember the introduction of the Victims' Bill of Rights. Judge Day, who ruled on that bill, said that the Victims' Bill of Rights has no rights inherent within it. There are no rights in the bill. Why would this government call a bill which purports to give rights the Victims' Bill of Rights if there aren't any rights? Do you see the game they're playing with you, citizens? That's why I talk to you directly. It's a game of pretending that it's a law-and-order government, but it's just a shell game, and if you are a victim of that deceit, then I pity you, citizens, and I pity you, good taxpayers, for falling into that trap.

That's why you need to be more involved and more politicized and more engaged, because only by doing so can you help to shape governments and can you help to make them accountable. God knows, many citizens in this province have tried to make this government accountable, but it's not working as well as it should. We need more and more of you citizens to decide that it's time to get out of our comfortable lives and our comfortable chairs and get out and make an effort to be a citizen. When you become a citizen, you're concerned not only about how laws affect you but how they affect others, because if it affects others in a bad way, it indirectly affects you. We are all citizens by the mere fact that we are human beings and we depend on each other.

This government is turning this society into a Darwinian society where every man is out there for himself. It's a dog-eat-dog kind of society. That's what they're turning us into. Do you want to be reduced to that state of affairs? I don't think you do. I know citizens don't want to and I know that once taxpayers understand the implications of bad laws, they won't want to either.

We support this modest measure. I hope there are a few others of the Conservative caucus who will as well.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 64, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities.

This government recognize the legitimate activities of charities and the Safe Streets Act did not change the status quo with respect to how charitable organizations conduct their business. It's not a situation of fixing the Safe Streets Act; it's a situation of there being a misunderstanding. The Attorney General has done his best to bring this situation to finalization. But the bottom line is

you cannot override the Highway Traffic Act and what's being proposed in this piece of legislation doesn't do anything to address that situation—far from it.

I want to deal with the Safe Streets Act and its substance. The Safe Streets Act does not prevent someone from soliciting money from people in vehicles if the person soliciting is positioned on a sidewalk, shoulder, boulevard, median or other place that is not a roadway. That has been the law; nothing has changed. What is being requested here is for certain organizations to be recognized. Those organizations out there are already recognized by local police forces and by municipalities.

The Safe Streets Act is not aimed at solicitation that is courteous, and it does not prevent someone from soliciting money from people in vehicles if the person soliciting is positioned on a sidewalk, shoulder, boulevard, median or other place that is not a roadway. Under the Highway Traffic Act, it has always been an offence for someone, while on a roadway, to stop a vehicle to offer or to provide any commodity or service to anyone in a vehicle. That is the law. That will not change by the amendment being put forth by the member opposite. If it's trying to do that, I didn't see it on the face of this bill. I've read the bill and I think what it's trying to do is define what a charitable organization that would be allowed to do certain things would be. The member opposite knows that.

If the Highway Traffic Act is set up to ensure the safety of activities on the roadways, for the member opposite to indicate that that's wrong and that the Safe Streets Act shouldn't be doing something like that has nothing to do with the Safe Streets Act. First of all, we have to look at the safety of the public in terms of who's using the roads. The intention was that they were to be used by automobiles. They weren't intended to be used for any other purpose. That's why we have safety on the roads. That's why you have a Highway Traffic Act. To say that the government needs to fix something—there's nothing to fix. The bottom line is it's something that has to be worked out at a local level in terms of the volunteer activities, which are appreciated by all members in this House. There is no doubt about that.

This is not a situation where what we're dealing with here is something the member's bill will change. It's not going to change in terms of where those activities can legally be held. So it's not a situation that needs to be addressed by that piece of legislation.

Mr Crozier: I'd like to thank those members who spoke to the bill, particularly my colleagues from Brant and St Paul's and the member for Trinity-Spadina. I acknowledge the fact that some government members have spoken to it, but I certainly don't agree with their comments. This act proposed today does amend the Highway Traffic Act. The member for Kitchener Centre asked would I have brought forward an amendment to whatever he meant by "the old act." It wasn't evident as being a problem, but your safe streets bill has made it a problem, and that's why the amendment is coming forward. So that answers your question.

I know your legislation wasn't intended to affect charities. That's why we're bringing the amendment forward.

The fact that you're not going to vote for my bill, I can accept that. It would have been nice, though, if there would have been one government member who would stand up and acknowledge that there's a problem and acknowledge that the government was prepared to fix it. But not one of you stood up. "There's nothing wrong with our bill. Everything's OK." Well, let me one more time quote to you from a letter from the Town of Leamington: "After the passage of the Safe Streets Act by the present government, the Leamington council had no choice but to withdraw its approval and support" of two charitable events that have gone on for years. For your guys to stand up there and deny that there is a problem with your Safe Streets Act when it comes to charities, then you're blind to the whole issue. All these charities—

Mr Wettlaufer: What's the date of that?

Mr Crozier: What's the date of this letter? December 13, 2000. All you need to do is acknowledge to charities in Ontario that there's a problem with the bill. Clear it up. If you want to do it with a government bill, fine.

The Deputy Speaker: The time for debate on this matter is now complete. We will take the vote at 12 o'clock noon. There being no further debate, pursuant to standing order 96(e), the proceedings are suspended until noon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1200.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (HISTORIC VEHICLES), 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT
LE CODE DE LA ROUTE
(VÉHICULES ANCIENS)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We'll first deal with ballot item number 56. Mr O'Toole has moved second reading of Bill 99. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to the committee of the whole House.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I seek unanimous consent for Bill 99 to be ordered for third reading.

The Deputy Speaker: You're asking that it be referred for third reading? Agreed. So ordered.

SAFE STREETS AMENDMENT ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ
DANS LES RUES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Crozier has moved second reading of Bill 64. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1202 to 1207.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour will stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Dombrowsky, Leona	McGuinty, Dalton
Arnott, Ted	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	McMeekin, Ted
Bradley, James J.	Hastings, John	Molinari, Tina R.
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Parsons, Ernie
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Peters, Steve
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Phillips, Gerry
Colle, Mike	Lankin, Frances	Ramsay, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Levac, David	Ruprecht, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario	Stewart, R. Gary

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sterling, Norman W.
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Stockwell, Chris
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Tasca, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 30; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker: The ayes being 30, the nays being 30, I cast my vote in favour. The motion is carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill is referred to committee of the whole.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Mr Speaker, I would like permission of the House that it be referred to general government.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Crozier has requested that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Agreed?

All those in favour of Mr Crozier's referral will stand and remain standing until they are counted.

All those opposed will please stand.

A majority is in favour. This bill will be referred to the standing committee on general government.

There being no further business before the House, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1212 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MEDICAL LEGISLATION

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): On December 12, 2000, the Chair of the standing committee on general government reported to this House my Bill 2, An Act to

amend the Medicine Act, 1991, without amendment. The report was received and adopted.

The adoption of this report by this House is a significant step in providing Ontario's doctors and patients with freedom of choice in health care. It is noteworthy that of over a dozen presentations to the committee, none opposed the bill. All made strong arguments as to the benefits and necessity of this legislation.

One of the most eloquent and relevant statements submitted to the committee was from Peter Rothbart, MD, chairman on chronic pain of the Ontario Medical Association: "To my mind the core of this bill is the very notion that fundamentally makes it a human rights bill first and a medical bill second. This core notion is that the needs of a patient are central to medical practice, that patient outcomes matter most, that alleviating suffering is what medicine is all about, that the standard of medical science and the guiding light of medical practice must always address human suffering first and last. I urge you to pass Bill 2 in the name of medicine."

We are approaching the end of a long road in achieving the goal of responsible flexibility in how licensed medical professionals treat their patients and enabling patients to have input into the modalities recommended by these medical practitioners. I urge this House to give swift third and final reading to Bill 2 to achieve these ends.

VETERANS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Earlier this week I was moved by the member's statement by my colleague from Kitchener Centre, Mr Wettlaufer. As the father of one who served in the military, I know the kind of commitment and duty that is needed by those serving overseas, whether it is in time of war or of peacekeeping. I also think it is important for us to take a moment during this specific season of peace and love to thank those who serve our country and protect our democracy.

World War II and Korean War veteran Bob Douglas, who now lives in Port Perry in my riding of Durham, is one of those people who deserve our thanks. From 1950 to 1953, he and 26,000 fellow Canadians fought overseas in the war between North and South Korea. It is my understanding that Mr Douglas served in the armed forces for 22 years before retiring in 1968.

Since moving to Port Perry with his wife, June, in 1987, Mr Douglas became involved in unit 11 of the Korea Veterans Association in Oshawa. He held a variety of positions within the local organization, eventually getting more involved, and for 10 years was the KVA's national membership chairman. One of the causes that he and other Korea vets worked tirelessly for was official recognition from our federal government for their service in Korea. They succeeded, and after much discussion with the government a volunteer medal was issued to the veterans of the Korean War.

As this marks the 50th anniversary, I would urge all members to thank those who served in this and other wars—especially, in my riding, Mr Douglas.

CHARITIES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Earlier today in private members' business, my Bill 64, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fund-raising activities of legitimate charities, passed with the support of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, my colleagues, members of the third party, and four members of the government. I want to thank them for that support and I want to thank all the charities that distributed petitions and supported that this bill be moved to second reading and to committee.

I want to assure the members present, and those who didn't support it, that the only reason it was brought forward was that there is some inconsistency in the province in the way municipalities give approval to charities to do fundraising activities.

It's my hope that this bill will move forward, with discussion and, even though it's a short bill, with amendments if necessary, so that there won't be any doubt that we, as a Legislature, support charities in the province of Ontario, for a variety of reasons for supporting the charity that is endorsed, so that there be no doubt we're all behind them, so that the law won't interfere with them, and so that we will be able to assist the charities in this province.

DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF NIAGARA

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This government's disdain for democracy exposes itself frequently, and more frequently than ever. The District School Board of Niagara had a problem. There was a vacancy and no Welland representative on that board because the acclaimed candidate regrettably died before the election itself, too late for any other candidates to file nomination papers. The board very much wanted the permission and the assistance of the Ministry of Education in holding a by-election so that the representative for Welland on that Niagara district board would be a democratically elected one, as it should be.

The board considered the matter once again on December 5. The next day, December 6, they commenced their phone calls to the minister's office, seeking an audience with the minister, Ms Ecker, or some of her senior staff to get some consultation and assistance in addressing this serious problem of democracy on the board in Niagara. Those phone calls were futile. Notwithstanding persistent phone calls from the district board of education in Niagara, they couldn't get past the scheduling assistant, Ms Fran Hauseman.

An answer was needed from the minister before December 12. It's too late, Minister. You screwed up. You blew it. You've imposed a situation on the District School Board of Niagara that compels them, rather than going the by-election route, to merely appoint a member representing the city of Welland. You, Minister, are responsible with your dereliction of duty, with your disdain for democracy, with your lack of concern about public education, for the problems that are being created

in Niagara with respect to democratic representation of the people of Welland on that board.

SIMCOE NORTH WINTER ACTIVITIES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'd like to take this opportunity to invite all Ontarians to enjoy a winter vacation in beautiful Simcoe North. Located between the shores of Georgian Bay and Lake Simcoe, we in Simcoe North are blessed once again with snowfalls that have left the region a true winter wonderland.

The Horseshoe Valley and Mount St Louis-Moonstone ski resorts offer some of the provinces best downhill, alpine and snowboarding. If you prefer to cross-country ski through miles of beautiful forestry, come visit Hardwood Hills or some of the scenic trails in the Lafontaine area.

Snowmobile clubs throughout our region have been busy all summer building better trails and bridges to make snowmobiling safer and more convenient to those who wish to snowmobile locally and to those who wish to be connected to the provincial trail system.

If you prefer a winter indoor sport, come participate in a curling bonspiel in Orillia, Coldwater, Midland or Penetanguishene. All have excellent facilities and welcome you. If you are a hockey enthusiast, either as a spectator or a player, the ice hockey rinks are always hosting tournaments and games for people of all ages. Other activities may include ice fishing, public skating and figure skating.

For accommodation and food, there is a wonderful selection of bed and breakfasts either in quaint urban settings or in rustic country settings. There are hotels, motels, resorts and inns scattered across Simcoe North.

Our region is within one and a half hours of the GTA and two four-lane highways, 11 and 400, wind their way Simcoe North.

Call any of our chamber of commerce offices or a tourism office for more information. I welcome you to enjoy a Canadian winter destination in beautiful Simcoe North.

FEDERAL AID WITH HEATING COSTS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I rise today to address the issue of rapidly rising heating costs and to commend the federal government for taking action, not just talking about the problem.

At the onset of what is shaping out to be a frigid, snowy winter with fuel costs literally skyrocketing, the federal government is actually doing something concrete about it. Yesterday, federal Finance Minister Paul Martin confirmed Ottawa's commitment to provide timely heating expense relief for eligible families and individuals in a time of great need. Beginning January 31, cheques will be in the mail to low- and modest-income Canadians. Married and common-law couples, as well as single-parent families, will get \$250. Individuals will receive \$125.

1340

I want an unqualified assurance today in this Legislature from the Ministry of Community and Social Services that it will honour this commitment from Ottawa to all eligible Canadians. Why? Because we've all seen how this government operates; for example, clawing back, dollar for dollar, national child tax benefits from social assistance and disability benefits, treating it like it was nothing more than found money for the province, taking money from the most vulnerable in our society, the poor and those with disabilities. This simply cannot and will not be tolerated.

Do not even think about this federal relief as a potential provincial money grab. This is federal money intended to help people in need. This year, I would prefer not to have to call the Minister of Community and Social Services a Scrooge, so please keep your hands off this money. It is intended for all Canadians, not for this province's already bulging coffers.

DON MESSER TRIBUTE IN NEWMARKET

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today to pay tribute to a Canadian legend. For 10 years, the most popular show on Canadian television was the Don Messer Jubilee, even more popular than Hockey Night—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry to interrupt. We'll start over if we could. I'm sorry. Some of the members were still carrying on. It's not fair to the member.

Mrs Munro: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I rise today to pay tribute to a Canadian legend. For 10 years, the most popular show on Canadian television was the Don Messer Jubilee, even more popular than Hockey Night in Canada. Sorry, hockey fans. The show began on radio in the 1930s and continued until 1971. The Jubilee gang included Marg Osborne and Charlie Chamberlain. Now, with a little help from two fiddling champions, it is being revived as a travelling stage show.

Memories of a Don Messer Jubilee, starring two-time Canadian fiddle champ Scott Woods and Ontario champion Mark Sullivan, performed on December 8 at the Newmarket Theatre. Woods and Sullivan were joined by Messer alumni Sandy Hoyt, the Hamilton-area broadcaster who was the host of the show from 1969 to 1971, and singers Tom Leadbeater and Marie Gogo. The program included Messer's evergreen jigs and reels, seasonal songs, and a fitting rendition of the TV show's Butchta style dancing. Champion step dancer Laura Jarvis was featured in the Newmarket show.

I know that all of us will certainly appreciate the opportunity to see this revised edition.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I rise today to talk to all the members of this assembly about

one of the duties we have remaining in the time left of this Legislature, with only four more days of sitting after today, and that is to address the situation in the high schools of this province. Each member elected to this body bears responsibility for what is happening in short-changing the students of this province. We have in front of us a possibility to do something about it.

Earlier this term, I invited each and every member of this Legislature, in a non-partisan fashion, to do something very basic: attend a school in their riding for a day. I'm pleased to tell you that every single member of the Liberal caucus has done that. Fourteen members only from the government caucus have at least put it on their agenda.

The important thing is that people are looking for more than that. The parents and students want peace in the schools. They want a solution. The Ontario Principals' Council tells us that 76% of schools have little or no extracurricular activity. There is an opportunity today to do something about it. Today we are seeking the non-partisan support of the members opposite to put in place something that will actually bring back extracurricular activities, actually bring some solace to the parents and the students who have been made to suffer because of provincial policies. We will see, I think, in each of the communities in each of our ridings, based on the response from each of the members opposite and the members in every part of this House, how much they really want to put students first.

LAKEFIELD'S 125th ANNIVERSARY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am very proud of the many communities in my riding of Peterborough and the hard work of the many volunteers who give so much toward making the community alive in spirit and uniqueness.

This year, 2000, Lakefield celebrated its 125th anniversary. The Lakefield Special Events Committee was formed to encourage, coordinate and promote events and activities that celebrate the community's unique heritage as we move into the new millennium. Many community groups and individuals have been hard at work on an exciting range of projects sure to appeal to everyone who lives in or visits their community.

The main project being coordinated by the SEC has been the development of a trail network, travelling 5.5 kilometres throughout the village of Lakefield. The trail will be ideal for walking, cycling, rollerblading, cross-country skiing, and so on. Along the trail will be information kiosks and gazebos, benches, trees, historical information and directional signage. The trail will eventually be linked to the Trans-Canada Trail upon completion of the County Road 32-River Road section of the trail.

I invite all members of this House to visit the community of Lakefield or any the communities in my riding

of Peterborough to witness communities that are alive in spirit with entertaining things to do and see.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin reports by committees, there are some pages who will be coming back next week for our extra week and there are some who are unable to do that, so for some of the pages today will be the last day. I'm sure all members would like to join in thanking this wonderful group of pages for their help over the last few weeks.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on general government and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards / Projet de loi 147, Loi portant révision du droit relatif aux normes d'emploi.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1347 to 1352.

The Speaker: Would the members kindly take their seats, please.

Mr Gilchrist has moved adoption of the report of the standing committee on general government respecting Bill 147, An Act to revise the law related to employment standards.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Snobelen, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Jackson, Cameron	Spina, Joseph
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Sterling, Norman W.
Clark, Brad	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tasca, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	Young, David
Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Kennedy, Gerard	McMeekin, Ted
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Parsons, Ernie
Christopherson, David	Kwinter, Monte	Peters, Steve
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Phillips, Gerry
Cleary, John C.	Marchese, Rosario	Pupatello, Sandra
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 27.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FLAGS AT HALF-MAST ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000

SUR LES DRAPEAUX EN BERNE

Mr Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 164, An Act to require that flags be flown at half-mast to honour Ontario police officers and correctional services officers slain in the line of duty / Projet de loi 164, Loi exigeant la mise en berne des drapeaux en l'honneur des agents de police et des agents de services correctionnels de l'Ontario tués dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions.

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

The member, for a short statement.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): Thank you, Speaker, and I thank Heather Whitlox for delivering the bill to you.

We are all aware of the commendable job carried out by police officers and correctional officers day after day in Ontario. When one of these officers is killed in the line of duty, it is with great remorse that we are required to say goodbye. A way to honour these officers one last time is to require that all Ontario provincial buildings fly their flags at half-mast immediately following the tragedy of their passing.

While there's a long-standing tradition and an accepted protocol for the flying of flags at half-mast in this country, there is currently no legislation requiring this practice to occur. That is what the flags at half-mast bill will do here in Ontario.

STUDENTS FIRST ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 ACCORDANT LA PRIORITÉ AUX ÉLÈVES

Mr McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to restore goodwill and positive learning conditions in Ontario's schools / Projet de loi 165, Loi visant à restaurer la bonne volonté et des conditions d'apprentissage positives dans les écoles de l'Ontario.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The leader of the official opposition, for a short statement.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

The short title of this act says everything about it. It's called the Students First Act. The purpose is to address the waning goodwill inside our high schools. My hope is that through its passage we can begin to recreate a positive learning climate, which the Education Improvement Commission told us just recently was so desperately missing.

My bill provides a plan for government and teachers to come together to improve education and to restore extracurricular activities for our students, and by so doing put our children first.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow for the singing of our national anthem, O Canada, at the beginning of daily proceedings of this House.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

1400

PROMISE MADE
PROMISE BROKEN ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000
SUR UNE PROMESSE NON TENUE

Mr Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act respecting accountability for barriers impeding people with disabilities from full participation in the life of Ontario / Projet de loi 166, Loi concernant la responsabilité à l'égard des obstacles qui entravent la pleine participation des personnes handicapées à la vie de l'Ontario.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):

Every day this province goes without the promised Ontarians with Disabilities Act, tax dollars are being misused to create yet another barrier, impeding the disabled community from fully participating in our society. Every new barrier adds to the bill that taxpayers will have to pay to remove the same barrier later. The removal of existing barriers is vital. The continued construction of new barriers is obscene. Ontarians need to know how much of their money is being wasted by this government.

