



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario
Deuxième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 26 April 2001

Jeudi 26 avril 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 26 April 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 26 avril 2001

The House met at 1000.

Prayers.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC
BUSINESS

SAVING FOR OUR CHILDREN'S
FUTURE ACT (INCOME TAX
AMENDMENT), 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR L'ÉPARGNE
EN PRÉVISION DE L'AVENIR
DE NOS ENFANTS (MODIFICATION DE LA
LOI DE L'IMPÔT SUR LE REVENU)

Mr Hastings moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 4, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide a tax credit for contributions to registered education savings plans / Projet de loi 4, Loi modifiant la Loi de l'impôt sur le revenu en vue de prévoir un crédit d'impôt pour les cotisations versées à un régime enregistré d'épargne-études.

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

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'm very delighted to have this opportunity and good fortune to have come up one in the balloting to present what I consider a very important piece of legislation. I hope some day that it will see its way into a budget and become part of this government's and this party's philosophy about educational access and educational opportunity.

In May 2000, I introduced an act entitled the E-Commerce Act, 2000, which was adopted by the Attorney General in some major changes with respect to privacy provisions. So I'm having a second kick at the cat, so to speak, in terms of this particular bill.

The essence of the saving for our children's future bill, or an amendment to the Income Tax Act, relates to registered education savings plans. These plans have been in operation for a number of years and have been authorized by the federal government. However, in the last few years—I'd say since about 1996-97—there has been an incentive to parents, grandparents, foster families or other people who are responsible for children that if you contribute up to, I believe, a maximum—there is an

incentive of either \$200 or \$400 per child that can also be provided by the taxpayer through the federal government to maximize the value of the contribution. The purpose of this bill is to provide additional addenda in the building blocks of getting our young people looked after for the mid- and long-term future.

If you look at any of these plans, there is one particular plan—I won't name the company—where you can provide for about \$10 a month. You will say, "That's a pretty modest amount, but how will that really help my child, my grandchild, my nephew?" It's the old magic of compounding interest. It's the whole idea that if you put \$10 a month away, that's \$120 a year; times 10 years, and you have \$1,200. Even if you have it in a guaranteed investment instrument, at the end of that time, you will probably have close to \$2,000.

Critics might say, "Well, \$2,000 is really not going to be an awful lot of money for anybody who is trying to access post-secondary education in this province," but in point of fact, it can be a significant benefit to those families who take advantage of the RESP federally, and what we would like to see provincially, in that it reduces the long-term debt—one of the trends that is most disturbing—for those students who go to university, who go to a community college or who go to a private vocational school.

I'm sure I'm going to hear debate from the other side, "If you would only increase the amount of funding, you would solve the problem, or if you would freeze tuition fees, you would solve most of the problem." But in point of fact, we have a significant number of competitive spending constraints that we have to deal with in the outreach, whether it be in health care, in corrections, in a whole number of government activities.

It seems to me that it's incumbent to create in this province and across this country a position of leadership that would encourage a culture of responsibility to have people help their children learn for the future, to give them the opportunity to go to a post-secondary institution. I think most parents, grandparents, foster parents, uncles or aunts are interested in doing that. However, the reality is that in a large number of instances, particularly reported by Statistics Canada, it's not occurring. So that's another fundamental benefit for presenting this bill for consideration today.

Briefly, I had a news conference yesterday and I had a lovely lady from the riding of Etobicoke North attend my news conference. I'll simply use her first name. Marcy first opened an RESP account for her son when he was 13 months old and she was out of work. "As a single

mother with no source of income, I felt it was imperative”—and these are her words—“that I start saving for my son’s education.” Seven years later, she thinks it was one of the best things she has ever done. Now employed in a client services responsibility, in a payroll firm, she has consistently contributed \$25 to \$35 monthly for her son Alexander’s post-secondary education. It doesn’t seem like a lot but it will really add up. She recommends an RESP to anyone interested in securing his or her child’s future.

1010

“With the way the economy is going today, there is no telling what university costs will be when Alexander goes to school,” she admits. “When I look at what my nephews are going through to put themselves through university, I am really happy to have started an RESP.” And she is a lady with an income of below \$30,000.