This bill will require that where any new barriers are constructed with government of Ontario money, there shall be a public sign posted in plain view stating, "Your Ontario Tax Dollars at Waste: This is a new barrier impeding Ontarians with disabilities, which Premier Mike Harris helped finance with your tax dollars."

In addition, all advertising paid for, directly or indirectly, in whole or in part, by Ontario taxpayers' dollars shall have the following prominently displayed in print or in the spoken word, as the case may be, and in closed captioning: "This advertisement is brought to you by the Ontario government, which has broken its promises to enact a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act."

Mike Harris's living legacy to Ontario is more and more barriers paid for by hard-working taxpayers. The short title of this act is Promise Made Promise Broken Act, 2000.

MEMBERS' OATH
OF ALLEGIANCE ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR LE SERMENT
D'ALLÉGEANCE DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr Agostino moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 167, An Act to provide for an Oath of Allegiance for the Members of the Legislative Assembly / Projet de loi 167, Loi prévoyant un serment d'allégeance pour les députés à l'Assemblée législative.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): As it now stands in legislation, as members are sworn into office they are required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Queen, Her Majesty Elizabeth II, which I believe is quite appropriate. What this bill would do is also add Canada to this oath of allegiance. It is now illegal for us as members of the Legislative Assembly if we include Canada in the oath of allegiance. This will allow the inclusion of Canada without taking anything away from Her Majesty Elizabeth II and the oath as it now stands. I urge this House to support this for second and third readings down the line.

PROHIBITING PROFITING
FROM RECOUNTING CRIMES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 INTERDISANT
LES GAINS TIRÉS DU RÉCIT
D'ACTES CRIMINELS

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 168, An Act to protect victims by prohibiting profiting from recounting of crime / Projet de loi 168, Loi

visant à protéger les victimes en interdisant les gains tirés du récit d'actes criminels.

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

The Attorney General for a short statement?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I'll speak to it during ministers' statements, Speaker.

SUPPLY ACT, 2000

LOI DE CRÉDITS DE 2000

Mr Sterling moved, on behalf of Mr Eves, first reading of the following bill:

Bill 169, An Act to authorize the payment of certain amounts for the Public Service for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2001 / Projet de loi 169, Loi autorisant le paiement de certaines sommes destinées à la fonction publique pour l'exercice se terminant le 31 mars 2001.

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

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): This is commonly referred to as the Supply Act. It is the formal approval by the Legislative Assembly of all the money that is spent by the government of Ontario over the year. This follows the process, first, of the budget back in May, a committee hearing estimates over the past year and finally, yesterday or the day before, the concurrence by this assembly in the estimates process that was done in committee.

This bill gives the government the right to spend some \$56 billion in accordance with those estimates and the process that has gone on.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Hon Jim Flaherty (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Our government stands on the side of victims. During the past five years, we have taken a leadership role in assisting victims of crime and holding criminals accountable. We have created the first-ever Office for Victims of Crime and asked this Legislature to make the office a permanent advisory agency, and we have expanded victims' services across the province.

Today, with the introduction of the Prohibiting Profiting from Recounting Crimes Act, we are taking another step to assist victims of crime and fulfill our budget and Blueprint commitments to strengthen victims' rights. If the bill is passed, it would take the profit out of crime by allowing for the seizure of the proceeds convicted crim-

inals may get from recounting their crimes in books or reviews.

There is a specific focus to the bill. It targets forfeiture of profits being sought by criminals from recounting their own crimes. Criminals should not be able to profit from their crimes by revictimizing victims. On the approval of the court, any money generated by a criminal who has written or recounted his or her crime would be forfeited and a fund would be established to compensate the victims of the crime from the forfeited proceeds. If the legislation is passed, Ontario would be the only province in Canada to protect victims in this way.

This bill is supported by victims' advocates groups. I'm sure they would tell you that victims of crime live in fear that criminals can revictimize them and make money doing so. Victims of crime—those persons directly affected by the crime and their spouses, children or family members—should not have to experience this agony. They deserve to be protected. This bill would help to accomplish that.

Under this bill, publishers and other media companies who enter into contracts with a criminal for recounting his or her crimes would have a duty to report the contract or face a fine of up to \$50,000. Officers and directors of the company could also be held personally liable for failing to report the contract.

This bill would apply to anyone convicted of a serious criminal offence and someone acting on that person's behalf, such as a spouse, partner, children or other related persons. It would also have a broad application in terms of the offences it would cover. Anyone convicted of any violent indictable offence with a maximum sentence of five years or more would be included. In addition, it would include anyone convicted of a serious property offence under the Criminal Code as prescribed by regulation.

1410

A wide variety of contracts would also be included in the bill to further protect victims of crime. It would include all contracts covering the use of documents that may be related to the crime, an interview with the convicted person or an appearance of the convicted person to recount his or her crime.

It is clear that Ontario continues to lead the way in protecting victims of crime. This bill again shows that Ontario is taking a leadership role in the area of victims' rights.

I urge my colleagues to support victims of crime by supporting this bill. I acknowledge and thank the foundation work that was done with respect to victims of crime and the bill that received royal assent in 1995 by the Honourable Cam Jackson, and before that the private members' bills that preceded that bill by Bud Wildman and three or four times by James Renwick of the NDP, beginning in 1982, I believe.

I urge all colleagues on all sides of the House to support this bill, just as the federal Liberal MPs supported a bill that was rebuffed by the Senate a few years ago dealing with the same type of issues.

I urge my colleagues also, of course, around the House to give the bill prompt passage.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The bill in question in many ways repackages and, I think it's fair to say, builds upon Bill 210, which was mentioned in the minister's statement. That bill received royal assent in December 1994. On third reading it received unanimous consent from this House. The Liberal caucus supported Bill 210, and we'll look closely at the legislation that you've just handed over to me.

I'll say this: if in fact victims of crime do not themselves have to do the work of trying to recoup profits from criminals recounting of crime, then that would of course be a positive step and we would want to support that positive step.

The victims' rights movement obviously is primarily about ensuring that victims are not revictimized. It's difficult to talk about the specifics and the hypotheticals as to whom this bill might affect, because of course we end up renaming the people who caused the reign of terror in the province of Ontario. I know the minister was reluctant to do that in his media conference, and I understand why, but the reality is that we are going to have to face the fact that there's nothing we can do in this House to stop a film about Bernardo and Homolka going forward. There's nothing we can do to stop that further revictimization of those victims. I just want everybody to understand in this House, because I heard it from the minister in the media conference, and I agree, from looking at the outline of the legislation, that this bill will in no way stop that film from going forward, and none of us should be fooled into thinking otherwise.

The victims' rights movement, rather, if it's going to have real teeth, needs tools. We need to give victims tools so that, for example, they can recoup profits from criminals. The minister wasn't able to give an example of how that might have helped a victim in the last few years, and I look forward to hearing examples and real instances from the minister, because he has to defend this bill and we on this side of the House need to know that this isn't just much ado about a hypothetical. We need to know that this is not just about headline grabbing but rather this is about advancing the cause of victims' rights, because that's what we are very serious about on this side of the House.

Victims' rights, obviously, are not monopolized by any government administration in this province or in this country. The United Nations Declaration of Basic Principles of Justice for Victims of Crime and Abuse of Power was passed in 1985. It talked about providing access to justice and fair treatment, providing restitution, providing compensation and assistance. Along those lines, we on this side of the House have looked for and sought from the government real, enforceable victims' rights, and sadly we have not got them with respect to their Victims' Bill of Rights, which we've heard time and time again has been held by the Ontario Court of Justice to be unenforceable in any way.

We look forward to and hope the government will move on all the important recommendations in the June 2000 report on victims' services in Ontario, *A Voice for Victims*, because the vast majority of those recommendations have not been put forward.

Last, we can use our space here in the House and outside to represent our communities in some fashion. If we can't, by legislation, stop these films from happening, we can let the people of our communities know what we think about them. I know that one member on this side of the House, the member for St Catharines, has done a lot of that and has done a lot in speaking to his community to try to heal those wounds.

I'd like to hear from the member for St Catharines now, Mr Speaker.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I intend to support this legislation because I believe it focuses on an issue that is extremely important; that is, someone making a profit from a crime by being able to recount the story of a horrible crime. Unlike the Attorney General or the critic for the opposition, I will say that Paul Bernardo should not make a plug nickel from telling his story to anybody.

If this bill will act as a deterrent, as the Attorney General hopes it will, to people trying to set up such an interview and such a contract, then it will be a positive step forward. It provides an enforcement mechanism for previous legislation that we have. I wish we could stop a commercial film being made about the Paul Bernardo story, and perhaps the weight of public opinion will allow us to do that. But I think this bill is a step in the right direction.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I caution my colleagues to be more careful in their enthusiasm, albeit suppressed, for this legislation. Take note that the bill proposed today repeals the Victims' Right to Proceeds of Crime Act. It specifically repeals that legislation, which this assembly passed in 1994, that would guarantee that if and when there are profits by criminals as a result of recounting their crimes, those profits become the property of the victims of those crimes and rather would transfer those proceeds and profits to a broader-based general fund that remains in the hands of this government, the dispensation of which remains with this government.

The Attorney General had yet another press conference. Last week he was Eliot Ness. Today, rather than crusading against organized crime, he resurrected legislation that already exists, that has already been agreed to, that was passed in 1994, and tries to leave the impression that somehow he is on the side of victims this time, not like when it came to the Victims' Bill of Rights—he was nowhere to be seen when it came to the real rights of victims in this province—not like when it comes to adequate policing in this province, where we still suffer fewer police officers per capita than in 1994; not with respect to access to courts, which are increasingly backlogged and overcrowded. His new fees for access to civil courts have discouraged access to those courts on a

repeated basis by any number of victims of crimes who want to seek redress in those courts.

The reality of today's press conference, that slapdash bit of legislation we are presented with today, was the well-deserved embarrassment by this government for its refusal to in any way take any steps to avoid, deter and put the blocks and brakes to a Hollywood dramatization of the most despicable crimes that have been committed in this province, dare I say in this country.

Don't you people understand that some Hollywood production company purports to hire glamorous Hollywood actors and actresses to tape a film here in the city of Toronto that will have the net effect of glamorizing the despicable horrors imposed by Bernardo and Homolka on their young victims and their surviving families?

Howard Hampton has called upon this government to amend its budget to ensure that not a penny of Ontario Film Development Corp money goes to that film that is proposed to be filmed here in Ontario, here in Toronto. This government doesn't want to take the steps necessary to do that.

This government is acknowledging that it is prepared to help finance a Hollywood glamorization of the Bernardo-Homolka atrocities. This government won't take one step toward calling upon Toronto's film development office to ensure that the producers of that type of film are not welcome—never mind just here in the city of Toronto but anywhere in the province of Ontario.

1420

This Attorney General, who talks a big game about victims, is prepared to roll over, throw the doors open and lay down the welcome mat for any Hollywood producer who wants to employ glamorous Hollywood stars to film and portray the despicable acts and crimes of Bernardo and Homolka.

This government won't join Howard Hampton in standing firmly in telling those producers of those types of films that their pornographic production may well be legally made in other jurisdictions but they're not going to be tolerated here in the province of Ontario, and that this province isn't going to have any part of any film depicting, with Hollywood stars, the murders of those young women down in Niagara region and the atrocities committed to them and the continued victimization of their families.

This Attorney General has abandoned victims from day one. This Attorney General tries to deflect attention away from his miserable performance on behalf of victims or, quite frankly, on behalf of safe communities in this province, with his phony-baloney press conferences, his slap-dash legislation, his attempts to direct attention over there when the reality is that victims are left exposed and vulnerable because your Victim's Bill of Rights was declared clearly to be a big zero when it came to any rights for victims.

Your promise to restore rights to victims has been broken day after day, week after week, year after year. You've got no business telling this Legislative Assembly

or the people of Ontario that you give a tinker's damn about victims. You've proven it time and time again.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My first question today is for the Minister of Education. Minister, you will know that I provided you with an advance copy of my bill and, in fact, I went so far as to put you on notice that I intended to ask you about this very bill today in order to launch this in as non-partisan a manner as we possibly can.

My peace plan, and my bill being part of that, is designed to improve education and to restore extracurricular activities for Ontario students. I believe it's win-win-win.

You want teachers to teach 1,250 minutes a week? My bill does that.

Teachers don't want to teach an extra class. My bill does that.

Students want more time with their teacher and they want their extracurricular activities back. My bill does that as well.

My simple question to you, on behalf of Ontario students, is, will you support both my peace plan and this bill?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I know at this Christmas time of year it is appropriate to give gifts. One is supposed to consider the intent of the gift and not the substance of the gift. I thank the honourable member for the intent of this particular gift, but with all due respect to the work that he and OSSTF have done on this, the gift is just not up to the task of dealing with the challenges that are in our classrooms.

Yes, the honourable member talks about 1,250 minutes, which is what the government has established in its legislation, but I don't think we can solve the problem of decreasing teacher workload by increasing the student workload, which is what this does.

Secondly, he recommends public audit processes, and, with all due respect, we already have public audit processes, both for school boards and for the government.

Finally, he talks about having experts to give advice to the government in some kind of committee. I think that's an excellent suggestion and I'll certainly consider it.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I want to impress upon you the urgency of the situation. You don't have to take my word for it; just take the word of the Education Improvement Commission. Recently it stated in their report that "students believe that the ongoing tensions among the Ministry of Education, the school boards and their teachers have affected their education" and they're concerned for themselves and for the students who will follow them.

The commission goes on to add, "We cannot overstate our concern about the reduction in extracurricular activities. If the current impasse continues, it is clear that more students will drop out and fewer still will succeed." Finally, the report "urges the Ministry of Education to immediately renew dialogue with teachers' federations and consult with all education partners, as appropriate, with a view to immediate reinstatement of extracurricular activities."

Madam Minister, we have been consulting for months with school boards, teachers, students, parents and principals, and, in keeping with the request of your own Education Improvement Commission, we have acted immediately. I put forward a peace plan today. We can pass this before this House rises and take a giant step forward in the interests of our students. Why will you not support my peace plan?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I find it interesting, now that we have 71% of our bargaining units with signed agreements, where unions and school boards sat down around the table and signed agreements, that the honourable member wants us, before Christmas, in the next couple of days, to pass a bill that completely upends all those collective agreements. I find that rather strange, coming from the honourable member.

I agree with him that disruptions in classrooms and politics in the classroom are wrong. They undermine student achievement and should not be happening.

I would also like to remind the honourable member that there is no need to renew dialogue, because we are and continue to dialogue with not only the teacher unions but also with the school boards, the parent groups and all the other important education partners to find suggestions.

The other thing is that this government campaigned on setting higher standards in our classrooms to get improved student achievement. The honourable members across the way may not want to thank teachers for the hard work they've done to increase student achievement in this province, but the international tests show they have—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, resolving this mess is going to take a conciliatory approach. It's going to require a compromise on your part, on the part of teachers and on the part of school boards, and it's got to be done in the interests of our students. I don't hear anything conciliatory coming from you right now. As the father of three children in high school today, I can tell you they're not getting the kind of education to which they are entitled, and the same thing applies for students right across this province.

My plan is far from perfect. I admit that. I am prepared to work with you and anybody else who has a genuine commitment to making sure we put the interests of our students first.

Madam Minister, I implore you, on behalf of Ontario students, and in keeping with the recommendation of

your own Education Improvement Commission: why can you not sit down with our teachers, our school boards and all other education partners and consider my proposal? It is relatively simple, relatively neat and relatively tidy. All we're talking about is making teachers teach eight more minutes for each of the three periods. It fulfills your mandate that they teach for 1,250 minutes, and it meets the interests of our students. Why can't we put students first in our province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: When we brought back-to-work legislation into this House to put the students first in Hamilton-Wentworth, the honourable member certainly didn't put the students first. He sided with the teacher unions and opposed that legislation.

I agree with the honourable member that compromise is extremely important in any sector, including the education sector. That's why this spring, when the unions said the workload standards as we currently define them meant seven out of eight and they wanted six out of eight, we changed the policy and put new money into the system to make it six and a half out of eight. It was a compromise.

Second, we put it in legislation in a way that would allow unions and boards to recognize the varying workloads of teachers. A teacher who does extracurricular activities should have that reflected in their workload. They chose—

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up.

1430

OAK RIDGES MORaine

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. As we speak, there is a David and Goliath struggle happening on the Oak Ridges moraine. Many of the smaller communities there are doing everything they can to withstand the tide of developers who are insisting on proceeding with massive development on the Oak Ridges moraine. At stake is the very future of one of Canada's most important aquifers.

On November 13 the people of King township voted in a green council. That council, acting in accordance with the expressed wishes of the electorate, recently said, "We don't want to go ahead with that big pipe sewer system that threatens widespread development on the moraine." I can tell you that the lawyers for the developers are already sharpening their swords, and the mayor herself expressed a real concern that they're going to be in for a long and expensive legal battle.

My question to you, Minister: what are you going to do to come to the assistance of the people living in King township to protect them and the moraine against developers?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I refer the question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'd be happy to refer the honourable

member to the 1996 provincial policy statement, which indicates that natural heritage features in areas such as that have to be protected from incompatible development. Development is not permitted, according to the provincial policy statement, on significant wetlands south and east of the Canadian Shield, or significant portions of the habitat of endangered and threatened species. Developers have to show there is no negative impact on the natural features or on the ecological function for which the area is identified.

We're doing our part to ensure that the views that I think are held by all Ontarians, when it comes to protecting the natural features of our environment in an economy that is growing, are maintained, and we would hasten to add that the honourable member can do his part as well.

Mr McGuinty: I directed my question to the Minister of the Environment on the assumption that, if anybody over there would, he would be the one who would stand up in defence of the environment in Ontario. I guess once again we were sadly mistaken on this side of the House to proceed on the assumption that you were in fact going to stand up for the environment.

The issue in King township, as you well know, Minister of the Environment, is not an isolated one. Property taxpayers in Uxbridge, Aurora and Richmond Hill are footing the bill for millions of dollars in legal fees in a brave attempt to keep unchecked development at bay on the moraine. The residents of East Gwillimbury, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Caledon East and Bewdley are next, and they can't win these battles alone. Anybody watching this must now be deeply disappointed and feeling dejected, because when I put the question to you on their behalf on the assumption you would stand up for the environment, you fobbed it off to somebody else.

I'll ask you again, on behalf of all those people living on the moraine who want to stand up in defence of the moraine for future generations of Ontarians, why is it you won't help them out?

Hon Mr Clement: Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, this government, as the honourable knows, is very concerned about the natural environment—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Come to order, please. You're not going to shout across. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: In this government, my colleague in environment and myself, and the Minister of Natural Resources and all other line ministers who have concern over this, are working in tandem to develop not only what we have now, but future plans to ensure our water is protected, our species are protected and our land features are protected in an economy that is growing.

I think that's the key issue here. When he was in government, they didn't have that problem because growth and development was not happening because they drove the economy into recession. Here on this side of the House our challenge, which we accept, is how to keep the jobs growing, how to keep the economy moving, and balance that with an environment that is there for the

present generation and future generations. We think the municipalities have the tools to do that, we think we have the tools to do that, and we are working together, in concert, to get that done.

Mr McGuinty: This minister's response is most telling. I ask a question about the Oak Ridges moraine and our collective responsibility to save it for future generations, and he talks about the need for development and economic growth. That says everything about where this government is coming from on this issue.

I have a special invitation to extend to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, join us in protecting the moraine. Just assume your responsibility, no matter how much you may find that difficult to do. Assume your proper and appropriate responsibility and begin to stand up for the environment. We've already done the work for you. My colleague Michael Colle introduced a bill in this House, Bill 115, An Act to conserve and protect the Oak Ridges Moraine. It's there; the work is done. Together we can help protect the moraine for the generations that are there today and generations yet to come.

My invitation to you, Minister: why not join us? Let's fight together and let's save the moraine.

Hon Mr Clement: Let me get beyond the rhetoric and into the facts. The facts are that as a result of the Mike Harris policies that have guaranteed jobs and opportunity for millions of Ontarians, the population growth in the GTA over the next 20 years is going to increase by 40%. Two million more residents are going to reside in our region. Maybe the Ottawa member has a secret plan that we don't know about as to where these people are going to be housed affordably. If he has a plan, he should share it with this House. In the meantime, I challenge him to go beyond empty rhetoric and join us to make sure we have growth and opportunity for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren, and that we protect the environment for future generations. When he has a plan, he has the right to stand up here.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Acting Premier. In the spirit of the season, I want to ask you to ask your government to do something meaningful for working families in this province. The Minister of Municipal Affairs just said that we have a growing economy here. Will you raise the minimum wage? For six long years, you have frozen the working poor out of a fair and decent minimum wage while home and heating costs have soared. There are twice as many children in working poor families across Canada today since 1989, when the government declared war on child poverty. Minimum wage earners in Ontario need another 44 cents an hour just to make up for the higher cost of living.

We're asking you here today to give working poor families the best gift of all. Will you raise the minimum wage?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The Minister of Labour wants to answer this.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): The minimum wage issue we dealt with on a few occasions in this House. The response is consistent, and I'll reiterate it to you today.

We are in the top three, I think, provinces in the country as far as minimum wage is concerned. We pay in the top three provinces: British Columbia and Quebec, and then Ontario. We have a very competitive minimum wage rate. It's a rate that is generous compared to the other provinces that are less than us.

Furthermore, you talk about not getting an increase. You have to take it in a block of time. In the 10 years during the 1990s, the minimum wage was raised by 37%. For a 10-year period, a 37% increase is a fairly significant amount of money. We believe it must maintain a certain relationship with the competitive forces around you, as well as being fair. Now, being in the top three is fair, and a 37% increase during the 1990s we also think is a reasonable increase. So our position is maintaining the same.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm proud to have been part of a government that recognized the needs of working families and raised the minimum wage five times over those five years. On the contrary, Minister, under your government these same families have had their wages frozen for five years, a five-year period where this province has seen quite substantial economic growth.

Campaign 2000 recently reported that there are 470,000 children in Ontario who live in poverty. One in three of those children comes from a family who is in a working-poor circumstance. Their parents are working and they still can't make ends meet. Your government made life more difficult for these working-poor families because you took away the drug cards from families who could scarcely afford to pay the cost of prescription drugs.

You have an opportunity now, in a time of surplus, to do something for children from working-poor families. I ask you again, will you raise the minimum wage?

1440

Hon Mr Stockwell: You're preferring to pick out some selective statistics. The fact remains that when we cut the taxes in this province, the main beneficiaries to the tax cuts were those who were earning at the lower end of the pay scale. They received the largest cuts in taxes. That can be directly related to more money in their pockets at the end of the day. This is not a complicated issue. It's very understandable. When you cut taxes, you pay less taxes, you have more money to spend. So by cutting taxes, we did what you didn't do: we used our money to raise the minimum wage; we created the surplus; we created the jobs; we caused the unemployment levels to go down. We used good, hard-working taxpayers' knowledgeable decisions to increase the

money those people were making at the lower end, not simply making universal decisions that cost us prosperity and job creation.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Minister, none of that holds up. You want to talk about prosperity? The United States economy has driven the boom in Canada, especially here in Ontario, and the fact of the matter is that they saw fit to raise their minimum wage twice and are now considering raising it a third time. That means their minimum wage is higher than our minimum wage, and that's our greatest trading partner, yet you want to talk about competitiveness with surrounding jurisdictions.

Earlier you wanted to talk about paying taxes and you mentioned blocks of time. I'll talk to you about paying taxes and blocks of time. In the last quarter, the 173 major public companies in Canada made \$7.6 billion. That's up 20% from a year ago. You're giving those corporations \$4 billion more in tax cuts but you don't see fit to give the working poor in this province at least a modest income.

Minister, by no measure can you justify not increasing the minimum wage to the working poor in Ontario. The NDP calls on you, Minister: raise the minimum wage. Share the wealth. Working people deserve their fair share of this economic boom.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Well, you'd better talk to your socialist buddies in BC, because the American economy didn't do anything for that province. Do you know what? On this side of the House "corporate profits" aren't dirty words like when you were in government. It's good to have profits; it's good to have prosperity; it's good to create jobs. You were raising the minimum wage. Nobody was working, for heaven's sake.

The Speaker: Sorry to interrupt. Minister, take a seat.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Last warning to the member for Hamilton West. If he continues, he's going to be out. Last warning.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Tax cuts create money for people to spend as they see fit. It's a good, reasonable and thoughtful public policy position. They create money for people to spend whether you're making X or Y. When you reduce taxes, you have more disposable income. The fact remains that this province has led the country in growth, has led every G8 nation—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take a seat. Last warning for the members for Nickel Belt and Niagara Centre. If you continue the shouting, you're going to be out.

Hon Mr Stockwell: It has led every G8 nation in growth. We've led them because we have had tax cuts that go directly into taxpayers' pockets, that they spend and they can use to create jobs. We have a fundamental philosophical disagreement. We believe in economic boom and prosperity; you believe in debts and deficits and despair. Welfare—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

SCHOOL EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): What a sad, sad place this is.

I have a question for the Minister of Education. You'll recall last week I asked you a question which had arisen out of the fact that the Education Improvement Commission said, "We've got a critical situation here," and urged you and other federations to solve it. I said to you that Earl Manners, the president of the OSSTF, says—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know you don't like him; I know that. But he wrote you a letter saying, "I want to meet with you and I have a mandate to solve this problem." So I asked you last week why haven't you set a date to meet with him.

I understand, since I asked that question, that your office is planning some meeting sometime in the future. I've got to tell you some of us were ministers, and if I felt, as a former minister, that something was really important, I would make the time. Knowing how important this question is, why haven't you set a time and a date yet?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education): I have actually found Mr Manners in one-on-one meetings to be personally quite charming. He presented me with a personally autographed photograph of himself some time ago.

I am quite prepared to meet with Mr Manners, and I should remind the honourable member that there is more than one teachers' union in this province. I'm quite prepared to meet with all of them. I do that on a regular basis. It is part of my job. We have a lot of issues we need to resolve. We can point to a number of considerable successes that that partnership has contributed to, but we also recognize that we have a number of significant problems we need to continue to work to resolve for the benefit of our students.

Mr Marchese: The situation is critical. Everybody is telling you, including the Education Improvement Commission, that you've got to solve it. Students are dropping out. As a result of not having activities, more and more students are dropping out. I suggest to you, Minister, that you have your own agenda. Let me tell you what that agenda is. I've told you before what that agenda is: you've got a plan, and this plan does not involve teachers doing extracurricular activities. Your plan is to say to boards, "You will be mandated to do them and you will find volunteers." I told you the last time I raised this question, a couple of weeks ago, that when you have volunteers doing it, you get more injuries, meaning more students will be injured. You'll do two things—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Mr Wettlaufer, what do you know? You're doing two things, Minister. With that plan, you'll escalate the confrontation with teachers and you will increase injuries to students. That is what I think your plan is, and you're avoiding a meeting with Earl Manners

because you're not looking for a real solution that would benefit teachers and students. Admit that you're doing this or deny it, but that is what I think your agenda is all about.

Hon Mrs Ecker: For the honourable member to think that any member in this House is somehow secretly planning, plotting to injure children, I find that rather offensive—very offensive. The only plan we have on this side of the House is for improved student achievement by setting higher standards, having a better curriculum, having a better report card and putting more money into classrooms. Yes, extracurricular activities should be services that our children are getting. I should remind the honourable member that today, as we speak, thousands of students are receiving extracurricular activities from thousands of teachers and community volunteers.

Again, I find it very offensive that he would question the commitment and the ability of community volunteers, most of them parents with children in the school. Many of those students are getting those activities and they are very important to them. Unfortunately, we still have teachers who are choosing to work to rule and we are going to continue to work to try and resolve that issue because those students deserve those activities.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Your government is downloading the life-and-death responsibility of ambulance services on to our unwilling municipal partners. You're doing this, by the way, against the advice of your own Who Does What commission. When I raised this issue in the House with the Premier, and in particular about the fact that municipalities are telling us that they are not ready, they will not be able to cope with this new responsibility, the Premier said, "It's not an issue. It's all under control. Municipalities can definitely handle this."

We learned from senior officials from the Ministry of Health, who told the public accounts committee today that out of 49 transfers of ambulance services to be completed by your own deadline—the very end of this year, December 31—only 18 are ready to go. That leaves 31 not ready. The ministry is taking the position that ready or not, those 31 transfers will be completed by the end of this year. Minister, do you understand that by so doing your government is going to endanger lives in Ontario?

1450

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I know the Leader of the Opposition has asked this question a number of times of the Minister of Health and she has responded to him.

I'd like to correct the record, first of all, that the responsibility is shared 50-50 by the province and the municipality. There are standards that have been developed to improve the level of service in this province. There's a working group that's working with our partners

and municipal representatives are on that. The fact that 18 are ready to go with these new improved standards in this new partnership of 50-50 is a good thing. If it takes a little longer to make sure it's done properly, the Minister of Health is doing that. I'm sure he's not advocating that some artificial deadline be imposed arbitrarily by this side of the House or this Legislature.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, it's your deadline. You've got 31 transfers to be completed in the next 10 working days. Ministry of Health officials have told us they intend to proceed with this. Do you know what else they're telling us? Notwithstanding the recommendation and good advice of the Provincial Auditor, who said you're going to have to spend \$100 million to make this work and to make sure people aren't jeopardized by this hasty transfer of responsibility, Ministry of Health officials are telling us that first they'll complete the transfers and then at some point in the future they'll talk money.

What are you doing here? Not only are you rushing the transfer, your government is doing it on the cheap. In the process you are going to undoubtedly jeopardize lives. Unfortunately I predict I will have to come back to this very question at some time in the future when something terrible happens. I'm asking you again: do you not understand, Minister, that by proceeding so hastily, by proceeding contrary to the advice of the experts who said you shouldn't be downloading this responsibility, and by not properly funding it, you are about to endanger Ontario lives?

Hon Mr Hodgson: The Leader of the Opposition fails to mention that it's a 50-50 partnership. The city of Toronto used to pay 100% of ambulance costs. Now we're paying 50% of it. I just want to make sure you get the facts right, that it's a partnership.

Also, when he quotes the Provincial Auditor, he fails to point out that Erik Peters pointed out this morning in health in public accounts, "The last point: I would really like to appreciate and put on the record the amount of work that was committed to be done by the ministry and the update they provided." He recognizes that there's a lot of work and that a lot of progress has taken place. Brad Clark, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health, is leading a working group and they're raising the standards for ambulance service in this province. They're spending more money than has ever been spent before, because we care about the health and safety of the residents. This is a partnership that will improve ambulance service delivery in this province.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. During the past several weeks, particularly since the last municipal election and the induction of the new Toronto council, city of Toronto officials have been in the media several times stating that the provincial government has downloaded a range of costs on the city that the property tax base cannot cover over the long haul. The city has said that Toronto needs a new deal or it

will go bankrupt. Could the minister please respond to these allegations.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I thank the honourable member for Scarborough Centre for the question. Indeed we have heard recently from both Mayor Lastman and CAO Mike Garrett about the state of Toronto's finances. I want to assure this House that Toronto is in a good position, because of the amalgamation that took place in 1997, to continue to find the efficiencies and savings required to deliver better services to Toronto taxpayers. In fact, in Toronto's 2000 budget, it indicated that the city achieved over \$137 million in annualized savings due to amalgamation so far, and Toronto has sufficient tax room to provide more services. By reducing the education portion of the property tax by \$560 million, this government gave that additional property tax revenue room to the city.

Mayor Lastman says Toronto is the greatest city in the world, and indeed they have a chance for a fiscally sustainable future.

Ms Mushinski: I'm pleased that amalgamation has indeed resulted in a number of savings, Minister, and I can assure you it has resulted in many tax cuts at the municipal level for constituents in my riding of Scarborough Centre.

As you are aware, of course, Toronto is the economic engine of this province if not of Canada. My constituents are concerned about the future of the city. Could you tell this House what you are doing to make sure Toronto taxpayers are getting value for their hard-earned tax dollars and what the province has done to assist the city of Toronto through this period of change?

Hon Mr Clement: The answer to that question would be that we have understood that to realize all the savings with respect to amalgamation does take time. Therefore, we have provided to the city significant financial assistance over the years to support the transition and restructuring needs: a \$50-million grant in 1998 and \$200 million in interest-free loans in 1998 and 1999. Indeed, the city has benefited through other provincial government policies: a \$76-million reduction in its public health and land ambulance costs as a result of the province cost-sharing those costs 50-50, a \$200-million reduction in costs as a result of municipal social assistance and social housing costs through pooling in the GTA, a \$250-million rehabilitation program on 401, which Minister Turnbull has shepherded through.

These are just some of the things that have been made available to the city, and indeed more has to be done. But it has to be done by the city. I heard recently that as of March 2000 the city had not collected \$418.2 million of tax arrears. Who's asleep at the switch there? We need their assistance. They've got to do their job—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. There's a

potential disaster, comparable to what happened in the town of Walkerton, waiting to happen in Ontario because of lack of regulations and because you don't have the staff to enforce any of the guidelines you have. I'm talking about the spread of sludge—that is, sewage treatment effluent—all over the farmlands of Ontario.

Here's what the mayor of Mono says: "To be blunt, the ministry's 'guidelines' governing sludge spreading border on being a joke. They need serious review and toughening up. Personally I have several major objections to what has been until now, 'acceptable' spreading practices. Winter spreading should be banned outright as there is no way the sludge permeates frosted soil. Similarly, spreading on pasture land has the potential to simply run off unless worked into the ground immediately after application. Finally, livestock must be kept off freshly 'sludged' land and that's not always happening." In addition to that, I can tell you it is sometimes being spread on water-drenched land.

Minister, you have a major problem out there right across Ontario. You are getting complaints, I'm getting complaints and individual councillors are getting complaints. Will you now commit to this House and to the people of Ontario that you will enact not guidelines but tough, enforceable, specific regulations dealing with the spread of sludge, and will you hire the necessary staff to be able to enforce those regulations?

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): This government is indeed committed to protecting and improving Ontario's environment by ensuring that tough environmental protection measures are followed. The events in Walkerton have drawn considerable media attention to the issue the member opposite has raised. I want to assure him that I, along with my colleagues the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, met with stakeholders on September 23 to discuss this very important issue.

I want to say to the member from St Catharines that we are currently reviewing the practices for the spreading of biosolids and septage as a part of the consultations on nutrient management stemming from the Barrett-Galt report that took place. As part of our review of the practices and protocols associated with biosolids and septage, we might well consider a registry of biosolid use in Ontario. My staff have been asked to bring forward any recommendations about how current practices can be improved.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?
1500

Mr Bradley: Virtually nothing is happening out there. What is happening is that you hear from people across the province, including those who write Better Farming magazine, December edition, that it's a disaster out there.

When you go into the Ministry of the Environment office to find somebody to enforce these regulations, you find people who used to be employees now disguised as empty chairs, because they don't exist any more. You have to hire the staff. It's labour intensive; I understand

that. There is also a problem with capacity, of storage. Think of Walkerton.

Walkerton was "faced with a problem that might well plague other communities going the sludge route. It has a massive concrete holding tank full of human waste and nowhere to legally put it. By next month"—this was in June—"the tank will be full."

"Asked what will be done with it," your ministry official said, "We don't know."

"The Walkerton sewage tank contains, among other things, the potentially virulent excrement of those hit by the killer bacteria, E coli 0157."

No doubt you've found something to do with the sludge that was in Walkerton. Think of all the other communities with that kind of sludge and the potential problems. Minister, do you not recognize this is a crisis? Will you now commit to promulgating immediately the necessary tough regulations and hiring the staff to enforce them?

Hon Mr Newman: Perhaps the member opposite didn't hear me when I answered his question the first time. The fact of the matter is we currently have a review underway within the Ministry of the Environment, right now, where we are looking at the spreading of biosolids and of septage as part of the consultations. We're obviously concerned if there are any trace amounts such as PCBs and sewage biosolids. That's why we are currently participating in a study with municipalities and the Water Environment Association of Ontario. The current requirements for the application of biosolids to agricultural lands are based on strict environmental protection measures and experience from many successful biosolids application projects over the past 25 years in this province.

The bottom line is that we have a review underway right now. We're looking at this very important issue.

GREAT LAKES WATER QUALITY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. As you know, the Great Lakes Charter is an agreement, signed by the Great Lakes Governors and the Premiers of Ontario and Quebec that serves to protect our shared Great Lakes waters. There is interest among people down my way because a significant portion of my riding is under Lake Erie.

I understand that a draft annex to the Great Lakes Charter has been developed to build on the strengths of the charter, while establishing a pathway toward a new binding arrangement. Minister, can you tell us a bit more about this draft document that the Council of Great Lakes Governors has made available for public comment?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member and congratulate him for getting his question in over the heckling of the Minister of Labour.

As I am sure the member knows, the Premier has been very supportive of the Great Lakes Charter and working

with the eight Governors in the United States and the Premier of Quebec, working together to protect, conserve, restore and improve the water quality of the Great Lakes. We remain committed to working with our partners to make sure that we strengthen the protection of the Great Lakes.

The Great Lakes Governors today released a draft Annex 2001, which seeks to expand the charter and seeks to expand our ability to control and improve the Great Lakes waterways. It seeks to retain water management authority within the basin. It wants to establish a common standard to review our proposed water uses and to strengthen our information as the foundation of our decision-making.

I think we've already made some great strides forward on that final point in the regional data management of our Great Lakes system.

Mr Barrett: Thank you, Minister, for that description of Annex 2001. I understand this draft document has been made available for public comment for 90 days, ending February 20, 2001. I also understand there are many positive elements to Annex 2001, such as promoting conservation and strengthening our shared information so future decisions on the management of our Great Lakes waters will enjoy the benefit of better, more up-to-date information.

However, I understand there remains some concern over the possibility of diversions on the US side of the Great Lakes, and this comes on the heels of several years of low water. Minister, could you speak to these concerns and tell this House and the people of Ontario how they can get involved and how they can make their views known.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I thank the member for the excellent question. Although the draft Annex will build on the strength of the charter and it serves as a bridge to even stronger commitments in the future, we do also have concerns. We believe that in some cases the diverting of water, even minor amounts of water, could result in negative effects on the Great Lakes. Let's be very clear: Ontario prohibits the transfer out of the Great Lakes basin by regulation. We continue to take a position that there should be no net loss of waters from the Great Lakes system. That's a position we've put to our partners and that our officials have put forward and will continue to do so.

I can say that we're very interested in hearing from the public on this matter, who have had a chance to read the draft. They can get hold of the Council of Great Lakes Governors directly—I know the Minister of Labour is waiting for this—by e-mail at cglg@cglg.org—and I can write that down for you, Chris—or by fax, which is horribly inconvenient, at 312-407-0038.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Minister, on the same day that you announced the gutting of the ONTC, the president of the agency, Mr John Wallace, left the ONTC. He refused to say if this was a planned departure or if he was leaving because he objected to your decision to dismantle the ONTC. What is clear is that Mr Wallace is the first of many, many ONTC employees who will now lose their jobs as a result of your decision to sell off these important transportation and telecommunication services in northeastern Ontario.

Minister, in order to determine if these employees are treated fairly as they are let go, will you table the details of Mr Wallace's exit package?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): As the House knows, the ONTC services improvement strategy was announced yesterday in North Bay, with a goal to improve the quality of services across the array of transportation and telecommunication initiatives in northeastern Ontario. Certainly the goal of that is, actually, to increase job creation in northeastern Ontario. I believe fundamentally in the job potential, the growth in northeastern Ontario. I want to make sure that the travel and telecommunication services are there to support that kind of growth. I believe in a very positive future for northeastern Ontario, and that's why we're moving to make sure the trains are going to run well. We're making sure that the buses are going to run even better, improving the Polar Bear Express, the Little Bear, working to improve the ferries. I'm confident this strategy is the best one possible for northeastern Ontario to support a brighter future for that corridor.