That’s one of the principal provisions of this bill. It targets these benefits for individuals, single moms who are earning \$40,000 or less, and it targets families at the upper end at \$80,000. We want to ensure that if this ever becomes part of a budget or some other piece of legislation, it encapsulates those two principal considerations in the bill.

Finally, I may say that a number of provinces across this country are looking to Ontario to see what happens with respect to this piece of legislation—where it goes—because there are a large number of provincial governments that are interested at some point, given their expenditure situations, in becoming involved in this area, not just primarily for the consideration of families but also from a constitutional perspective.

In the last few years, the federal government, bless their hearts, has become involved in education, and while I don’t want to use the constitutional argument to a great extent, under the existing federal arrangement, education is supposed to be primarily a provincial responsibility. Here we now have the federal government involved. We understand why. It’s because we live in a globalized, interconnected world and I think that is primarily their rationale, but the provincial governments want to reassert and get involved at some point in the near future in this type of program.

Finally—or second-finally—I think it’s important that this bill have serious consideration from the viewpoint of the human potential that can be released. Regardless of what government is here on this side, or in any other provincial capital or in Ottawa in the coming decades of this century, it is inevitable that the price and cost of post-secondary education is rising and will be rising. The trend rate right now is about 5% to 5.5%. If you look at a projection from Statistics Canada, by 2018, it is estimated that the cost of a university education in Ontario and probably in other parts of the country will reach nearly \$120,000. That’s assuming no increases and that you just have the existing trend. This is a modest way of trying to respond in a positive, specific way in changing that trend line and getting parents and working families involved in the education of their children, their

grandchildren or foster children—and there are a lot of foster parents in this province.

That’s my presentation for today. I will be glad to hear remarks from the other speakers to follow.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I’m pleased to speak to this bill. In fact, this bill is very similar to the policy we had in the last election. I’m very pleased that there are people on the other side who care about working families. I believe this is important enough that it should have been a government bill, but I congratulate the member for bringing something forward.

There are a couple of things the honourable member across the way mentioned, though, that make me want to say a few things. I applaud Marcy, the young lady you met yesterday, but there are families with \$40,000 or less who have more than one child and who would still find this difficult. Anything we can do to help working families is a worthwhile bill—and I’m not saying this isn’t—but the reality out there is a little more stark than perhaps the other side realizes.

Over the last decade, the average student debt load upon graduation has increased by \$11,821, from \$8,675 to \$20,496. If this bill does anything to address that student debt problem in the future, it will be a worthwhile bill.

During that same period, the average tuition fee for an arts and science student has increased by \$2,300 per year, from \$1,639 to \$3,951 per year. Again, if you give with the one hand, as this bill wants to do, and then take away, on the other hand, by increasing tuition, then the net effect will not be of any value to the students of this province, either now or in the future.

The cost of living has increased by 373% over the past three decades, while tuition fees have increased by approximately 678%. From 1984 to 1999, the aggregate amount of outstanding student loans increased 6.2 times, while the median student loan debt rose from \$3,000 to \$7,000.

Today, to put this in more practical terms, a student must work 660 hours in order to pay for a four-year bachelor degree. In 1977, the same degree would have required 235 hours of work. I know when my cohort went to university 25 to 30 years ago, if you worked a summer on minimum wage for four months, you could actually pay for your university and your room and board. That’s not possible today. If students live in cities and towns where there is a university or a college, they can attend those institutions, if that’s their only choice financially, but for those who don’t have institutions in their hometowns and they need to leave their town, the room and board is an added expense.

For the 1997-98 academic year, the average OSAP award was \$7,700, but the average student debt levels have more than doubled since the provincial government eliminated the Ontario student grant. Over the past five years, the amount of loan assistance available to students has decreased by \$500 million. This is from the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Some 31% of family units in which the major income recipient was under 25

owed student loans. Again, we do need bills like this, but they're only a beginning. In these young families, student loans represented 52% of their total household debt.