Ms Martel: Minister, the question was, will you table the details of the exit package for Mr Wallace? You see, Minister, you're the only one who thinks that there's going to be some improved situation at the ONTC. Anyone who knows anything about the ONTC and your decision to sell off its important assets recognizes that there won't be much of anything left at this crown agency once you're through.

But the ONTC is still, for the moment, a crown agency. There are some 800 employees who are now at risk of losing their jobs as a result of your decision. I think they and the public need to know, need to be assured, that their workers will be treated equitably and fairly just as we believe Mr Wallace has been treated. So I ask you again, will you table the details of the exit package for Mr Wallace so that other employees at the ONTC will know that their contribution will be treated in the same manner when they leave?

Hon Mr Hudak: Again, I'm very pleased to put the record forward as Minister of Northern Development and Mines of all the initiatives going on under the Mike Harris government to support northern Ontario, northeastern Ontario: seeing the doubling of the northern Ontario heritage fund; a record \$915-million investment in northern Ontario highways. I'll compare as well this strategy to improve the rail, to improve the bus services, to improve the ferry and telecommunication services. First there was an NDP package—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Hudak: Well, she was, quite frankly, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines that saw services—for example, cancelling bus routes in north-eastern Ontario, reducing the subsidies significantly, getting rid of the trucking arm, docking the ferry. That's a record of cuts with no idea of a growth strategy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take a seat. Member for Beaches-East York, it's her last warning as well. You yell out like that, you're gone for the day.

Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mr Hudak: I was just making the contrast with a program that cut the ONTC without offering any alternatives to support growth in northeastern Ontario. This strategy is there to promote job creation and to support the economy and improve customer service, a record I'll compare with yours any day of the week.

1510

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. He will know that Ontario recently published its population projections for the next 10 years—the government does this every five years after a census—and the key finding was that the population is anticipated to grow by about 1.4 million people. But 85% of that growth, according to the government figures, will come through immigration.

Our employers in this province need to continue to recruit skilled labour to come to Ontario. It perhaps is one of the most important factors for our employers. Yet I've been through the government business plans that I think you coordinate and there is not one mention of this issue in any of the business plans.

Minister, you predict 85% of our population growth, well over a million people, will come through immigration. They will be a key factor in our labour growth, a key factor for our employers. Why is it that in your business plans there is nothing that deals with this issue in terms of attracting the best and brightest to want to come to Ontario?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I couldn't disagree more. Our business plans are filled with details on how we can make Ontario more prosperous and a better place to live, one which attracts people from around the world who want to come here to invest, to live and to raise their families. All our business plans are designed with the goal to give transparency to the way the government wants to improve the lives of Ontarians.

Mr Phillips: I realize immigration levels are a federal responsibility, but where they locate in Canada is very much a provincial responsibility. At one time in Ontario we had many plans for ensuring that people felt comfortable coming here. If you look at places like California, they are aggressively recruiting people to come to California. That is one of Ireland's key economic tools. We are losing a substantial number of skilled people to

the United States. I and my caucus think that dealing with this issue is quite fundamental. Many of our employers are saying, "Where are we going to find the skilled people who want to come to Ontario?"

It's odd. Again, Minister, I challenge you to find one example in your business plans where this issue of how we ensure that talented people, skilled people who will represent, according to your figures, 85% of our population growth—I see nothing in your documents that speaks to the issue of how we attract those talented people. Certainly we are getting lots of discussion from employers saying, "We need skilled talent to come to Ontario." There is nothing in your business plans that speaks to that issue. Why is that, Mr Minister?

Hon Mr Hodgson: I'm glad the member from the opposition acknowledged that immigration is federal and that they have criteria around that process.

What we are doing, through the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade and through the Ministry of Finance and through all my colleagues, especially the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, is making sure we have the skills there for the future jobs. Fortunately, because of our economic policies which have laid a foundation for sustained and continued growth due to the tax cuts, we have people from around the world wanting to come to Ontario again. Unlike when your party and the NDP were in power and the jobs were leaving this province, jobs are coming back.

Last week, some of our ministers met with representatives from the IT community from Ottawa. We have numerous people wanting to immigrate from the United States to Canada to work in the high-tech sector around the Ottawa region. Throughout Ontario there are hundreds of examples of success stories of businesses attracting skilled workers from around the world due to the economic policies of this government, which your party has objected to at every step of the way.

DRIVE CLEAN

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Phase two of the Drive Clean program is about to start in my riding of Kitchener Centre. You may or may not be aware, but my wife, my daughter and I are all asthmatics, so we have very great concern with the quality of air in Kitchener Centre. Two years ago, Kitchener, and Waterloo region for that matter, were considered to have had the poorest air quality in all of Canada.

One of the worst things I can see when I'm driving along the highways is the blue exhaust coming out of somebody else's car. There has been much criticism that the Drive Clean program doesn't go far enough in the elimination of air pollution. I wonder if you could share with the House what the constituents in Kitchener Centre can expect from your Drive Clean program in the next couple of weeks or months.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of the Environment): I appreciate that the member for Kitchener Centre recognizes the importance of the program and its benefits

to the air that we all breathe. I say to the member from Kitchener Centre that your affected constituents can expect to receive a Drive Clean notice about 90 days prior to their vehicle registration renewal date. Their first step is to choose an accredited Drive Clean facility and to make an appointment. If their vehicle is properly maintained and tuned, they will most likely pass the test, which takes about 20 minutes and costs about \$30.

Before the test, there are a few things they can check on their vehicles. First, they can check the gas tank cap to ensure that it's not broken, faulty or missing; they can check for holes in the exhaust system or the catalytic converter; they can check for major fluid leaks—they can check for the leakage of oil, water or antifreeze; they can check for any damage from worn tires or visible smoke coming from the vehicle.

Phase two will now encompass 13 new urban areas. They are Peterborough, Barrie, Guelph, Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge—

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

Mr Wettlaufer: Minister, I'm glad to hear the response, but you didn't explain what the measurable reduction in smog is going to be. It's common knowledge that the opposition parties, who have been very critical of the Drive Clean program, did have an opportunity to bring one in themselves, but they never did. Unlike them, who talk the talk, I want you to demonstrate that our government is walking the walk and that our government is concerned about the pollution problem. I believe it's serious; I believe we're serious about taking care of the air we breathe and ensuring that it's safe and clean, but I'd like your assurance that this is actually taking place.

Hon Mr Newman: I want to thank my colleague from Kitchener Centre once again for another outstanding question. In 1999, the Drive Clean program tested one million vehicles and cut smog emissions by 7%. When fully implemented, Ontario's Drive Clean program will cut smog-causing pollutants from vehicles by up to 22% within the program area. On top of that, driving clean can save you up to 10% in annual fuel consumption and actually prolong the life of your vehicle. Most importantly, Drive Clean is improving the quality of the air that we breathe.

I'd also like to point out to members of the House today that results of a recent poll in the GTA and Hamilton-Wentworth region indicate that 80% of those polled supported the Drive Clean program here in this province. The Drive Clean program is one of the cornerstones of our commitment to clean air and is fully supported by Ontarians across our province.

MARRIAGE

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): My question today is for the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. The subject matter of my question is love, and more precisely, the question is with respect to this government's position that would deny me, as a gay man, the right to ask perhaps the most im-

portant question anyone could ask of someone that they love. As you well know, the Metropolitan Community Church of Toronto has made clear their intention to send to the registrar of Ontario information about at least two couples in the new year who would like to get married.

I would like to ask you, Minister, in this day and age do you see it as appropriate that government would seek to limit the opportunities for people of the same sex to affirm their love and commitment to another human being?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): I've indicated over the past few days that this is not an issue that falls within the jurisdiction of the provincial government. This is clearly a federal matter and the responsibility is clearly defined through the Constitution of the country, as well as federal legislation. The federal government has defined a marriage as the union of a man and a woman.

Under the Ontario legislation, the Marriage Act, our role is to identify those individuals who can legally perform a marriage, whether they be a minister of a recognized religious organization, a justice of the peace, a provincial judge or a number of individuals and professions who have the carriage of that responsibility. We have no role in terms of determining who may marry.

1520

Mr Smitherman: Minister, you've noted that Ontario's registrar will not sanctify these marriages, citing her interpretation of a federal law and the Constitution, which you have repeated today. But as you are aware, section 5 of the Ontario Marriage Act states, "Any person who is of the age of majority may obtain a licence or be married under the ... publication of banns." It would seem that provincial law does accept same-sex marriages, and clearly this issue is headed toward the courts.

Therefore, Minister, I would ask you, will you commit today that your government will not actively engage in pursuing a legal interpretation that excludes same-sex couples from making the most significant commitment of their love to one another? Will you commit today not to work actively against this evolution?

Hon Mr Runciman: We're obligated to comply with the laws of this country, and the laws clearly spell out what is right and what is wrong in the eyes of the federal government, in the eyes of federal legislation. If the honourable member reads the Marriage Act, it clearly indicates our obligation to comply with respect to the laws of the land, and that's what we're doing.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. My concern is that with a province as large and diverse as Ontario, we need a balanced approach to the training and recruitment of medical students to fill the needs in underserved areas like for instance my riding of Durham. I understand that it was our government that commissioned the McKendry report.

Some sectors believe that the pool of potential medical students is shrinking. Some would suggest it's shrinking due to the changing demographics in society today. I'm asking the minister, what action has the government taken to help resolve this critical issue facing many communities in Ontario today?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities): I'd like to thank my colleague from Durham. He's absolutely correct. This government is fully committed to providing balance at our medical schools for many reasons: I think the citizens of this province recognize the importance of having representatives from all walks of life; need; all geographical corners of the province; and young people aspiring. We want to encourage everyone who's qualified to be accepted as far as possible in our medical schools. We've taken the advice of proposals such as the McKendry report and acted swiftly to encourage greater participation from our rural students.

In July of this year, the Ministry of Health announced that medical school students will be entitled to receive up to \$10,000 for each year of undergraduate medical training as part of—and I'll say this so everyone can hear it—the tuition grant program and location incentives fund.

We are very interested in having young people from all walks of life and all corners of Ontario apply to our medical schools, and we are making many opportunities available to them so they'll have the financial support they need.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, Minister of Correctional Services, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for permission to now call third reading of Bill 2, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, and that the question on third reading be immediately put without debate or amendment.

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

MEDICINE AMENDMENT ACT, 1999

LOI DE 1999 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MÉDECINS

Mr Kwinter moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act to amend the Medicine Act, 1991 /
Projet de loi 2, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les
médecins.

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

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be named as in the title.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

“Whereas the northern health travel grant offers a reimbursement of partial travel costs at a rate of 30.4 cents per kilometre one way for northerners forced to travel for cancer care while travel policy for southerners who travel for cancer care features full reimbursement costs for travel, meals and accommodation;

“Whereas a cancer tumour knows no health travel policy or geographic location;

“Whereas a recently released Oracle research poll confirms that 92% of Ontarians support equal health travel funding;

“Whereas northern Ontario residents pay the same amount of taxes and are entitled to the same access to health care and all government services and inherent civil rights as residents living elsewhere in the province; and

“Whereas we support the efforts of the newly formed OSECC (Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care), founded by Gerry Lougheed Jr, former chair of Cancer Care Ontario, Northeast Region, to correct this injustice against northerners travelling for cancer treatment;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to fund full travel expenses for northern Ontario cancer patients and eliminate the health care apartheid which exists presently in the province of Ontario.”

As a southerner, I'm in full agreement and I have affixed my signature to this petition.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

“Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

“Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

“Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles.”

I appreciate that this bill was considered this morning. However, I want to clear my desk of surplus petitions on behalf of Mr O'Toole and Mr Parker. I'm pleased to affix my signature to these petitions.

SINGING OF NATIONAL ANTHEM

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This is addressed to the Legislature of Ontario to allow for the singing of O Canada in the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas this wonderful country Canada has a national anthem we should be proud to sing; and

“Whereas the national anthem is sung in our schools, stadiums, and numerous public assemblies; and

“Whereas the MPPs of the Ontario Legislature should be doing everything they can to promote this great country and its customs and traditions; and

“Whereas the singing of the national anthem will be a reminder to all MPPs and members of the public that we should not hesitate to use every opportunity to sing the praises of our great country, Canada;

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

“That the government of Ontario allow the singing of O Canada by MPPs in the provincial Legislature.”

I’m in agreement with the singing of O Canada in our Legislature. I don’t know why Mike Harris doesn’t allow it. I’m going to sign my name to it.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I have further petitions from UAW local 251 in Wallaceburg.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas this year 130,000 Canadians will contract cancer and there are at minimum 17 funerals every day for Canadian workers who died from cancer caused by workplace exposure to cancer-causing substances known as carcinogens; and

“Whereas the World Health Organization estimates that 80% of all cancers have environmental causes and the International Labour Organization estimates that one million workers globally have cancer because of exposure at work to carcinogens; and

“Whereas most cancers can be beaten if government had the political will to make industry replace toxic substances with non-toxic substances; and

“Whereas very few health organizations study the link between occupations and cancer, even though more study of this link is an important step to defeating this dreadful disease;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That it become a legal requirement that occupational history be recorded on a standard form when a patient presents at a physician for diagnosis or treatment of cancer; and

“That the diagnosis and occupational history be forwarded to a central cancer registry for analysis as to the link between cancer and occupation.”

I’m very proud to present this petition Allison Stark, one of our pages here, a fine Hamiltonian who’s done an outstanding job and I’m really proud to have her here with me in the Legislature. Thanks so much, Allison.

1530

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to the United States to receive medical attention;

“Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are not covered by OHIP;

“Whereas many residents of St Catharines and other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor, as a result of the growing doctor shortage we have experienced during the tenure of the Harris government;

“Whereas many assistive devices that could aid patients in Ontario are not eligible for funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health;

“Whereas community care access centres have inadequate funding to carry out their responsibilities for long-term and home care; and

“Whereas the Harris government has now spent over \$185 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads:

“We, the undersigned call upon the Conservative government of Mike Harris to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and to invest this money instead into health care in the province of Ontario.”

I affix my signature as I am in complete agreement with the sentiments expressed in this petition, which I am giving to Katherine.

SINGING OF NATIONAL ANTHEM

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It’s my pleasure again to stand up for my country and ask that this petition be presented to the Legislature to allow for the singing of our national anthem, O Canada, in this Ontario Legislature. This is from a group of senior citizens in the city of Toronto.

“To the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas this wonderful country, Canada, has a national anthem we should be proud to sing; and

“Whereas the national anthem is sung in our schools, stadiums and numerous public assemblies; and

“Whereas the MPPs of the Ontario Legislature should be doing everything they can to promote this great country and its customs; and

“Whereas the singing of the national anthem will be a reminder to all MPPs and members of the public that we should not hesitate to use every opportunity to sing the praises of our great country, Canada;

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

"That the government of Ontario allow the singing of O Canada by the MPPs in the provincial Legislature."

I support the singing of O Canada in this Legislature, I don't know why the government doesn't allow it, and I will affix my name to it.

REGISTRATION OF VINTAGE CARS

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I have a petition with respect to allowing year of manufacture licence plates on historic vehicles, a bill that was referred for third reading today.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there are many Ontarians who have a passion for perfection in the restoration of vintage vehicles; and

"Whereas unlike many other jurisdictions, Ontario vintage automobile enthusiasts are unable to register their vehicles using the original year of manufacture licence plates; and

"Whereas Durham MPP John R. O'Toole and former MPP John Parker have worked together to recognize the desire of vintage car collectors to register their vehicles using vintage plates; and

"Whereas the Honourable David Turnbull as Minister of Transportation has the power to change the existing regulation;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass Bill 99 or to amend the Highway Traffic Act to be used on vintage automobiles."

I appreciate the opportunity to present this petition.

SINGING OF NATIONAL ANTHEM

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario concerning the singing of O Canada in the Ontario Legislature. It reads as follows:

"To the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas this wonderful country, Canada, has a national anthem we should be proud to sing; and

"Whereas the national anthem is sung in our schools, stadiums and numerous public assemblies; and

"Whereas the MPPs of the Ontario Legislature should be doing everything they can to promote this great country and its customs; and

"Whereas the singing of the national anthem will be a reminder to all MPPs and members of the public that we should not hesitate to use every opportunity to sing the praises of our great country, Canada; and

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

"That the government of Ontario allow the singing of O Canada by the MPPs in the provincial Legislature."

Because I believe so strongly in what's written there, I have affixed my name to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BALANCED BUDGETS FOR BRIGHTER FUTURES ACT, 2000

LOI DE 2000 SUR DES BUDGETS ÉQUILIBRÉS POUR UN AVENIR MEILLEUR

Resuming the debate adjourned on December 12, 2000, on the motion for second reading of Bill 152, An Act to implement the 2000 Budget to establish a made-in-Ontario tax system and to amend various Acts / Projet de loi 152, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre le budget de 2000 en vue de créer un régime fiscal propre à l'Ontario et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Tony Martin): The member for Hamilton West.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to finish my leadoff remarks on this budget bill.

I said at the conclusion of my remarks, I believe on Tuesday, that what I wanted to do with my remaining time—given that this budget spells out the government's economic plan, part 2 of their implementation of the recent budget, which we know showed that over the next couple of years upwards of \$4 billion will be given as tax gifts to corporations, many of which are making record levels of profit, as well as to individuals who have done very well by the economic boom and who in our society least need any kind of tax gift at this time.

What I want to talk about today is how we in the NDP view the kind of Ontario this builds. I said the other day that a lot of the problems that exist right now, which we bring during question period and during comments like this, are papered over as a result of the boom, which is so strong, particularly in the auto industry, which is our main economic engine here in Ontario. With the economy going the way it has in the United States, the demand for the autos and the parts we produce here has gone through the roof. So the direct and indirect jobs that are in the Ontario economy are so great that no matter what this government or any other government did, this economy would have roared along.

The question I want to pose in my remarks today is, what happens when the music stops, when the booming economy is no longer there to make money available and create jobs, which in our opinion covers up a lot of the major damage this government has done to the infrastructure of our province, those things that have contributed in a major way to our being chosen a number of times by the United Nations as the greatest country in the world to live in. Being the strongest and largest province in this Confederation means we had a lot to do with that, and we're all very proud that many of those foundations have given us that distinction. Who isn't proud to be in a country where the United Nations keeps saying time and time again, "That's the best country in the world"? But the very things that built that reputation

and that quality of life are what have been under sustained attack by this government for over five years.

There are indicators that in the next 12 months we're going to see a significant downturn; at the very least, a slowing down. Having said that, no one can predict with any kind of certainty when it will happen. I don't think anyone challenges the fact that it is going to happen. The natural business cycle means there will be at least a slowdown, and possibly more than a slowdown. We may easily slip into a recession.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: Some of the backbenchers who know everything about everything say, "That could never happen." Well, Mr Hastings, we'll make sure you're noted as one of those here, and we'll check back that you were the one who said, "It couldn't happen, not in Tory Ontario. We're recession-proof."

The fact is, most of us who are living on planet Earth recognize there will be an economic downturn. To what degree, we don't know, but the more severe it is, the deeper that—

1540

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Over the last few weeks a habit has been occurring in this House of referring to members by their names, and we have it again today. I thought the rule was that you refer to members by whatever riding they represent, but it would appear you can do anything in this House. Could we at least get back to that fundamental, if it's not too much? Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: That is the standing order, and I would expect that all members live up to that. That order reaches not just one side of the House, and I remind people that it's still in effect.

Mr Christopherson: Thank you, Speaker, and I apologize to the member from Bedrock.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: I withdraw, John. Sit down.

Mr Hastings: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: First, let me apologize for my comments about the recession, which we never said. But on the point of order, I'm the member for Etobicoke North. I have never once, in six years, referred to the member for Hamilton West as the member from somewhere else. So can we at least have that? I know it's asking too much.

The Acting Speaker: I believe the member had already withdrawn that comment, but if he would do it again, it would be appreciated.

Mr Christopherson: I don't want to make it a habit. I did withdraw it already.

The fact of the matter is, there will be a recession and, if we take a look, there's a real possibility that it's going to happen sooner than later.

Earlier I raised the issue of the auto industry, because it's the most public and identifiable signal we see right now. We know that DaimlerChrysler is slowing down production. There is some speculation that there will be other layoffs. Certainly General Motors made a major announcement the other day that could have significant

implications for us. For a slowdown in the auto industry to do the kind of damage that would create serious trouble in Ontario, it doesn't need to be a direct announcement about layoffs within the Ontario auto industry. Any part of the North American auto industry that starts to slip into a slump in a major way, in terms of layoffs and a reduction in production, will have a ripple effect right across. Given it's huge significance to us, it is not at all unlikely that some time soon we're going to begin to see the effects of that.

We need to also keep in mind that energy prices have gone through the roof. As members of this House know, it takes a number of months—usually six to eight months—for a change in the price of crude oil to work its way through the entire system, all the way downstream to the point where the consumer pulls up to the pump or we turn on the heat in our homes. There has been such a dramatic increase. I would suggest that the last time there was this dramatic an increase takes us back to the 1970s. We saw the inflationary pressures that placed on our economy and we also saw what happened to our economy in the 1970s. Much of our day-to-day life, as well as the foundations of planning a business budget, changed forever overnight. Whether this will be as dramatic an impact remains to be seen, but it's there. It's on the Richter scale. We're just now beginning to feel it, and unfortunately we're beginning to feel it in Ontario at a time when people start to increase the amount of energy they use to heat their homes during our cold winters.

But it goes further than that. There are the implications of the trucking industry. My brother Mark is a broker for Loomis, and these costs have a direct impact on him as an independent business person. Therefore this is going to affect his profit, his bottom line, and therefore the quality and standard of living he is able to provide for his family. He's going to get hit both ways: on the business and in terms of his use as a personal consumer. There's also, obviously, going to be an impact on every mode of transportation and every mode of physical production in the province. I could go on and talk about some of the high-tech firms that are beginning to announce layoffs or capital investments that are not beginning to happen.

I raise all of these things to point out that it isn't just a case of spending time on my feet fearmongering. There are reasons that everyone is looking at to suspect that the economy is going to slow down in the next year and, as much as respective finance ministers want to say and do say that we'll get a soft landing, meaning that we won't feel the impact as much as a hard landing, there's no certainty to these things, no certainty at all.

I can remember the projections that Floyd Laughren as Minister of Finance and I as his parliamentary assistant received from both the in-house economists here within the ministry as well as private external economists telling us that the economy was in a slump, Canada was in deeper and longer as a result of Brian Mulroney's real high interest rates. The difference between the interest rates that we were charging and the actual rate of inflation was much higher than it was in the United States

and, quite frankly, practically around the world. That meant that Canada, along with the high dollar, was heading into a deeper, longer recession than other economies that we were compared to.

When we assumed office in 1990, we were told it was going to be a very severe recession, straight down, but that it would be short and then there would be a slow climb out over the last two to three years of our term. I should say that we were told consistently from the time we went in that it was going to be a very sharp decline for a very short period of time and then a slow climb out. That's not what happened.

What happened was, yes, we went into the very sharp decline in a short period of time, only we stayed there; in fact, it went a little deeper. We had the economic forecasts tested to see whose advice we were following that was leading us astray so we could change it, and it turned out that the economists within the ministry as well as economists in the private sector were all predicting the same thing. If you take a look at the advice we received and the policies we had versus the way things turned out, against the advice and speculation of the experts at the time, recognizing it's an inexact science, if anyone ever bothered to do that, you would have a lot better understanding of exactly why we did the things we did.

Is that to say we didn't make mistakes? No. That would be foolish. But the notion that somehow we were so off the mark that just by the fact that you own an NDP membership card, you cannot possibly manage the economy is simply not the case, and it doesn't hold up to the facts. I urge anyone who is interested in that and maybe even challenging me on it to take a look at the advice that we were given and the actions we took based upon that advice and then, when the reality became different, what we did to try to adjust and compensate for that changed scenario.

Having said all of that, I want to point out that for a lot of people, the notion of poverty and the minimum wage and the fact that there isn't any kind of housing policy, either at the provincial or the federal level—and I would remind people that the federal Liberals are the first government in Canada for the last 40 years that doesn't have a housing policy. This is one of those times that the Tories can't chime in and cheer and pound their desks and say, "Way to go, Dave. Go after those Liberals," because they don't either. In fact, the last government in North America that had a social housing policy, with real plans and real money creating real homes was the NDP. We have right now a total absence of leadership and responsibility for housing that can't be sustained. But that is our reality right now.

1550

In addition, look at what this government has done vis-à-vis the health care system, the education system, environmental protection, social services and the impact of downloading on municipalities. Take all of those things and say what does the world look like for the average person who really maybe hasn't paid too much attention to these issues. They care, but it isn't the main

thing they think about all day, because it doesn't reflect their life and it doesn't reflect maybe their neighbourhood and their families and their friends and co-workers. That's wonderful were it such that no one had to live a life that was different than that. But they do, a lot of them.

What happens to somebody who right now doesn't think a lot about this, but finds themselves, halfway through or two thirds of the way through next year, being on the short end of the recession? You won't have all that money and the fact that you haven't had pressure on the welfare system because there has been job growth, pressure on housing to the degree that I'm going to suggest will happen when we get into a recessionary situation, all the pressures that are added on a health care system during a recessionary time, on our education system as they try to pick up pieces of the quality of life of children that maybe they aren't able to provide at home any longer.

There are whole ranges of things that change. Everything about the province will change. If you're one of those who has a job today and everything's fine and you've got enough disposable income and you've benefited from the Harris tax cuts and you survive the next recession and nothing changes for you, then you are very, very fortunate, very blessed, and I guess the most we can ask for is that you please remember there are others who aren't that fortunate, who aren't living that way. But you won't be touched.

But if we get into a recession, some folks who are watching now or at home or at work and not thinking about the possibility of being in these statistics are going to be. Those are real people. When you see layoffs coming, those are real people who are connected to real families, and they're going to be impacted in a real way.

Let's just take a scenario where you've got someone who has been working 25 years at the same place. They've been very fortunate. They've got a good union, meaning they've got good benefits for their children: a dental plan, insurance plan, all those things that Tories don't think working people ought to have. If you did, the very least you'd do is raise the minimum wage. Don't tell me you care about the quality of life of working people. It just doesn't wash.

Let's say you're one of those fortunate folks who have a good collective agreement and you've been able to share in the benefits of increased productivity and the fact that there has been money made, profits made at this corporation and you've gotten at least a piece of that. You find yourself in your mid-50s, you've still got children in school, maybe one in university, but you've still got major responsibilities, and you're laid off. Whether you're a GM worker, DaimlerChrysler, Stelco, Dofasco, Camco or one of the new tech industries, you're out; you're out of work.

The first thing that happens is you apply for EI. It's now called EI. You apply for EI and you know what? The odds are against your getting it. Whereas in the not-too-distant past, the majority of workers were covered by

what was then called UI, as of 1997, only 25% of people who work for a living qualify for EI, one quarter. That means three quarters, 75% of all the people who are working in Ontario would not be eligible for EI if they were permanently laid off. If you are fortunate enough to qualify for EI, you're going to see a sharp decrease in your standard of living and you're going to hope it is only temporary. If it is, wonderful. You're very fortunate. If not, or if you didn't qualify for EI, you're probably going to live on your savings as long as you can and maybe start cashing in some RRSPs.

Do you know where the next stop is if we are in the middle of a recession and everywhere around you're seeing layoffs and you've got younger people coming out of university and college also competing for the same limited jobs that are out there, those scarce jobs, many of them part-time, that don't provide the same benefits, which is going to be a huge problem for the same example person I've used? I'll tell you what: after you've run out of things to sell and the family heirlooms are gone and you've used up every bit of discretionary money you have and cancelled any future plans you might have had, if you're still out of money and haven't been able to find a job to replace the one you had, you've got one choice. You'll have to go on welfare.

Pride can only take you so far. When your children need new shoes, when your son or daughter in college or university has to pay their residence bill and their food bill and their tuition bill and you've got mortgage payments and because you weren't able to buy the new car and are trying to keep an older car on the road, you've got maintenance bills and your insurance bill has come in—you've got all these pressures—at some point, if you don't have a source of income, you've got to go to welfare.

Let me tell you, the world changes big time. It always did, but how different it is now. Even if it's short-term, here's the world you're in. If you've got a family cottage, you'd better sell it. Not better, have to. You've got to sell that cottage, otherwise you don't qualify. The fact you say, "I just need a little help for a while"—too bad. Remember when Mike Harris talked about drug testing those people. Guess what? You are those people. How do you like that world?

If you own a home and you've been on welfare for a year, to continue on welfare the state will put a lien on your home. In effect, you're no longer really receiving assistance. You're actually living off the value of your home. After the lien is placed, you've got to pay it back at some point.

Again, one of the points in raising all this is to try to jar even a few people to the awareness that there is no "us" and "them." In my opinion, that's artificially constructed by the government, and it has been done by other governments—"us" and "them." As long as it's "them," they deserve that. They use the very small percentage of people who abuse the system as a reason and an example of why they had to step in and do what they did.

It's funny, they never seem to feel the same about people who cheat on their income tax or who have

fraudulently squandered millions of dollars of little old widows who have lost all the money they ever had in the world. You don't seem to take the same attitude towards those kinds of lawbreakers. We know what you do. You go after the visceral emotion. People understand that. Unfortunately, a lot of people succumb to the enticement that you can believe there are different categories of human beings in our society.

I don't think I mentioned yet: welcome to drug testing. So much for your dignity. So much for the sanctity of the self. So much for privacy.

1600

That's the world you are now in, and what's going on around you? Let's take a look at our health care system and let's remember that the examples I'm giving now are where we are today with our hospitals. There is an increase during a recession, for a whole host of reasons, in the demands on health services. We've got jammed ERs. We've got underfunding of ambulances, which the auditor has said are not responding in the expected time periods because they don't have enough money. So much of this comes back to money and, by the way, there was \$4 billion to give away to those who didn't need it. Let's keep that in mind as I mention these things—record levels of ambulances on redirect that are being told, "Sorry, don't even bother stopping at our emergency room. You'd better keep on moving because we're all backed up and we can't take another single person." We've already seen an inquest into someone who died.

We've got a major, critical shortage of nurses, and when you're in the hospital, take a look at those nurses. They are so stressed. We've got a doctor shortage on top of all that, and that's not even speaking to the very specific, even worse situation that exists in northern Ontario in communities like yours, Speaker, of Sault Ste Marie in terms of the particular health issues they have around doctors and medical services and provision of supports for cancer patients—special, unique problems that our northern citizens have, and I'm not even focusing on those. There's the health world, as you sit there looking for some kind of better future, some hope for what kind of a positive world maybe your children could grow into.

Hospital deficits are ballooning, and either this government finds the money to make up those deficits or there are going to be even further cuts to our hospitals. Again, I haven't even gotten into the whole issue of the lack of funding for community health care which supposedly was to offset the institutional health care that we're losing because we're downsizing hospitals. Remember that plan: downsize the hospitals because institutional care is not as good nor as efficient as community care, so you take the majority of the money you save from downsizing hospitals and put it into community health care? It didn't happen. Downsize the hospitals, don't put it into the community services—even your own commission told you that was the key ingredient—and what do you get? Exactly what I've described, only now we're in a recessionary period and

this government you can bet is going to start to say, "You know, it's different now." They didn't have any money when times were good, at least not enough money, but now the argument is going to be, "We're in tough times. We're going to tighten that old belt, so we can't afford to transfer any more money to hospitals." Every issue I've raised here right now will be exacerbated during a recession because the government will use that as their reason to cut off whatever limited money they are spending in health care.

So there for that ordinary middle-class worker is the world they see in health care, and if they've got a sick child at home with any kind of chronic illness, this is going to loom large. We all know what happens to the minds of people when they're out of work long enough and despair and despondency start to set in. Don't think this won't play a role when it's on the news, on the radio, on the front page of the newspaper every day.

Then you take a look around you and say, "Maybe I should at least go outside and get a breath of fresh air and that will help me feel a little better." Of course we know that smog is a growing threat to the very lives of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Ontarians. Certainly the studies are showing us what smog is doing to children who have asthma. I think one of the Tory members mentioned today—I believe he was referring to himself and someone else in his family as being asthmatic—he is very much affected, as are seniors. If things continue, it won't be long before what would otherwise be called a luckily normal, able-bodied, healthy person won't have the immune system to withstand the damage that smog is going to do.

And don't expect to take a stroll down to the local beach and go for a dip, because how many local beaches are being closed because it's unsafe to swim in the water? Need I say anything more than "Walkerton" about water?

How did we get there? I'm not talking about the dark days of the recession. These are the boom times. The boom times had us see in this budget, the very budget we're debating today, that they cut almost 18% from the Ministry of Natural Resources and they cut 9% from the Ministry of the Environment. In this budget they cut all that money, billions, literally. It sounds like a McDonald's advertisement—billions of dollars given to the very wealthiest people and corporations in Ontario. The Ministry of Natural Resources gets cut 18% and the Ministry of the Environment gets cut 9%. Over the last almost six years the staff are down 40%. I raised all these environmental issues.

You would think, with billions of dollars in surplus available, in the biggest economic boom we've ever seen in North America, there would at least be a few bucks to deal with some of these issues. No. They cut those ministry budgets and we've lost 40 staff—pardon me; were it only 40—40% of the staff have been cut. Get this: the combined operating and capital budgets of the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Natural Resources—wait for it. Billions to give away to the

wealthiest, cuts to the two ministries that protect our land, water and air—\$100 million cut, taken away. Never mind where's the common sense; I ask, where's the sanity?

The auditor has started commenting about this. I should recognize they've been mentioning it. The Environmental Commissioner—you could argue he's the environmental auditor—has been mentioning it for very many years. But even the general auditor, the Provincial Auditor, has been pointing out that the government has cut enforcement staff. Get this: enforcement staff. We keep saying they're taking care of their corporate friends and they give us rhetoric in response. I'm not going to give you rhetoric. You have cut enforcement staff by 25% and inspections have declined by one third. You would think, if you cared about the health of the people and our environment, that you'd be increasing those areas, wouldn't you? That's not what happened. That's not what's happening.

That laid-off auto worker has seen the crisis around them in health care getting worse and they've got a young child who has a chronic health care problem, and now they look around at the environment and they can't even rely on the fact that the air they breathe is going to be safe, let alone the water when they turn on the tap. But it's OK because, according to these folks over here, the only thing that matters is that the very wealthy are getting very much wealthier, and so everything should be OK, except if you're not wealthy and you're in the situation I just raised. You go through your mail—you don't want the mail that has those little windows in them, don't want any more bills—but then you start reading and hearing about what's going to happen to property taxes. You're barely somehow keeping your mortgage payments going—even then at the point that I'm describing in that kind of story, they're probably behind in their mortgage payments and are having to find a way to try to save their home—and you're being told you could face anywhere from a 10% to 30% or 40% increase in your property taxes as a result of reassessment, never mind adding in the downloading. This speaks very directly to quality of life. Municipalities have been handed so much responsibility and not given the money.

For those government members who want to argue the point, I remind them that Tony Skarica, a former Tory MPP, voted against this government's bill because it wasn't revenue-neutral.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): A former MPP.

1610

Mr Christopherson: OK, so a former MPP. What's your point? In fact, I would say to you that emphasizes my point because it's probably one of the most principled things I've ever seen done since I've been in politics. I give the guy full marks. He had the guts to put his vote and his voice and ultimately his seat on the line for what he believed in. So I would suggest that any kind of derision you meant by saying "former" is very ill placed. You would do well to use him as a role model.

My time is rapidly expiring, but there are a few more things I do want to mention. You've got to appreciate that the pressure on municipalities right now is incredible, and you know what? It doesn't really matter what philosophical base you start from, who wants to be the one that chooses between public transit—which is a huge issue for people of modest income and seniors and students; a lot of students go to McMaster University in my riding and Mohawk College—or ambulances, or public health, social housing, women's shelters or GO Transit? Who wants to make those decisions, and at a time when the only roar one hears is, or almost the only roar, "Tax cuts, tax cuts, we're going to have tax cuts"? In that climate I feel, really, for all municipal councillors trying to grapple with this impossible situation.

You know, if the individual I just mentioned and their family ultimately end up in poverty, they will join the largest group of Ontarians ever to be in poverty, and to be deeper in poverty than in the history of our province. In fact, there are only two provinces since 1996 that have seen an increase in their poverty rates. Why? Because of the economic boom. That's why it's news. What are the two provinces? One is Newfoundland and, to be fair, they've got a lot of challenges during good times, bad times; they're there all the time. So to some degree I don't think you'd hold them to the same test. But here in Ontario? There are more people in deeper poverty than we've ever had before during the biggest economic boom. How can that be? How can it be that there are more people in poverty and more middle-class people looking at poverty and seeing—you know what?—it's only one job away. During a time when this economy is so strong, you've got billions of dollars of surplus and you give it away to the wealthy. How can that be? How can it be in this Ontario that there are children who don't have adequate child care or don't have access to the health care they're entitled to or don't have access to the education system they're entitled to? I don't have time to talk about the litany of things you have done to our education system and to our teachers.

These are the realities that family is facing, and these are the good times. What's going to happen to these people in the bad times? For some people, part-time work is all they're going to find. You've done nothing about that in your latest changes to the Employment Standards Act. You haven't introduced any kind of prorating of dental care, health insurance, life insurance—all the things that normally one is entitled to because of full-time employment. You've done nothing for part-time. You've certainly done nothing for the working poor who are earning minimum wage, and if you're not earning the minimum wage, if you are earning a couple of bucks more, it's very difficult for you to keep getting raises when the standard post that's used is the minimum wage and it's not moving.

So if you are fortunate enough to find some kind of a job, you've got a whole new world. I keep talking about the new world that we have in the environment, social services, health and education. Take a look at the new

working world thanks to Mike Harris and Chris Stockwell. Thanks to the new changes under the Employment Standards Act, a whole lot of rights you thought you had, like being at home with your family from time to time, are gone. That's the world that you suggest you have adequately prepared us for.

Had we spent those billions of dollars on investing in our environmental protection, investing in our health care system, investing in our children through the education system, both post-secondary and at the elementary level, we would have a very different Ontario. Instead, yes, it's a different Ontario, but oh, it's such a sadder, sadder one than it needs to be.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr David Young (Willowdale): I listened with interest both this day and the night before last to the previous speaker, the member for Hamilton West, and I'm privileged to have an opportunity to comment upon his remarks.

I acknowledge at the outset that there is more to do in this province, that there are some who have not benefited as much as we would like and as much as they would like from the economic boom that has helped so many across this province, but I think my friend opposite in the NDP overstates his case by a significant degree. If one were to have just arrived in this province, turned on the TV and watched the member opposite talk about this province, they would have envisioned a Third World nation. With the greatest respect, that is not what we have here.

What we have here is a thriving economy. What we have here is an employment growth rate that since 1995 is 15.5%. My friend attributes that, as do the Liberals opposite on many occasions, to the fact that there is a boom in the United States and that we're being dragged along by that success. But of course, if one compares the employment growth rate in Michigan, as an example, at 7.4% over the same period, one realizes that ours is twice that much. If one compares what is going on in Ohio, another border state, over the same period of time—their growth rate is 6.7%, again compared to our 15.5% employment growth rate—one realizes that there is something very positive and very different going on in this province.

I know that my friend has an obligation, as an opposition member, to preach gloom and doom, and as I said at the outset, I acknowledge that there is more to do, but to describe this economy in the year 2000 and the society in the way that he has frankly is somewhat misleading.