I found it interesting that the member's bill includes families, single people who make \$40,000 or less or families that make \$80,000 or less. Well, \$80,000 was the average family income of the students who went to medical school at Western 10 years ago. That average family income has increased from \$80,000 to \$140,000 now. I found the \$80,000 a very interesting figure because of that. It probably isn't coincidental; maybe the research was done. But even families between \$80,000 and \$140,000 can't afford to send their kids to medical school the same way that they did a few years ago because of the deregulation of the fees.

The average annual student loan disbursement rose by 30.9% from 1991 to 1996. It has actually gone up by over \$1,000. I'm happy to see the feds are getting into the game. It is a provincial jurisdiction, but as the member opposite mentioned, it is a global economy and we have to invest in post-secondary at all levels of government if we are to compete.

Some 217,000 post-secondary students relied on the government's Ontario student assistance program to cover a portion of their educational and associated living costs in 1997-98. These students, without assistance, would presumably not have been able to attend post-secondary university. Again, any assistance to students, whether it's through RESPs or through government assistance, is needed.

I'll talk in a few minutes about how the demographics are changing. We will have a huge baby boom effect, the echo boom effect, which will require more investment into post-secondary education.

Interest rates on the Canadian student loan are based on a fixed rate of prime 5% or a floating rate of prime plus 2.5%. Actually, the Ontario student loan is based on prime plus 1%. In this case, the Ontario government is actually charging the students less interest than the federal government. I know the Ontario government and the federal government are working on harmonizing that, making one student loan, and I support that. Again, anything that will help working families send their children to post-secondary education, something we support on this side of the House.

1020

The default rate on student loans for university students last year, the year 2000, was 7.1%; the college default rate was 17.2%. I think the reason for that is that in many instances students who go on to community college are adult learners who have families who can't necessarily pay right away and they need time and assistance in order to do that.

I actually had a meeting yesterday with the bureaucrats from the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, and work is underway to improve the OSAP system. I'm happy to hear that and am looking forward to what exactly the changes will be so that we can respond.

There are no accurate records that are kept which measure the level of debt incurred through family and

non-governmental assistance bank loans. We have statistics on how many students have OSAP and Canadian students' loans from the federal government, but we really don't have accurate statistics about the students who don't qualify for OSAP, or even for those who do, as far as how much debt they have incurred from banks, like the Bank of Nova Scotia, the Bank of Montreal and so forth. I believe if we had statistics, we could see that this problem is even greater than we know, and therefore, again, any bill or any policy that will improve this is welcome.

I just want to put a human face to some of the numbers I gave. Jeff Sutton is a major in finance and economics from the University of Western Ontario. I have his permission to talk about his case. His hometown is right here in Toronto. A good student, his current education-related debt is \$17,500. His aspirations are a career in sales and marketing, possibly an MBA. He's currently the vice-president of education on Western's student council, and he has previously worked in retail and security. He volunteered as a Big Brother during his first three years at Western. He's also a member of the hockey team at Western. This is a responsible young man who has not incurred this debt irresponsibly. In fact, for the first two years of his studies he didn't have a debt, because his parents were able to help him. But something changed in his family situation which then required him to take out loans, and that is why in two years he incurred such a large debt. But he was willing to do it, because he knows the statistics: if you have a post-secondary education, you'll go further in life, you'll be healthier and you'll be safer. Research has shown all that, and it's actually logical as well.

Tina Yeung is in theatre and drama studies at the University of Toronto. Her debt is \$14,050. She has worked in numerous jobs, including assistant tax administrator, tour guide for middle-school-aged youth and camp counsellor. She currently has two jobs, as a pharmacy assistant and working in a restaurant.

So, to assume that some of these students are irresponsible in incurring the debt or that their families haven't helped them is wrong. They do what they can, but they do need assistance from us, and indeed that's our responsibility.

Tina also finds time to do volunteer work. She's a member of the theatre standing committee for Hart House Theatre, she's class representative for four years and a volunteer with numerous local and community theatre groups—truly a future leader in our community. This is what she says:

"I had to work through most of high school in order to save for university. After the first year, it seemed that I would need to continue to work during the school year as well as the summer. Most of my tuition and residence costs that weren't covered by my student loans were paid for by my jobs, but I did receive some assistance from my family. I wanted to try to pay for as much of my education as I could out of my savings from work.

"I hope to one day be trilingual ... so that if theatre or film doesn't work out I can pursue a degree in tourism.