The Acting Speaker: That last comment was out of order. It's not parliamentary to accuse somebody of misleading the House.

Mr Young: Withdrawn.

The Acting Speaker: Further comments or questions?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It's a pleasure to stand and offer some comments on the remarks by the member for Hamilton West. I think the characterization by the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Finance that the role of opposition parties is

to preach doom and gloom is a little bit off the mark. The member, who was a minister in a past government, did an excellent job of making his case with respect to what's going on in the province of Ontario. I'm one of those who happen to be proud that Ontario is enjoying good economic times. Many people, friends of mine and family, are experiencing that, and I celebrate that along with all Ontarians and indeed all Canadians. I think that's an accomplishment we all ought to share some responsibility for.

I would say, though, that I think there's one area, and the member touched on this, where the government is missing an opportunity, and that is in terms of living up to its responsibilities to make the necessary investments to ensure that we have economic growth and quality of life which are sustainable.

1620

From the standpoint of a member who represents a riding in Toronto and who is the critic for the Liberal Party for the greater Toronto area, I believe you don't need to look very far to see the decline of quality of life that is occurring for the constituents of the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. I know that in his remarks he'll want to talk about the fact that many of the constituents he represents are experiencing extraordinary challenges getting to and from work—and that's impacting their family life—because gridlock has occurred.

The city of Toronto is facing some extraordinary pressures around reinvestments that are required in its municipal transit system. The province is no longer a partner in those arrangements. That will be a burden on the taxpayers of Toronto.

Many people in my constituency continue to suffer from policies which do not contribute to the creation of affordable housing. The government has yet to address the reality which is that some people cannot afford to pay market price for their housing.

Mr Gill: It is a pleasure to take part in this debate. The members from Hamilton West, from Willowdale and from Toronto Centre-Rosedale spoke. A couple of things: the member from Willowdale mentioned that it appears to be that the opposition is only naysaying. I've not heard one positive thing from them—surely to God, when we have 800,000 more jobs created, that is not to say that the government has been attacking the poor for the last five years. It has been the last five years that the economy turned around. I did say it was very difficult to turn around. It is like a big ship. But eventually and slowly, we have turned around.

They talk about doom and gloom and recession. When the NDP was here from 1990 to 1995, there was a recession all over the world pretty well, especially in North America. But their financial policies were totally wrong. I was not in politics then, but I do remember somewhere reading that they were going to spend their way out of recession. You can't do that. You can't spend your way out of recession. You can't spend to create jobs. You can cut taxes to create jobs. We've had that example—800,000. In fact, more than 200,000 have been

created since 1999, when we came into our second mandate.

The NDP speakers normally say, "It is because of the US economy. That's why we are benefiting," forgetting to say that we are benefiting from the astronomical growth that this province is enjoying because of the hard work of our government.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I listened to my friend the member from Hamilton West with great interest. Even though I was out in the members' lobby for a few moments, I listened in out there as well, on the monitor. I would like to suggest that he made some very interesting and enlightening points with respect to possible downturns and recessions that have occurred in this province. Certainly, the most severe downturn that we witnessed was the 1990-91 recession, which some people called a depression, in this province.

Frankly, I would say that his advice as to what this government is perceiving to be good times and how the people of this province must prepare themselves for an eventual downturn in the economy is good advice. It is important to remember that the economy cannot continue to grow forever without seeing some setback. I also believe that it is important for this government to recognize that its forecasts are incredibly rosy in their outlook. I think they are overestimating future growth.

These, along with the prescriptions in the budget for positive changes the government likes to say it is making, possibly could lead us into a very difficult time in the future if we should happen to experience a downturn in the economy. There are no protections in the fiscal plan the government has put forward for that eventuality. So I'd like to commend the member for making those comments.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Response?

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank the members who took the time and effort to respond to my remarks. Let me deal with at least a bit of a response to all that was said. The member for BGMS—he said we could say that, so there you go; I'm not that big a jerk—said it was a big job, that you had to turn the ship around to get the economy right. I would reject that. I would say to you that this thing was like a shuttle on the launching pad, and once the American economy took off, it didn't matter whether you did anything or not, it was going. So I don't think there was this big ship to turn around. The economy was taking off, and quite frankly, had you held off on your tax cuts, we would have balanced the budget sooner in the province of Ontario and escaped all the damage you did.

My colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale raised a key issue. That's the problem: you get four hours of material and you have to pack it into a 40-minute speech. This is an important issue that needs to be explored more and really is sort of the end chapter of the speech I gave, which is that at the end of the day you've done nothing about sustainability.

Tax cuts are short-term solutions that do nothing for the long term. Where's the investment in our infra-

structure? Where's the investment in our universities? Where's the investment in our health care? Where's the investment in our environmental protection? In our municipal base? Without those things, you don't have quality of life. That's where the majority of people are impacted.

To my friend from Willowdale, Mr Young, who talked about I was describing us as being a Third World nation, I was saying that the perspective of some folks—I'm not saying that's the way the whole province is, but a growing number of people—do you know what?—are living like it is a Third World nation, and that's unacceptable. It ought not to be. There's enough money to make sure that doesn't happen.

The Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Gill: It is a pleasure once again to stand and join in the debate on Bill 152, the Balanced Budgets for Brighter Futures Act, 2000. Bill 152 is the latest chapter in the government's record of sound fiscal management, lower taxes, more jobs and less red tape. Since the Mike Harris government took power—I've said it before—since June 8, 1995, over 830,000 jobs have been created. That's more jobs than the entire population of the new city of Ottawa. Let's talk about my riding: that's seven times more jobs than the entire population of my riding.

If you ask the people of Ontario, "Are you better off now than you were five years ago?" I know the vast majority, even among the Liberal and NDP supporters, would say yes, they're better off than they were five years ago. We can talk about all the partisan rhetoric, but this is a fact of life. Any of the parties can go out and ask the ordinary citizens and they would concur with the remark I just made. In fact people will have time, an opportunity after the Christmas break, to go and talk to the constituents, and this is exactly what they will hear.

Our economy is on the move again. More people are working. Taxes and red tape are lower. High standards have returned to the schools. Parents now have report cards they can understand and have more direct power over their children's education. I'm sure parents over the last few weeks have been looking at the newspapers and comparing the results of the grade 3 and grade 6 students across Ontario. They've seen the improvement and the stability our system is bringing back to the classroom, because we are going back to the basics, we are going back to the structure, we are going back to the arithmetic and the sciences that are so vital to the growth of our youth, so that they can compete with anybody in the world.

1630

Ontarians now have a government that believes entrepreneurship and initiatives are virtues. We no longer seek the NDP dream of a society that values only equality even if this means everyone living together equally in poverty. Equality means little if there's no prosperity, if the schools and health care are mediocre and if there's no hope for advancement for ourselves and our children.

This government believes that profit in the private sector is a good thing. I've said it before: "profit" is not a

bad word in Ontario. Government should not punish wealth creators but should encourage them and make their lives easier. I'm proud to be part of a government that does what it says it will do. That saying has become a cliché in Ontario, but it has become a cliché because it is true. We have a discussion in the newspapers that perhaps the federal government, which promised certain things in the red book, is already saying, "But you're not reading the fine print. That's not what we said." That has become the track record of the federal government: to change their mind quickly and say, "We never said so"—another example of their boondoggles.

More important to Ontarians, I think, than any one particular law or plan this government has introduced is the fact that Ontarians finally have a government they can trust. That's the catchword: trust. Mr Speaker, I've spoken to many, many parliamentarians over the last year and a half, and I know you were with me in some of the discussions. They have certainly been amazed that our government has actually reduced the number of MPPs. Overall, in different countries, governments have a tendency to keep increasing their size, keep increasing their budgets, keep increasing their numbers. We are the government that has gone ahead and cut our own numbers, from 123 to 103.

I'm proud to say that during that reshuffling my riding was a brand new riding, and I'm very, very proud that the people of BGMS, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, gave me an honour, gave me a chance to represent them. In fact, just yesterday the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale took a cab, and that cab happened to be driven by somebody from my riding. That person—and I've got a name and address because the member took his name and address—was very complimentary of my performance. I'm very happy that he passed on that message to me, and this person will be getting my Christmas card, let me assure you.

I'm proud to be part of a government that does what it said it will do. We are honouring the commitments we made to Ontarians in the 2000 budget. Bill 152 puts into place a number of these specific promises.

This bill introduces a made-in-Ontario tax system allowing Ontario's government to introduce tax changes that suit our provincial needs, not the whims of a fickle federal government.

R&D, research and development, will be promoted by new tax credits for employees of R&D-intensive companies.

We will introduce corporate tax incentives that support the book publishing, digital media, film and television production industries.

This bill provides for a new educational technology tax incentive to encourage businesses to support Ontario's universities and community colleges in acquiring new teaching equipment and learning technology. Just a few minutes ago, the member opposite said in his remarks that we're not doing anything for the universities. We are going to be spending \$1 billion over the next few

years to go back to the infrastructure, for the buildings, for the bricks and mortar.

We will reduce red tape for small business by allowing more Ontario small businesses to use the short-form corporations tax return and we will extend the right to incorporate to all regulated professionals while maintaining personal professional liability to protect the public interest.

As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I am proud to see the government fostering investment in research-oriented businesses by providing labour-sponsored investment fund—LSIF—shareholders with an enhanced tax credit of 20%, up from 15%, so more companies, more funds that are labour-sponsored, will benefit from that.

This bill will, for the first time, allow the government of Ontario to establish its own separate tax rates and brackets. As members know, the present income tax rates are calculated as a percentage of federal income tax and are dependent on the tax rates that the federal government of the day chooses to put into place. If the Liberals in Ottawa choose to hike taxes to pay for their cradle-to-grave guaranteed annual income scheme—this is what I was talking about—then Ontario taxpayers could be pulled right along. A made-in-Ontario tax system will allow this government to make changes based on Ontario's needs. Ontario can protect its tax system from increases by Ottawa, as well as targeting credits, exemptions and deductions to areas that really deserve assistance.

You may ask, why do we need to be protected from Ottawa when the federal government cut taxes in the run-up to the last election? The answer to this is simple. With a four-year majority, the Prime Minister no longer has any incentive to spend the nation's money wisely. It will only be a matter of time before some scheme, such as the guaranteed annual income or another HRDC scandal like a \$1-billion boondoggle, will eat up the federal surplus. I don't trust Ottawa to spend my money wisely, and I know that many members of this House do not either. Wasteful spending is ingrained in Liberals. With no fear of an approaching election, I expect the Liberals will return to their wasteful spending nature, like the ceremonial fountains in Shawinigan, a \$1-billion boondoggle. They said it wasn't quite a boondoggle; it's only \$1 billion.

How do they waste our money? The Liberals in Ottawa are kicking in \$1 million to upgrade the living quarters of 650 monkeys at Health Canada. These are monkeys being used for medical research. This new monkey palace will include comfy hammocks, natural trees and toys for all the Liberal monkeys. There will even be separate facilities for about 150 behaviourally challenged monkeys. Canadians can surely rest better at night knowing that the federal Liberals are reaching out to provide for the needs of the monkey community. I am certain they will vote Liberal, but it is a secret ballot, so we don't know for sure. Let me be clear: I'm not against the monkeys and I'm not against the welfare of the animals, but Liberals have a record of wasting money.

For example, Liberals are also spending a lot of hard-earned taxpayer dollars subsidizing hard-up golf courses in Canada's eastern provinces. Courses that have received over \$1 million in the last few years include the Clovelly Club in St John's Newfoundland, the Confederation Golf Club in Charlottetown, Algonquin in Fredericton, as well as many others that have not quite made it to the \$1-million mark. Don't get me wrong. I like to play golf once in a while, if I ever get time. But why are the taxpayers having to pay to let people play?

Interjection.

Mr Gill: Thank you. I hate to admit my golf score; it's simply outrageous. But I do intend to improve, hopefully. I know there's a new golf course being built in Niagara Falls, along with a new casino, and I hope that at the member's invitation I will be able to go there and have a game with him.

I have listed some of the reasons that Ontario needs to escape from the federal tax system. It's only a matter of time before the Liberal spendathon starts again—"Gliberal," like my colleague would say. We need to get out of their system before they drag us down with them again.

1640

Ontario's approach to finances is much different from Ottawa's. Our plan is to keep taxes low while targeting credits where they are needed. Our government is committed to stimulating research and development in the province. To do this, Bill 152 establishes an Ontario research employee stock option credit. This credit will allow employees of eligible research and development companies an Ontario personal income tax credit on the first \$100,000 of taxable employee benefits and capital gains each year arising from designated stock options. I know this is quite technical, but this is for the benefit of the people, to retain the people and the talent in Canada. This credit is targeted at the most R&D-intensive companies: those that spend at least \$25 million or 10% of their revenue on research and development. Company size doesn't matter. All businesses that meet the minimum would qualify. Ontario is taking this step to ensure that R&D-intensive firms can attract and keep highly skilled and well-educated employees. Ontario is part of a global marketplace, not just of goods and services but of human talent as well. We want to make sure our educated workers, particularly young people, can stay and contribute right here in Ontario.

Our excellent education system, colleges and universities, which Ontarians enjoy and which this government continually works to strengthen, cannot be a way station to a high-paying job in Silicon Valley. It has to be financially worthwhile for Canadians to remain here and for immigrants to want to come here.

I'm proud to say I'm a first-generation immigrant to Canada, like many others, educated here in one of the world's great universities, the University of Toronto. My family, my wife and I, have thrived and prospered in Canada. It is important to me that my children have the opportunity to do even better.

Another proposal to aid high-tech industries to keep their most valuable employees is to exclude from the employer health tax base the stock option benefits of eligible companies. This measure will help companies attract the best employees by letting them offer competitive compensation packages.

To help foster investment in R&D-intensive businesses, this bill increases the tax credit for labour-sponsored investment funds from 15% to 20%. This program will increase the venture capital available to research companies.

Bill 152 proposes a new education technology tax incentive to encourage business to support Ontario's universities and colleges. This incentive goes directly toward helping colleges and universities acquire new equipment and learning technology. Under this program, corporations will receive a tax deduction, and unincorporated businesses a tax credit, on donations and price discounts to Ontario universities.

The government will support Ontario's mining sector by providing a 10-year or \$10-million profit exemption from mining tax for eligible remote mines. A lot of the time the opposition says we are not doing enough for the mining sector or we are not doing enough for the north. This is a specific program to make sure the mining sector thrives and is sustainable. After using its 10 years or \$10-million exemption, the remote mine's profits would be taxed at the very minimum, marginal rate of 5%. This provision would be retroactive to the 1996 budget.

Ontario's cultural industries will also benefit as the government increases tax credits to book publishing, digital media and film and television production industries. Bill 152, if passed, would enhance the Ontario book publishing tax credit by increasing from \$10,000 to \$30,000 the maximum tax credit for each book and by the extension of the credit to the first three books by eligible Canadian authors. That is a specific program for the arts community, for the authors.

The government will introduce a regional bonus for film and television production shot outside of the greater Toronto area. This regional bonus will create new jobs in film and television outside of Toronto and keep Ontario competitive with other provinces and the United States.

The interactive digital media tax credit will be expanded to include limited amounts of marketing and distribution expenses. Small, emerging Ontario companies in this area will benefit, as they will be better able to compete internationally in marketing and distributing their products.

Red tape will be reduced for small businesses by this bill, which will allow more of them to use the short-form corporations tax return. Large sections of the corporations tax return are geared toward larger corporations and are therefore irrelevant.

I know when I talk to a lot of small businesses in my community they find the tax system, the tax return, very cumbersome, and they have to hire tax professionals at great expense. So this short tax form will eliminate that by cutting red tape.

Professionals in Ontario have been asking for this government to increase their opportunity to incorporate, and we have responded. This is a long time coming. I know the doctors are very happy that they can incorporate. The government will be extending incorporation rights to a number of other professional groups as well, including dentists, lawyers, physicians as I said, and accountants. Professionals regulated under public acts will be covered, as well as certified general accountants. Other groups that could take advantage of this change include nurses, radiologists, social workers and veterinarians. I'm sure Dr Doug Galt will be very happy about that.

This amendment could encourage valuable professionals to remain in Ontario by providing important tax benefits. Many of our professionals, particularly in the medical field, are in strong demand across North America. We need to encourage them to stay in Ontario, so Bill 152, if passed, will be of great benefit in making sure our young people stay in Canada, stay in Ontario, which will benefit all of us.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I was listening to the comments from the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and you would think that the federal election hadn't taken place. Maybe he has been in a cocoon somewhere, but basically his Reform-Alliance supporters lost. They lost badly. They were wiped off every riding and his own riding, I'm sure, too. I think they won two seats in all of Ontario, so obviously the people of Ontario want something different than the Reform-Alliance-type, know-nothing, trailer-park-type politics. They want balanced government that takes care of people who are in need and also is very supportive of people who are in small business.

I couldn't quite understand why he took off on a tirade against monkeys. I really wonder if there is something the member has against monkeys and what monkeys have to do with the budget bill. But he had to take off against monkeys for some reason.

I should also mention that perhaps the member didn't realize that in this budget bill there's no mention of financing or helping public transportation. I'm sure the people of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale would like to have some decent GO Transit service.

As you know, GO is now only financed on the property tax. GO cannot survive on a property tax base. It is impossible. They need some provincial help so you can have decent GO service so people don't find the crunch in the morning, where they can't get into parking lots because they're already filled up, there are only two or three trains, they can't get to work downtown and they're forced to use their cars. As you know, Bramalea is known for its gridlock. You can't get around Bramalea any more because of all the cars and lack of public transportation.

Maybe that's what the member should be asking the Minister of Finance for. Do your job. Do what other cities and provinces do all over the world. They support public transit, good transit systems like GO. They need

their help. You don't have to spend time attacking monkeys. Talk about GO Transit.

1650

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Raminder, member from Bramalea-Gore, the economy is rolling along so well. Good God, we have so many billions of dollars in our coffers that we decided, as a Conservative government, that we were going to give \$1 billion away. So healthy is our economy that we are going to give \$1 billion away—not a dollar, not a million, not a thousand; one billion. You know how many zeros there are there, right? The one is without zeros and then you add zeros: one billion—200 bucks a pop for those who pay income tax to make them feel good. Why? Because the Premier and the others say “because the economy is good and because it's their money and we want to give them a couple of dollars back.” One billion dollars.

I argue they should have cut the debt with that \$1 billion, reduced the debt of my children and their children. You know how good these Tories are about reducing the debt. But no, “We've got \$1 billion and we just want to give it away because we are magnanimous as a government. It's their money and we want to give it away to them.” A billion bucks. Imagine what one billion bucks could do. Lots. One billion bucks could take care of a whole lot of people in trouble. It could take care of our health care system a little bit because everybody is complaining about it.

Good God, what about education? You've taken billions out. Maybe you could put a couple of dollars back. What about housing those poor people? It's not even poor people; we're talking working poor, the guys who are working who don't have any money and they don't have a place to go. Yet we've got \$5 billion, in addition to the \$1 billion, to give away to the corporate sector. Why? Because it's their money, presumably. But it's your money, good taxpayers, they're giving away. They could have cut the debt and they didn't do it.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to let the member opposite know there are nine zeros in a billion. We had to get that message to him. He couldn't calculate it that quickly as he spoke. The ability of the third party to do math is legendary. Their inability to do math is legendary in Ontario.

It's absolutely shocking, when the member, Mr Gill, gives a wonderful speech on the economy, when he tells us about some of the legendary waste of the federal Liberals, that the members opposite turn that prime example of Liberal governmental waste into some kind of debate about monkeys, good or bad. It is shameful. They should join the chorus on this side of the floor and admit that is waste and it should be punished. It should be punished at the polls, in my mind. If you did take a combined vote between the two Conservative parties in the last federal election, in many ridings you'd see the Liberals lose a lot of seats in Ontario and other parts of the country. So the member across shouldn't be so quick to judge.