No matter where I end up, I would like to be active in my community.”

She already owes, without finishing, \$14,000.

Scott Courtice from Queen’s University already owes \$22,000. He wants to go to law school and possibly a career in politics, so of course we need to support Scott. Scott comes from a middle-class family with one working parent and his father is semi-retired, having recently left the small business he owned. His parents assisted him as much as they could but, like many students, this support fell short of covering all of the costs of a post-secondary education. He falls in a category that does not allow him to get OSAP, so he has secured bank loans for his four years of school, and that is why the loan is so high, a situation that sees Scott making interest payments of about \$150 each month. That means, in addition to the cost of tuition, books and living expenses, if he goes on to law school, he’ll have to find \$150 a month. But he remains optimistic. “I plan on attending law school and aspire to enter politics. I have a passion for social justice and want to enter politics to safeguard Canada as an equal and just society.”

These are amazing young people we have in our community. Again, we applaud any measure on this side of the House that helps working families help their kids go on to post-secondary education, like Jeff, like Tina, like Scott.

I want to talk just for a couple minutes about the increase in demographics or the change in demographics in the next decade. The Ministry of Finance’s demographic projections indicate that the population aged 18 to 24 will grow by more than 20% in the next decade. The majority of that growth, by the way, is in the 905 area. In Durham, in particular, that age cohort will grow by 40%, and yet the University of Toronto and York University have asked for capital funds to expand their campuses in those areas and have, at least for now, been rejected.

I believe the government needs to heed those demographics. We’re going to have an explosion in that demographic in the next decade and we need to plan for it now. Again, if you look at the study, it shows that these kids don’t live away from home, the ones in the 905 belt; they prefer to go to universities here in Toronto. So these students and their families are assuming that they will have a space in one of our three universities here and are financially planning for that eventuality, not for going away, the majority of them, and therefore we need to do our part and plan for that eventuality as well.

The bill has many good points. Again, I like the fact that families with incomes of \$80,000 and less will be eligible, as well as single individuals with an income of \$40,000 or less. As the member opposite won’t be surprised to hear, I would have liked it to go a little further because I do know that if an individual has an income of \$40,000 or less, there are differences if that individual has more than one child. Marcy, the young lady who spoke to the member opposite yesterday, perhaps only had one child, Alexander, and she managed to do the right thing, and I applaud her. However, if she

had more than one child, would she have been able to put away that money every month for her kids’ education?

A good start, but again, this government gives with one hand and takes with the other. Quite frankly, I hope the member opposite doesn’t have the same fate that my private member’s bill had, the severance bill, where it was passed unanimously. It was supported on all sides of the House, but this government, by delaying legislation by one month, killed all the bills. I hope this bill doesn’t have the same fate. Indeed, if Mike Harris were truly supportive of this and of these endeavours, he would have made this a government bill and not a private member’s bill.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party and this caucus support any change that will help working families send their kids to post-secondary education, and I’ve been pleased to speak to this bill.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I very much would have liked to have engaged in this debate because there are things I want to tell the member for Etobicoke North and his government about what they are not doing with respect to adequate funding for the post-secondary educational system. So while I would have supported it—I would have, in spite of some comments I made to a constituent who is here—and while I have concerns, I feel compelled and obliged to tell you, Speaker, that under the standing orders this may be a violation, and I’ll read section 56 because I’ll need your ruling.

Section 56 says, “Any bill, resolution, motion or address, the passage of which would impose a tax or specifically direct the allocation of public funds, shall not be passed by the House unless recommended by a message from the Lieutenant Governor, and shall be proposed only by a minister of the crown.”

Speaker, I think you need to rule on this because we need to protect ourselves from this motion before us.

The Deputy Speaker: Mr Marchese has raised a point of order. Is there any comment on the point of order?

1030

Mr Hastings: This is an old chestnut used by somebody who is probably not prepared to deal with the merit of the case.

If the member for Fort York could recall—and I’m sure he has a very good memory—the previous member for Algoma-Manitoulin from your caucus raised the same issue with respect to a bill I introduced three years ago called the Technology for Classrooms Tax Credit Act. It was referred to Speaker Stockwell and to the leg counsel at that time and it came back with a clarification and clearance.

If you read the bill carefully, it is not a money bill, because it does not propose the expenditure of a penny. What it does do is raise the idea of looking at a tax credit. It’s a concept. There’s a big difference. I hope the member for Fort York would take that into consideration and get on with the debate on the merits of the bill.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): This is subject matter that is dear to my heart and I commend the member for bringing the subject matter forward.

However, in 1998, at the time I wrote an article that appeared in the *Toronto Star* on this very subject, the idea of a tax credit attached to an RESP, I wanted to propose this as a private member's bill. I was told by leg counsel this would be a money bill, that it could not be introduced into this assembly by way of a private member's bill for that reason.

I would like to support what the member for Trinity-Spadina has proposed with regard to his reference to the standing orders and I would ask that you look into this matter, whether it is appropriate for this bill to be introduced in this fashion.

Of course, we support the notion of the bill and the principle of the bill and, to back what my colleague said earlier in her comments, this should have been a government bill and not a private member's bill. It is indeed worthy of support.

However, one has to question the appropriateness of this bill in this form at this time, using the vehicle of a private member's bill, so I would refer that as well to you, Mr Speaker.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I certainly appreciate the points from the opposition. It is my understanding that due diligence had been exercised in this case with this legislation to ensure that we were technically correct. It is my understanding that we are. Certainly, Mr Speaker, if you wish to pass further comment on that—so I would respectfully suggest that we should continue with this. It is an important issue. The opposition has certainly expressed interest in pursuing this. I think the member has worked hard to bring this in today for all of us to debate, a very important issue.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I want some time to consider this, so we will take a short recess while I do.

The House recessed from 1033 to 1038.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to thank the member for Trinity-Spadina for raising this point of order and the other members who contributed their comments to this point of order.

I would cite as a precedent Mr Stockwell's ruling on Bill 24; I'll just quote this for you:

"With respect to the orderliness of Bill 24, it does not impose a tax"—which is similar to Bill 4—"indeed, it does the opposite in alleviating a tax. It does not specifically allocate public funds; its passage may cause the government to forgo a certain amount of revenue, and thereby impose a burden on the Consolidated Revenue Fund, but this equates only indirectly to an expenditure. There are ample precedents fully supporting the permissibility of such a proposal."

I share Mr Stockwell's views; this bill is in order.

On a point of order, the member for Etobicoke North.

1040

Mr Hastings: I have a point of order for the Chair as to the use of the time. Do we still keep going on the hour, or do we restore the clock for the last six or seven minutes?

The Deputy Speaker: We have not lost any time; we have the same amount of time for each speaker from each caucus.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the clarification you made. I'm happy; that's why we're here. We call points of order on the basis of our understanding and then you clarify them and we move on.

On this issue, the member from Etobicoke North—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): It gave you five minutes to learn something about the issue.

Mr Marchese: Mr Wettlaufer, it's good to see you here.

Here's my problem: while we are going to support this bill, the problem with the bill is that it doesn't speak to the problems that have been caused by this government. As the member from Etobicoke North said, he's going to hear from the opposition about all the things that we are going to say that may appear to be in opposition, and then he spoke about the fact that there are so many other constraints upon this government in education and health that there's really not much we could do, so this is a really neat idea and we ought to be supporting it.

But here's the problem: this government has cut from our university sector alone—not to forget the college sector—\$500 million, and they did this in a good economy. When the money was rolling in, Mr Hastings, the member from Etobicoke North, wasn't there to say that we shouldn't be cutting \$500 million from post-secondary education. I never heard him or any other member saying, "We need to support our post-secondary education with money." He was there saying, "We've got to cut. There's too much fat in the bureaucracy and in government and we've got to cut."

Yes, they cut in good economic times and they cut in post-secondary education, the university and college system, and they do it with glee, they do it with pleasure. They have no problem finding \$12 billion or so of our income tax money to give away to the corporate sector and to individuals who make high wages. They have no problem stealing your money, good citizens, and giving it away, instead of investing those billions of dollars in the sectors that are critical to us, which are health and elementary, secondary and post-secondary education. So while we have money, we do nothing with it except to give it away to the people who don't need it.