I again want to congratulate Mr Gill for his excellent speech. By the way, returning \$1 billion taxpayers'

dollars to them is not very much liked by the opposition parties, although guess what? The federal Liberals are going to do the same thing in February of next year. That's right: a direct cheque back to the taxpayers of Ontario because they had a surplus. Now they're going to say it's for home heating costs. Call it what you want; it's a direct cheque from the Liberal Party back to the taxpayers of Ontario because they had a surplus, just like this party did. The greatest form of flattery for us is when the federal Liberals start to imitate our tax cuts and our direct returns to the people of Ontario.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The problem with limiting speeches is that the member didn't have time to speak about the shortage of ophthalmologists in St Catharines and the Niagara region, which I know he would want to have mentioned, and in fact the shortage of doctors throughout the Niagara Peninsula. On almost a daily basis, and I'm sure the other members from the Niagara region would agree, we get telephone calls from people who are desperate to acquire the services of a doctor, either a family physician or a medical specialist. Unfortunately, this government hasn't yet taken the kind of comprehensive action needed to ensure that we have the number of doctors we need in the Niagara region. As I say, they call the constituency office. They believe that somehow the MPP can produce a doctor the next day and we're unable to do so.

Two things have to happen. One is that we must provide financial incentives to have doctors come to our area. I'm not one who believes that you should underpay members of the medical profession. I think medical specialists and general practitioners should be compensated appropriately to encourage them to come to areas outside of Metropolitan Toronto, which has a large number of those doctors.

In terms of the specialists, such as the ophthalmologists and the dermatologists, what is required is that on a temporary basis the government of Ontario lift the ceiling on billing so that these people can continue to serve the people of the Niagara region. In addition to this, of course they must have the best of medical devices and the appropriate prescription drugs to be able to serve people. I think of Visudyne, for instance, for those with macular degeneration. I know if the member had more time he would have discussed that issue.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Hastings: It's interesting listening to the member for St Catharines. You'd think the world revolved around St Catharines.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. It's response time.

Mr Gill: I appreciate everybody who took part in this debate: the members for Eglinton-Lawrence, Trinity-Spadina—I don't see him here—my esteemed colleague from Niagara Falls, Bart Maves, and the member for St Catharines.

A couple of things came up in the discussion. Gridlock was one of the things that was mentioned, along with the progress and the advancement in the economy. There are certain things, inherent difficulties, that come in. People

at home will agree with me that we don't want to go back 10 years when there was a depression or a recession or whatever you call it. People were sitting at home and we were paying people to sit at home. Even though people have some difficulty, they would rather have this difficulty than sit at home collecting unemployment, collecting welfare. I have no problem admitting there's a gridlock problem, but nonetheless it's a problem that comes with prosperity.

The member from Trinity-Spadina talked about the \$200 tax credit. We are very proud to be able to send people back their money. When we discovered that we had a surplus—a lot of times governments, especially the federal government, tend to think it's their money. They forget that the money belongs to the taxpayers. There's only one taxpayer: you and I and the people listening at home. When we find that we have a surplus and those people have sent in a surplus, it's only fair that instead of our deciding how to spend that money, they should be the ones. Somebody asked me, how do I intend to spend my \$200? I spent that to buy shoes and clothes for my children. People are free to do whatever they like with that.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Cordiano: I'm very happy to have this opportunity to speak on this bill and to make some comments. I want to read from the Ontario budget. Let me just read from part of this document.

"The Ontario economy posted another year of very strong economic growth. Real output increased by 4.2%, with substantial advances in consumer and business spending. The housing sector showed exceptional strength, with 100,000 housing starts. More than 150,000 jobs were created last year, lowering the annual unemployment rate. Over the past three years, the Ontario economy has expanded by more than 16% and created 463,000 jobs. Our economy is now in its sixth consecutive year of growth and in recent years has outpaced the economies of each of the group of seven industrial"—

Mr Bradley: Thank you, Paul Martin.

Mr Cordiano: Listen carefully, I say to the member for St Catharines.

"Ontario's export performance is expected to strengthen. Employment is expected to increase at a record pace, with the creation of an estimated 180,000 jobs. This record level of job creation will lower the Ontario unemployment rate to an average of 5.1%."

I just quoted from the budget of 1988, with the red trillium. You remember that, I say to the member for St Catharines.

1700

Mr Bradley: I remember that. They were the good old days.

Mr Cordiano: Interesting numbers and interesting language, and it resembles the budget of today.

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: Just listen. The good part is coming.

Mind you, there are dissimilarities between the two budgets. One of the things I would like to point out that

was very different in the two budgets, in this budget in the year 1999—let's use that because those are actual numbers—compared to 1988.

In 1988 the Liberal government of the day was spending a total of 7.8% of gross domestic provincial product on capital investments, capital improvements. Pardon me, this was 7.8% of the Ontario budget, the expenditures that year, not the gross domestic product. Excuse me.

In this fiscal budget for 1999, this government planned to spend \$2.2 billion on capital. That's stated in the books of the government, in the budget documents. They also planned to make expenditures outside those budget documents with the SuperBuild fund, and I will allow that the government will spend an additional \$2 billion per year over the next five years. So over the five-year period there will be an additional \$10 billion in capital expenditures. When you add the two—the \$2 billion and the \$2.2 billion that is stated in the budget—the total amount spent on capital, as a percentage of the budget, is 6.7%, substantially lower than it was in 1988.

Capital expenditure is a necessary ingredient in keeping the economy growing. I say to the government, you are experiencing a boom time. You are experiencing growth like we experienced in the 1980s. The numbers are very similar. We had job growth. The unemployment rate then was 5.1%; the unemployment rate today is still hovering around 6.3%. You still have a way to go in terms of job creation to match that 1988-89 period. We performed exceedingly well in those years.

Governments have a nasty habit of trying to take credit for what happens in the economy. To some extent they should, but I say to you, the Ontario economy is a wondrous thing. When the economy picks up all over the world, the Ontario economy picks up even greater. We are well positioned and there are some key reasons why that is the case. I'd like to speak to those in just a moment.

One of the key ingredients is capital expenditures—making investments in our infrastructure. Making investments in the health infrastructure and in the social fabric is also important. I say to this government, you are falling well behind in making certain that this economy will keep growing. The infrastructure expenditures that are necessary are not being provided for. I have proved to you that in 10 years the differences are substantial. That 1.1%, 1.2% difference in capital expenditures is huge. It's in the billions. As a matter of fact, I would argue that our infrastructure is dilapidating all around us more rapidly than ever before. This government should be making further additional investments in infrastructure, which it is failing to do.

The GTA alone is expanding at an enormous rate. The gridlock we are experiencing in the GTA, as some of my colleagues have pointed out time and again, is stifling economic activity.

The 407, which this government likes to proclaim they had a hand in somehow inventing, was a project that was around for the last 25 years. In fact, we should have built it. If I have to make a comment to criticize previous

governments, both Conservative and our Liberal government, it would be the fact that we never speeded up the construction of the 407. We had built an interchange at Highway 400, but we did not build the 407 and complete it. That highway was long overdue. It should have been built 20 years ago. In fact, it's going to operate at its maximum capacity very shortly, despite the tolling, which I think is a ludicrous idea, to give this highway away literally in a fire sale to the private sector. Now they're going to jack up toll rates to an impossible level. On top of that, the new owners of the 407 are not even making payments-in-lieu. That's a further bonus they received. No property taxes are being paid.

I would say to the government, while you applaud yourselves and pat yourselves on the back, remember that the Ontario economy is positioned, and has been for many, many years—and you are entrusted with its care. This brings me to the next point. One of the key secrets to keeping our economy moving forward and growing and ensuring that we have a competitive cost advantage with our neighbours to the south is our health care system. Our health care system is a tremendous ace in the hole for this province and for this country. Our health care system allows us to have a tremendous cost advantage over other jurisdictions. In fact, the cost per employee for US manufacturers to provide health care—

Interjections.

Mr Cordiano: Listen carefully. You might learn something. The cost for health care south of the border is around \$3,100 per employee. The cost to Ontario manufacturers for that same employee is about \$540. The difference is substantial. It's in the \$2,100 range. That kind of a difference accrues to those manufacturers in the form of a competitive advantage. We have to make certain that sort of advantage continues to be there. The only way you can do that is to continue to invest properly in the health care system. That isn't happening today. We are devastating our health care system. The infrastructure that's necessary isn't being provided. We were very much against the closure of hospitals, and we told this government. The cost-savings that were supposed to accrue from the closure of hospitals, what have they led to? The recognition that you cannot close hospitals without putting a severe strain on the system.

So the system is suffering badly, and don't tell me you can blame the federal government entirely for this matter. It's totally irresponsible to do that and shirk your responsibilities.

Mr Bradley: You had all kinds of money for tax cuts.

Mr Cordiano: As a matter of fact, there were billions of dollars for tax cuts over the last five years. That wasn't a priority. The federal government had a serious deficit problem. They eliminated that deficit. They are now prepared to cut taxes. That's not the route that you followed. That was the leadership shown by the finance minister of Canada, Paul Martin. That was a clear vision for where this country ought to be going. We are on a sound fiscal footing federally, and that has allowed this federal government to say to the provinces, "Look, we're

going to reinvest in health care, but we're also going to provide some modest tax cuts. That's after we've put our fiscal house in order."

But that's not the plan this government followed in Ontario. They cut taxes. And you know what? That did not have the stimulant effect on the economy for creating jobs that you might think. It certainly did not. With the exceptional growth in exports to the United States, because they are our largest trading partner—and by the way, that's another area of vulnerability that we have in this province. We're vulnerable because we've increased our exports to the United States and have become even more dependent on the United States as a market. The fact of the matter is, even though that has provided us with a very prosperous future, it's not a very secure future. We are hugely dependent on that market. I think we ought to be looking at where we are vulnerable.

1710

We're vulnerable when it comes to the lack of infrastructure spending this government has inflicted upon the economy. If there is a downturn, we will not have made during good economic times the kinds of investments we should have been making during this boom time. This government is failing to make them. I've proved that the capital expenditure budgets of this government don't even measure up to the levels we had in the 1980s. We should have been spending even more on infrastructure. This province needs that infrastructure because we are an export-oriented jurisdiction. We have a huge number of goods moving south on a daily, hourly, minute-by-minute basis. Our roads are being chewed up. We need rapid transit for our GTA corridor. That should be built, not 10 or 15 or 20 years down the road; we should start to build that today. Yet this government hasn't talked about public rapid transit. There's no mention of it in the budget whatsoever.

There are great shortcomings on the part of this government with its budgetary plan with respect to this bill. There are a few areas I want to highlight respecting the bill. They've made certain changes that I think are worthy of some discussion as to how they impact the economy in general. As I say, health care is a key area that needs to be safeguarded by any government anywhere in this country.

In addition to that, I want to highlight the electrical provisions of this bill. The problem with what this government is doing is that the stranded debt of Hydro is now being foisted upon the ratepayers. They will have the sole burden of dealing with the repayment of that debt, and we're concerned about that. They will be paying for it for many years to come. It's something like \$19.5 billion that Ontario Hydro still owes.

The made-for-Ontario tax program: the fact of the matter is that this government can talk about decoupling its income tax from the federal government all it wants. The reason it's doing it is because of the federal government's move to cut taxes. That in effect would make certain that the Ontario government's take from that income tax, the revenue that would accrue from its

income tax take as a percentage of the federal income tax, would be reduced automatically, and therefore this government could not go along with that. They talk about decoupling from the income tax system. I say to the members opposite, be certain that we're not going to set up a boondoggle, a system that would result in about \$300 million a year if you set up your own collection agency. Surely to God that's not going to happen. That would be a disaster of \$300 million in expenditures.

In addition to that, there are the provisions that allow for incorporation by professionals. Obviously this is a boon to doctors and chartered accountants, and presumably the government is trying to stem the flow of our professionals south of the border. But what about teachers and what about nurses? They're fleeing in record numbers and we are losing them daily. We have a shortage of teachers; we have a shortage of nurses. I'm not suggesting they be allowed to incorporate, but certainly we should recognize that they too are professionals, that they too deserve to be treated like professionals, with the kind of respect this government has failed to show for teachers and nurses.

I think the time has come to deal with that in a serious fashion, to recognize that our education system is an integral part of growing our economy well into the future, and that making sustainable investments in education and health, which means dealing with the people who provide the primary care, the nurses and teachers in the education system who provide their service—we shouldn't overlook that. Yet this government fails to recognize how important those professionals are to our system, to maintaining a high-quality education system and a high-quality health care system. We are in danger of losing that quality. It's happening today. There's no mention of those individuals in this budget.

I say to the government, when you pat yourselves on the back, remember that health care is a key component of maintaining our cost-competitive advantage with our neighbours to the south. If you fail to recognize that, you will hurt the Ontario economy, as you are doing now. I suspect that in the future, when and if, God forbid, we should have a downturn, we will feel the effects of that in our health care system even more dramatically than we are today.

You're failing to make the necessary investments in the infrastructure that are required to alleviate the gridlock we're experiencing in the GTA, for example. The SuperBuild fund talks about partnerships with the private sector. I've suggested to you that your capital expenditure budgets don't even meet the requirements that are there today, forgetting what's coming on in the future. In fact, when you compare their capital expenditures to those of our government in the late 1980s, in 1988, as a percentage of total budgetary expenditures, they don't measure up. In 1988, 7.8% of the budget was allocated for capital expenditures. In 1999, it's less than that, at 6.7% if you include, hypothetically, what will happen with the private sector and the SuperBuild fund—substantially lower—and the pressures are enormous for infrastructure spending.

We're not keeping up. Our roads are operating at 125% of capacity. There's no mention of public transit in the budget. I've never heard any of the government members talk about public transit, about any kind of possibility for the growth and expansion of public transit. All they've done is slash budgets and have given the responsibility to the municipalities, downloaded all those responsibilities for roads and public transit. They simply cannot keep up with the demands that are being placed on the infrastructure that's in place now, let alone any new infrastructure we require.

This government has failed to recognize what really keeps this economy going. Tax cuts are all they seem to talk about. As I've proved, there was great growth in the economy in the late 1980s. There was great growth at that time and there's great growth today. Yet you're squandering the opportunity to invest in our infrastructure, in our health care system and in our education system. You'll see that's going to be something we regret in the future.

I would say to the government, when you pat yourselves on the back, remember, you're not making the necessary investments that will ensure our economy grows well into the future and has future prosperity for all.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Marchese: The member for York South-Weston makes a number of good observations that I want to pick up on. The main one was the fact that their government, and I would dare say the New Democrats, spent more on infrastructure than you guys do.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: You don't like spending, I understand, but infrastructure is good for society, right? It has long-term benefits, doesn't it? It has long-term consequences, not just for you but for your kids. If you can't think for yourselves and about yourselves, think about your children and whether or not they're going to have the benefits of infrastructure dollars, because it's true you're not spending any.

Imagine New Democrats spending in a recession because we believed infrastructure was a critical part of our society. What does this government do? It dumps those responsibilities on to the city and says, "We can't do it. We don't want to do it. We're going to dump it on to the city." The city has no money except property taxes. They've got to go hit on the homeowner to get the money for the infrastructure. They've got two ministries, the Ministry of Housing where the minister doesn't build housing any more—I don't know why he keeps the title—and we've got the Minister of Transportation, who looks after asphalt and a couple of highways, yet he's called the Minister of Transportation. These guys don't have a job any more, but they keep the title and the limousine. Why do you keep the limousine and the extra money if you don't have any work for the title for which you are responsible? No transit, because you've given it away to the cities, and no housing, because you've dumped that down to the cities. You've got nothing left.

You people are not spending. Who is minding the shop for when the economy goes down? Who is worried about the seniors, when in 10 or 15 years we'll have more seniors than anybody can look after? What about a home care program? Where is the money for that?

1720

Mr Hastings: It was fascinating listening to the member for York South-Weston trying to create a parallel between expenditures and taxation in the 1980s and in the 1990s. What he failed to mention—and I believe he was a member of the Peterson government—was that if you look at the numbers back in those years, you had a situation of expenditures rising 15% or 20%, yet the money to cover that was not there. How did we end up with the deficit we're in?

What is so interesting, to listen to the member for York South-Weston, is that he's a member of what they call the Liberal Party of Ontario, but not once in my time over here have I heard them embrace the idea of lower taxes as espoused by Robert Mundell, that great University of Chicago and Columbia University economist who posited the whole view that if you want to grow your economy, you lower your taxes, reduce your red tape and make your government somewhat smaller. You would think they'd be espousing such an idea across the way. When he talks about higher exports to the United States, guess what? Are the states surrounding the Great Lakes higher-taxed jurisdictions than Ontario? I don't think so. Where do you see that in the economic literature?

Our whole economic premise for being here for five years was to bring back the Ontario economy. We used to hear across the way, especially from the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, "Where are the jobs?" I can remember that in 1995, 1996 and 1997. Well, we created an environment that brought about a huge number of jobs and actually increased revenue in this province so we would have those monies for vital services like education and health care that they're always talking about across the way.

Mr Bradley: The limitation on the amount of time a speaker has means he doesn't always have the chance to talk about all the issues. I'm wondering if the member from Lawrence would be interested in recalling for the House that the largest tax cut I can recall in this province was when the Liberal government removed the premiums from OHIP. That was a very regressive tax that did not take into account a person's ability to pay. Those premiums were completely removed.

As well, I want to ask his opinion of the Premier's name on all the signs on the highway, like some southern Republican governor in the United States. You drive along the highway and it says, "Your tax dollars at work. Mike Harris, Premier." One has to wonder what sort of ego a person has, to have a sign with his name on it. Surely it's the Ontario taxpayers' money and not Mike Harris's that is going to these various projects we see from time to time.

The other thing I want him to talk about, if he has time, is the misuse of government Web sites. I was

browsing several government Web sites the other day, and I noted that some of them were partisan. Some of them were not, and I want to commend those ministers, like the Minister of Natural Resources, who do not have partisan Web sites. The Minister of Community and Social Services of course had one. He was still out in the hallway after the government House leader said, "I'm sorry, the Speaker was right in his ruling. We're never going to do it again." Out in the hallway was the YPC of YPCs, John Baird, still saying, "It's the right thing to do."

Last, I want you to mention what you think of the \$185 million this government has squandered on self-serving, blatantly partisan government advertising at the expense of the taxpayer.

Mr Maves: I want to commend the member for York-South Weston on his comments. I always enjoy when the member gets up. I played some hockey with the MPP's team last year. We had a good time in the Gardens. We actually traded the member to the federal Liberals, I think, that day and then proceeded to whack the federal Liberals about 12 to 4. But he's a good member; I enjoy his comments.

I'm happy with the fact that he went back to 1988 to pull out that budget, because there are several things that were different between the 1988 budget and today. He's concerned that he doesn't think we're spending a high enough percentage of our revenues on capital expenditures. A couple of things are a little different today.

Back then, the Mulroney government was contributing about 20% or more of health care costs to the province of Ontario; today the Chrétien government's contributing about 11%. That's one major difference here, and we've had to take some monies from other areas of the budget in order to prop up that health care budget.

Another dissimilarity is that this government has gotten very creative over the past couple of years and we've sought out private-sector and public-private partnerships on capital funding. For instance, when we just had a billion-dollar campaign where we put \$1 billion into college and university capital funding, we leveraged that to get \$800 million also from the private sector. So we've been a little bit more creative and we're actually spending a lot more money in this province on capital right now than the books may appear, because of that creativity.

Lastly, let me say things were indeed rosy in 1988, but that was the one of the biggest tax-and-spend governments in the history of the province. It shows you how far the province can fall and how quickly it can fall when you're raising taxes, as that government was doing in 1988 and 1987 and 1989. They were raising taxes again and again and again, and they ended up killing the economy in Ontario.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr Cordiano: I'd like to thank all the members for their comments.

It's important to remember that while this government has cut taxes, they have also off-loaded most of the social costs for welfare and social housing and public transit on

to the municipalities, and now those costs will be borne by the property taxpayers. So, part 2 of the Harris agenda is about to hit with full impact in the very near future when these municipalities will have to increase property taxes to ensure that they have enough revenue to provide for those very critical areas. So I say to the members, don't get too high up on your horse because the impacts of property tax increases is coming to a location near you in your own riding in the not-too-distant future.