Mr Hastings comes forth with a neat idea saying, "Parents need help." Yes, they need help, but if they truly need help, why don't you eliminate tuition fees altogether? We wouldn't need this scheme, because then everybody would have access. How would we pay for it? We would pay for it through a progressive income tax system. We would pay for it by not giving away our money to the private sector and to individuals on high incomes. We would have loads of money if we decided that tuition fees are a barrier and that it's costly and that it's keeping a lot of people away from post-secondary education. But that's not the commitment this government has. The commitment they have is completely exclusionary. If you've got the money, fine; if you don't,

too bad. This tax credit is not going to help the person who is making \$30,000 very much, and although Mr Hastings mentioned one individual who says, "We've got a plan for the future of our children"—good God, doesn't he know that the majority of people who make \$30,000 can't invest a penny in RRSPs or invest in the registered education savings plan? People don't have money to invest. He would know and you would know that over 300,000 tenants are paying over 50% of their income on rent alone.

Do you think, therefore, that Mr Hastings believes or understands that they would invest the rest of the 50% on these kinds of programs? They will not, because the other 50% is for, what, basic stuff like maybe some clothes, and it might not be a fine jacket but just plain old stuff, just plain old clothes. Do you think they would have any money for a little entertainment, like going to a show, perhaps? We're not talking about Florida and going off with some fancy cigar; we're talking about just a little money for some recreational activity. I tell you, the people earning \$30,000, \$35,000 or \$40,000 can't afford to stash money away in a plan.

I know there is a gentleman here who is nodding and saying, "Yes, they can." Well, there might be, because Mr Hastings mentioned one person. Maybe there are two or three, maybe there are more. There aren't too many. The people who will invest in this plan are the people who have money. I tell you, and I've said it here many times, I as a person who makes \$78,000 could not afford to pay—I know, Speaker, you seem a bit afraid; I'm intimidating you too. My daughter had only one year of help from me. I make \$78,000. The other years, she has been on her own.

I know, from the Minister of Culture, that's OK and fine by you, and maybe with your \$78,000 plus your ministerial salary you've been able to stash away a couple of bucks. God bless you, and God bless your buddies, women and men buddies, who have been able to put the money aside to help their kids. But only in the last two years have I been able to—I decided it's important to put some money aside for my son, because he'll be, hopefully, in university a couple of years from now. So, I get the benefit from the federal government, and I would get the benefit from this bill, should he introduce it. So I, who started this two years ago for my son, will benefit somewhat.

But I am arguing with you—Speaker, don't be too intimidated; through you to Mr Hastings—that the people who make \$30,000 or \$40,000 don't have the extra cash to stash away in such a plan. What they need is help from this government. What they need is to be able to reinvest in post-secondary education. Put the \$500 million back. Reduce tuition fees if you won't eliminate them. If you won't have it free, reduce it; don't increase it, as you have done for the last five years, where tuition fees have gone up 60% under you fine people, you fine taxpayer types of people—60%.

We are short of professors in our university system. Our facilities are going down, in spite of your bragging

remarks about the SuperBuild fund, which only spends half of the money we used to spend, and this, as you have a growing population getting into the universities. You smile gleefully, saying, "Ha, ha, ha, we're spending so much more."

We are short of money, short of university professors, we'll have 90,000 more students by the next decade, and this government says, "Don't worry, we've got a private university coming in. They'll fill in the space." How can one little university fill the space? "Oh, don't worry about that. The SuperBuild is building so much space that it will cover all the 90,000 people," the argument comes from the spokespeople of these fine people, including the minister.

The space is not there. So we've got a little plan here, a little tax credit. It's going to help people like me, at my \$78,000 range, but it's not going to help people like Stavros Papavasiliou, who is here today to observe the proceedings of this House and to listen to us all debate this very issue so that he can learn from Mr Hastings how he will benefit from such a plan. So if his dad is able to invest a couple of bucks more in this plan, Mr Hastings is your man, because he's going to come and give you \$100 more on the first \$1,000. That should help a whole lot. That's going to help a whole lot, because the average tuition fees are \$20,000. Ha. OK. Invest \$1,000, you get \$100. My God, yes. If Stavros is here, he's going to save you. He's going to help you a lot.