The fact of the matter is, fees have gone up for most people in all kinds of areas. Yes, there have been tax cuts, but the fact of the matter is that public transit, social housing, as I say, the cost of social assistance, has been off-loaded to municipalities. These should never be funded from the property tax base. They should be funded from a progressive income tax base. We've strenuously objected to that, and this government completely ignores that.

If the economy should have a downturn, these municipalities will be hard pressed to meet their requirements at the local level. At the end of the day, they'll be coming, cap in hand, to Queen's Park to march toward the Premier's office to ask for the assistance that they're going to need, and you're going to have to bail them out. I say that's not too distant in the future. The city of Toronto is experiencing very difficult shortfalls in its projections. It's just around the corner, so I say this is all a fabrication.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I want to start by saying it's a real privilege to follow the member for York-South Weston, who at one time arguably could have been the leader and I'm now beginning to understand why—why he isn't—no, why. I mean that complimentarily. I know that he has an extensive business background, but he has missed a couple of things here.

I think you have to start at the fundamentals. If I look right back to the Common Sense Revolution, and the now Blueprint document that is our next series of formulas for success, we started with the \$11-billion deficit thing. You've got to look at where we were and understand some of the difficult decisions we had to make that all Ontarians shared in. As my colleagues are saying, and we all know the creed very well, each and every hour we were spending \$1 million in excess of the revenue coming in. It was a shameful dilemma. We came up with some fairly straightforward formulas. The opposition have laughed, and today the member for Trinity-Spadina was indeed laughing at it; in fact, he didn't really know how to calculate the numbers. But it was like this: we were in a situation where we had to make changes or the province was basically bankrupt. We came up with a theory: tax cuts create jobs. It's very clearly laid out in this document here that the more we reduced taxes, the more jobs were created—there's almost a direct relationship with job creation—and the more job creation, the more revenue.

1730

I'm going to start basically at Minister Eves's December 4 statement. "Finance Minister Eves today announced

that the Ontario government is projecting a \$1.4-billion surplus this year. Eves said \$1 billion of the surplus comes from the elimination of the province's reserve and will be applied toward net provincial debt reduction."

So any of that surplus that we had held for emergency situations was being moved right straight forward to debt reduction.

"Due to the strong performance of Ontario's economy and our government's robust revenue performance, we are now able to invest in priority areas such as health care and at the same time reduce the province's debt" in an earlier time frame than originally committed. That might be a nice place to sort of look at the revenue side and the expenditure side.

I'm looking at the current economic review that Minister Eves introduced. These are on the accruals; they're actuals based on 1996-97, and \$49.4 billion was the actual revenue. I see the actual revenue at the end of the 1999-2000 fiscal year was \$62 billion. That's an increase of almost \$13 billion in revenue. What that \$13 billion tells me is that the economic theories, the levers that we introduced, the 67 individual tax reductions, have increased revenue. That's what's totally revolutionary to any of the people on the opposition side.

But I think the biggest form of compliment is imitation. Imitation is flattery. That imitation could be no better demonstrated than this last week when the Prime Minister of this country, the Honourable Jean Chrétien, when speaking at Duke University, indicated that Ontario is very competitive with its neighbouring jurisdictions like New York and Michigan and many parts of the United States where there's a similar kind of industrial or mixed economy. He said that basically Ontario has the lowest personal income tax, which creates an attractive investment environment.

On top of that, we have one of the best health care systems, I would say, if I look at the amount of money and the changes that have been made there, and education systems as well. That is a compliment to the very difficult decisions that have been made since 1995.

"In the 2000 budget we challenged the federal government to follow our lead on reducing the capital gains inclusion rate from two thirds to 50%. The federal government responded to our challenge...." There's another case where they see our fiscal strategies and spending strategies are right on target. "To ensure that Ontario taxpayers obtain the full benefit of this move, we will now be implementing the 50% inclusion rate effective October 18, 2000...." So there again, as we're moving, they're imitating. I think when the Prime Minister of this country recognizes that, it is certainly in itself an indicator that we are on the right track.

If Mr Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, has a chance or any time left, he is probably going to spend a couple of moments talking about all of this growth and prosperity, and he will say there is growth and prosperity, because he's the critic. I haven't heard him say anything about these 900,000 jobs that the economy has created, but he should get to a few of the

fundamentals that are in here. In 1985-95 the Liberals and NDP tripled Ontario's debt, from \$49 billion to \$102 billion, and at the end of this fiscal year we'll have paid down the debt by \$2.5 billion, exceeding our Blueprint commitment, as I explained earlier.

But I think the important thing here is to look at some of the measurements: the debt-to-GDP ratio is actually decreasing. That's an important measurement. It may be a little bit obscure for some, but in 1995 the debt-to-GDP ratio—that's the amount of debt and the growth in GDP—was 31%. Today it stands at 26.7%, indicating that there is a lower ratio of debt-to-GDP, which means we're growing the economy faster than we're growing any debt.

The attributing of the amount of growth to exports is another part of his remarks, I'm sure. I've heard him speak and the comments are usually the same every time, and I'm trying to anticipate them being the same again because I think he's going to speak again.

Ontario deserves its fair share of immigrants. He mentioned that today in question period. He said there would be an increase of—I forget the number—a million new Canadians who would be immigrating into Ontario. I think that's also part of our strategy. If you look at the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board's A Road Map to Prosperity, which I am going to cover somewhat, there are a number of cases where a very rich and very diverse economy and a very rich and diverse culture are addressed as well.

If you look at—I'm going to find it in my notes. I do want to find that and get to that.

Mrs Brenda Elliott (Guelph-Wellington): It's important to be properly informed.

Mr O'Toole: Yes, to get it right rather than just go on.

Business investment and consumer spending are leading Ontario's economic growth. Eighty per cent of our growth is related to what we are doing right here in Ontario. I've got to repeat that in case the member for Scarborough-Agincourt perhaps isn't listening. He probably is. Eighty per cent of our growth is related to what we are doing right here in Ontario. Twenty per cent is related to our net exports.

As well, our employment growth rate since 1995 has been 15.5%, compared to 7.4% for Michigan and 6.7% for Ohio. Job growth rate: we have created over 830,000 net new jobs since 1995, greatly exceeding our CSR commitment of 725,000.

We've said all along that some of the tax strategies, including some of the venture capital and stimulating that through tax credits—we've also encouraged the federal government to reintroduce those venture capital funds. To the general public those strategies are of not much consequence, but they are the very strategies that explain the rapid growth, because 80% of the growth in new jobs is really occurring in the small business sector. We're creating the kind of climate where those small business people know this government is there to support that growth.

I'm going to make a small change because I want to put on the record some of the things in this document

here, A Road Map to Prosperity. I think it's important for people to be aware that this document is in fact a blueprint. This blueprint starts with five strategic goals. Any government needs to have a vision and a road map, and that's what I'm presenting here today. This isn't just a numbers game, it's a road map to prosperity, and that road map to prosperity is managed by Premier Harris and our finance minister, Ernie Eves. On the other side, I don't see anyone able to even carry the book, let alone write it.

The five principles are knowledge and skills for prosperity, which I will cover in some detail; an innovative culture, as I mentioned earlier, and I will go into some depth later. A strong global orientation: Minister Palladini, as I speak, has committed to open trade offices overseas. In fact, I believe he's overseas now doing just that, doing what he promised. Building our industrial and regional strengths: I can tell you that we've opened the Innovation Centre in Durham and a small business enterprise centre, very well received. A favourable investment climate: as I said, that means just exactly what Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin are doing—recognizing that the tax holiday that's been put on power development programs, the innovative tax credit that has been allowed for young entrepreneurs to take capital credits and avoid paying capital gains on those investments. This is how you feed and fuel what I call an entrepreneurial culture. That's the change; it's not the same old, same old.

1740

I compliment Mr Stockwell, our Minister of Labour, as well for bringing in flexibility in the workplace with three pieces of labour legislation, in the industrial-commercial-trade sector and the Employment Standards Act, which has received some attention. In fact, it doesn't say anything in that bill about working 60 hours a week; it gives employees the right to choose the hours they work. That flexibility is what the opposition just doesn't get. It's the innovative culture. People working in a knowledge-based economy are certainly smart enough to make those kinds of decisions.

I'm going to comment on a few of the five basic principles, and I think it's important to put on the record this Road Map to Prosperity, because these are the principles on which we are going to expand or explode into the new century, starting next year.

Knowledge and skills are to ensure that Ontario's education and training system is high-quality and market-responsive; that is, training children and young people for an economy that exists. That's why we put in the "new economy" investments in computers and engineering. That's where the jobs are. It's not discrediting the value of any other education, but it's linking up the skill shortages that I hear about today in the Ottawa silicon valley into what our learning institutions are providing.

Number two under knowledge and skills is to promote strong employment skills and a commitment to lifelong learning. That is a culture of lifelong learning. It applies to the people in this House. It applies to the parents, the children and those people who recognize that now that

we're in a global economy, we've got to have the right skills in the right place at the right time. He who sits back will be lost.

It is somewhat aggressive and assertive to recognize that, but we want a prosperous economy so we can have strong health care, strong education and strong social supports for people who need our support. Without that, without the strong economy, the rest is all platitudes. Mr Rae found out in government that you can't spend your way out of an economic recession. You have to have strategic, directional programs, which this government has.

Number three is to facilitate smooth school-to-work, job-to-job transitions. In fact, in the whole curriculum reform, if you look at it, there's the three different streams that are moving through our secondary school system as we speak. I will admit it's a more rigorous, quality-driven curriculum.

The second strategic goal is the innovative culture that I mentioned in the five strategies, building an innovative capacity throughout the economy that, like the Wisdom Exchange, champions the entrepreneurs of the year. The Global Traders Awards are coming up in the next couple of weeks. These are celebrating successes, looking forward and partnering with those innovative companies like RIM and other Canadian-based companies that are, in many cases, partnered with our academic institutions.

The third strategic goal is the strong global orientation that aggressively markets Ontario internationally as an attractive place to invest. We're doing it. Minister Palladini is out there selling it right now, expanding Ontario's trade with the world. Develop world-class infrastructure to connect Ontario to the global marketplace, promote global citizenship and a cosmopolitan outlook and a positive Ontario, preferred home for the world's best.

The fourth strategic goal is industrial and regional strength. Encourage more effective local governance to support local economic development leadership. I could maybe talk on that. It was part of what Mr Cordiano, the member from York South-Weston, was talking about, the whole trade between the Who Does What exercise and municipal transfers. It should be realized that we uploaded \$3 billion worth of expenditures, education costs, off the residential and industrial-commercial tax base. We swapped with them something like \$2.5 billion in services.

I agree that some of those things need to be sorted out, specifically transit. I believe there's an awful lot that has to be spent on transit. We've heard that in the news recently and in the future—I think it's a larger question, though. I think they have to integrate transit, but it's capitalization on the economic development potential of the GTA and other large urban centres.

Clearly you've got to have a healthy Toronto. Toronto is the centre of Canada. I'm not trying to discredit any other part of Canada or Ontario, but you have to have a healthy heart to have a healthy province, and I suspect this government is committed to that. I think our

commitment to the Olympics is evidence of that. The infrastructure will be put in place as part of that Olympic infrastructure, not just for the waterfront but it will include GO Transit and other high-speed rail links and corridors, I'm confident.

That's part of what SuperBuild is all about: to build on the strength and capacity and potential of northern and rural Ontario. They complement the other parts of the province, a wonderful, rich, diverse, environmentally beautiful province. I know it's important when I look at Mr Snobelen and Ontario's Living Legacy, which is the parks system that has been created that complements all the growth and recreational lifestyles the future will demand.

Number five is a favourable investment climate, to ensure sound fiscal management, provide the right climate for growth and investment, reward entrepreneurship—I've repeated that a few times, but it's one of our investment climate strategies—and remove barriers to business activity. Many would refer to that as the Red Tape Commission. Mr Joe Spina is the chair of that. Bob Wood, the member for London West, was a member. As well, the member for Scarborough Centre, Ms Mushinski, was on that. A number of members work on these subcommittees where we meet with stakeholder groups that tell us what sorts of barriers are preventing investment, and we act responsibly as guardians of the investment climate and the environmental climate in this province.

I would say to you that this is worth picking up. Anyone who is watching should get one because it is the Road Map to Prosperity. I'm telling you, it's the plan. It's available on the Web site. Mr David Lindsay is the president and CEO of the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board. It's at www.gov.on.ca. Look on there for OJIB, the Ontario Jobs and Investment Board, and their report. I can assure you this should be a reference point for each of us.

There's one final commitment I should say publicly as I'm looking at the minister responsible for children. I know that we're meeting now to involve—if you were to look at the statistics in future years, by 2016 the child population of Ontario will be three million. Look at the plans and strategies in place there under Ontario's Promise. That's the Premier's five-point commitment to children in Ontario.

Complementing that is the strategy our minister, Margaret Marland is developing. Healthy Babies, Healthy Children is a new program to screen infants. There is preschool speech and language, early literacy initiatives, extended parental leave, and also arguing for our share of early child development over five years. These supports, in Ontario's Promise, are “a healthy start,” “an ongoing, positive relationship with a caring adult,” “a safe place that offers positive, meaningful activities” outside the home, “marketable skills through effective education,” and the opportunity to give back to the community. Those are the five principles for each individual, our children, that the minister in charge of children, Margaret

Marland, working with the Premier and with caucus and cabinet, will build on in the future.

If you look at the Road Map to Prosperity and just a few of the five principles I've mentioned, and look at the broader picture of education reform and our reform agenda with respect to children and their future, I believe it is the road to prosperity, and this budget is just one piece of that.

The Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Phillips: The member, probably inadvertently, wasn't aware of some of the numbers in the government's own documents. I don't normally like to go back 10 years ago, because I think the public wants to move on, but just so we can be sure of the record, when the Peterson government left office, the provincial debt to GDP was 14.6%, and now under Mike Harris it's 28.7%; it has doubled. According to government documents, the public debt interest as a percentage of revenue in the last year of the Peterson government was 10.5%. It's now 15.1%. In the final year of the Peterson government, total expenditure as a percentage of GDP was 15.5%, and today it's 15.6%.

1750

I think the public is often surprised that Premier Harris has added \$24 billion to the debt of the province. The debt of the province has gone up almost 25%. In fact, from the time Mr O'Toole started speaking to the time he finished, 20 minutes, we had to pay \$70,000 just to cover the interest on the debt Premier Harris has added to the province. Think about that. Every hour we're spending over \$200,000 just to pay the interest on the debt Premier Harris has added. Mr O'Toole, in his 20-minute talk—\$70,000 in interest costs as a result of Mike Harris.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: I know this comes as a shock to my business friends. I almost hate to shock them like this, but I always say, "Harris has added \$24 billion. Every hour we're spending \$200,000 just to pay the interest on Premier Harris's debt." It's unfortunate but true. I hate to disillusion Mr O'Toole, but those are the facts.

Mr Marchese: Just to respond to the member from Durham, I remember the Premier saying he had developed a recession-proof economy. Imagine the power this man has. Imagine the words that flow ex cathedra from the Premier: a recession-proof economy. How does he do it? He does it magically by tax cuts to high-income individuals. Yes, that includes union men and women who are making \$70,000 and \$80,000 and want a piece of that action. And it includes millionaires who don't need the money and a corporate sector that in a good economy is going to get \$5 billion in the next three or four years. God bless the Tories. That's the magic of the solution to the problem of future recessions.

Don't worry. Mike Harris says he has created a recession-proof economy. Can you believe that, good taxpayers of Ontario? You have to listen to those words very carefully, because when the next recession comes—and some people are predicting it's going to come in a year or a year and a half—who's going to be there to

mind the shop and look after the seniors, who are being kicked out of hospitals after one day because there's no room for them and are sent home and there's nobody to look after them because either families are strapped and there are no resources or not enough money. On whom are they going to rely?—the government isn't there. They're going to rely on volunteers to look after seniors, you would think. There is no government any more; there are just volunteers who are going to be looking after you.

The member from Durham says we need healthy cities, but he has dumped everything on to the cities. The cities don't have any money. They are impoverished. They are so poor. There is no money left, and they dump everything on to the cities. Who will be looking after the shop when the recession comes?

Mr Young: It is an honour to comment on the remarks made this afternoon by the member from Durham. I thank him once again, not only for what he said today but for the assistance he has provided on a continuing basis to the Ministry of Finance. Without his help, frankly, the budget wouldn't be as complete and comprehensive as it is.

There was a significant level of discussion—quite a bit of discussion over the last short while—about debt. It's trite to say we all oppose more debt. At one time or other, all the parties ran advocating less debt, but some of the parties were more frank than others. To the credit of the Liberals, in their red book in the 1995 campaign they acknowledged it was going to take some time to turn around the economy of this province, by reason of the dire straits we were in. The Liberals acknowledged that we would have to continue to go into debt for a considerable period of time. Of course, that shouldn't come as a great surprise, because if one considers their record, together with that of the NDP, between 1985 and 1995, one will clearly see that the Liberals and the NDP tripled Ontario's debt. It went from \$49 million to \$102 million in 10 short years under the Liberal and NDP administration of this province.

Interjections.

Mr Young: I misspoke; it is in fact "billion."

Let me say this: at the end of this fiscal year we will have paid down the debt by more than \$2.5 billion. That greatly exceeds the Blueprint commitment made by this government in the last campaign.

Mr Cordiano: It is clear that the approach this government has taken is to add an additional \$24 billion to the accumulated debt of this province. In fact, they did that at the same time they were cutting taxes. The most fiscally responsible thing at the time would have been to pay down that debt instead of adding to it. If they had done that at least, then I think the economy would have had a chance to grow even faster in those earlier years. It didn't do that. It didn't turn around. The tax cut got in the way and what ended up happening is that they underfunded severely the essential services that we needed in health care and in education. They took it out on health care and education. They took billions of dollars out. Further to that, they added insult to injury by offloading

to municipalities the cost of social services like housing and public transit. And now, if there is a slowdown, we have an economy that is vulnerable because of the structural changes they've made to the province's fiscal infrastructure.

So I think you have to look really hard and say to yourselves that if there is a slowdown, revenues will be slowing down. There won't be the ability for the municipalities to make those essential payments; revenues won't be coming in for them either. The property taxpayers of this province are going to get dinged as a result, and the services that are necessary, like public transportation, are going to suffer even more in the future. So I say to the government, you have created an economy that is vulnerable because it will not have the necessary revenues in the future, and the sustainability of this economy will not be there in the future. I say to the members, look really hard at what you've created.

The Speaker: Response?

Mr O'Toole: It is a pleasure, as I said, to listen to some of the responses. The member for Willowdale tried to dispel the myth that the debt is growing, and I think he did it very, very well. If I look at the 1995 Liberal plan, it is clear that we would have had more debt today. On top of that, we've taken on the very difficult task of restructuring Ontario Hydro, now Hydro One and OPG, and, if someone looks into that stranded debt issue, the

compensation reform of WSIB, which had about another \$12 billion in stranded debt, we managed much of the debt that isn't showing. Mr Phillips knows that. He knows that those were taken into the government books.

I have to correct the member for York South-Weston. The only people who took money out of health care were Allan Rock and Martin. Shame on them. This government has moved it from \$17.4 billion to almost \$23 billion. These have been difficult decisions, because there are ministries that have borne that load of moving our expenditures—and I should say, in all caution, we have increased not just the revenue by \$14 billion; what we've actually done is increase the expenditures by almost \$7 billion. Those strategic investments I believe are part of the recovery plan that I mentioned.

I think the member for Willowdale, as the parliamentary assistant, has spent considerable time discussing some of the small business decisions. And I think one of the top ones is the ORICGA, the Ontario research and investment capital gains allowance. If people want to spend some time—and we know the hi-tech sector is growing—there's an example of investing in our future, in our young people and in technology. The other side just doesn't get it.

The Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
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Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Willowdale	Young, David (PC)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)

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

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

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