1050

Mr Hastings said, "We've got so many constraints, such as, we've got to give more money to the corporate sector to reduce their load because, God, they need help from us. And the income tax cut, we're so committed to that and we've got to give the other two billion to four billion bucks; oh, these constraints on us in order to get the economy going." John, how do you like that? How do you like these arguments? How do you guys defend yourselves out there? How do you defend your commitment to these couple of billion dollars in income tax cuts to the corporate sector when the economy is slipping?

Do you remember M. Harris saying, "We have created a recession-proof economy"? Do you remember that? That was M. Harris saying, "We have created a recession-proof economy," the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Dumb and dumber.

Mr Marchese: And it's getting dumber because they are still plunging ahead with their plan—the plan is working—to destroy us. And what was the plan? Income tax cuts. That's what was going to save us from the devastation of recessions, should they occur in the US.

By the way, do you remember that Mike Harris and the others laughed, ha, ha, when the NDP was in power and we had a recession? They would laugh, saying, "No, you caused the recession. You didn't have a revenue problem, you had a spending problem," they used to say.

Mr Kormos: They were there with their hands out every step of the way: "Build me a hospital. Build me a school."

Mr Marchese: Every step of the way their hands were reaching out.

I say to you, we've got an economy that's about to plunge down.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): Two per cent projections for next year. Is anyone reading the newspapers?

Mr Kormos: Mr Roth is doing well. Mr Stronach is doing even better.

Mr Marchese: Growth. Mr Stronach I think earned \$25 million this year. There are a couple of people doing well in the economy, but generally, thousands of people are being laid off, every day for the last two months.

Mr Kormos: How many for Nortel alone?

Mr Marchese: Nortel I think laid off 5,000, 10,000 people. So many companies are laying people off.

I say to the folks across the way that if the economy is going down, we need to save some money. We need to protect ourselves and not give it away. We need it because welfare is going to go up, unless they decide to completely—

Mr Kormos: The Tories will put them on the street.

Mr Marchese: That would save us some money if they put them on the street, wouldn't it?

Mr Hastings is quite proud of this bill, I understand that, but I am saying that what we need is a plan from the government to help students, to help the university sector, so that we have the money to be able to prepare ourselves for this new economy, and this bill doesn't do it. It doesn't help the majority of people earning 30,000, 40,000, 50,000 bucks because they need all the money they've got.

Mr Kormos: And \$18,000 and \$20,000.

Mr Marchese: Forget about those people because they don't have any money.

Although we are going to support this as a little measure that moves the yardstick just a little, it does nothing really to deal with the problems these people have caused.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): It's a pleasure for me to speak on Bill 4 this morning, which is An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide a tax credit for contributions to registered education savings plans.

My colleague from Trinity-Spadina was talking about the cost of jackets. It's amazing that my trademark says Wal-Mart but I thought his, on the other side, said Armani. So I wonder what he was talking about.

There is no doubt that providing financial means for a higher education is a challenging task for many people. As my colleague from Trinity-Spadina would lead you to believe, he would like to have the government pay everything, pay the full education costs. I guess he wants free tickets on the TTC. He probably wants a free Cadillac also, while I would expect a free Chevrolet.

Most people believe, and I adhere to that philosophy, that there is a responsibility both for the government and

for the person who receives the education to have a financial stake in obtaining that education. There are different ways of obtaining the financial means to obtain a higher education. One would be to have rich parents, but most of us don't have that luxury. Some of us might be lucky in winning a lottery but, again, most of us don't have that luxury. Of course, there's the scholarship avenue but, again, an awful lot of students don't have that opportunity.

What I would like to talk briefly about this morning is the registered education savings plan.

Ce plan encourage l'enseignement supérieur. Ce plan est visé pour ceux avec une source de revenu soit inférieure ou moyenne. Ce plan encourage les parents ou les étudiants de démontrer leur responsabilité sur le plan personnel pour leur futur, au lieu de toujours compter sur le gouvernement.

I realize that what we have in front of us here today is not a perfect solution, this part of the solution. But to hear my colleague from Trinity-Spadina this morning—he had approximately 15 minutes to address this issue. He probably spoke on it for about a minute. He talked about everything else but the issue that's before us today. I guess I could probably expect that from him, because basically they are more interested in the ideology than in dealing with the problems that people face, that students are facing.

However, and I can speak from experience, I'm absolutely convinced that once you have a financial stake in your education, the results will be there. I'm sure there's going to be a tremendous amount of personal satisfaction in having invested in your future.

Let me quote from a person who sent a letter to Mr Hastings. I'll quote from her letter, which was sent on April 24.

"I am an RESP subscriber with a two-and-a-half-year-old son. I would benefit greatly from your proposal to introduce a tax credit for RESP investment for low- to middle-income families. Financial security is a major concern for all Canadians, and post-secondary education is a major investment that requires planning and saving well in the future. As a teacher myself, I understand the value of a good education and hope to instill that in my son."

I think that speaks for the large majority of Ontarians. They are willing to contribute financially to their own education and to the education of their children. So I would urge all the members of this House today to vote in favour of this bill.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my privilege and my pleasure to speak in support of the member for Etobicoke North's private member's bill. Mr Hastings has gone to some extent to represent the argument that families—small, independent economic units called the family—and their children need a future, and certainly the children.

This goes a long way toward signalling the right kind of policy, which is to lower taxes, really. People all over, from all income groups, have argued for years that taxes

are too high and some kind of bureaucrat makes the decision on where to spend it and allocate it, without much accountability to the public.

But I speak from the perspective of a parent of five children. It's my wish and hope that all five children graduate with some sort of skills and education, be it university, college or careers. There are skilled-trade shortages today. So we have to do everything we can within out fiscal and legislative authority to, first, signal the importance of parents contributing and getting tax relief for contributing to their children's future.

Indeed, it could be said that I, as a parent, and my wife work very hard for our economic unit. I don't expect in a normal sequence of events that Mr Sergio or anyone else in this House today should pay for my children. We have a collective responsibility, and of course, as we all know, post-secondary institution funding, whether it's through the Canada student loan or through OSAP or for the direct funding of the operational costs of post-secondary institutions, does come from the provincial government.

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We have a challenge ahead of us to make sure that we have quality education that's accessible and affordable. In the climate that we're in today, where all of the stakeholders within the universities want more income, which is arguably correct, and they want to be rewarded, who is going to pay for that? Who else is paying for it? The government actually has no money. It really re-allocates or redistributes money.

The economic unit of this country, of this great province is the family. What Mr Hastings is trying to say here is that it's the right thing to do to save for your children's future. I support that. I think everyone in the House will support it. I look forward to unanimous consent and moving forward quickly with a plan that helps every family in this province, regardless of income, to help their children and our collective future.

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): I'm pleased to speak for about half a minute, I guess, to support my colleague's bill. I think this is a very important initiative that will help many families in the province of Ontario to save money for their children's education.

The member asked me to indicate my experience. I've got three young boys. My wife and I are already trying to save money for their post-secondary education that we hope they will pursue.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Name them.

Mr Arnott: I should name them, yes: Jack, Phillip and Dean. Jack is almost six—five and a half he tells me; Phillip is three and a half, almost four; and Dean is two. So we're already starting to try to save money for their education. But the fact is that we're very fortunate and privileged that our income in our household is such that we're able to afford to save money at this early time. But I think there are a lot of families that are struggling to put together a few dollars every month, and this initiative would help those families.

The thing I like the most about the member's bill is that it targets the available assistance that the government may have to support and encourage people to save for their children's post-secondary education to the families that really need it: the low- and middle-income families. So I think that's something the member should be commended for. I want to congratulate him for the good work that he provides on behalf of his constituents and the private member's bills that he brings forward and encourage all members of this House to support this very important initiative.

The Deputy Speaker: You're allowed to use the balance of your caucus's time plus your two minutes for wrap-up. Is that your intention?

Mr Hastings: Yes. I'd like to comment on and appreciate the comments from the members for Hamilton Mountain, Wellington-Waterloo, Durham and Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. I think they spoke practically about the merits of this proposition.

Yesterday I had the great opportunity to meet a young lady by the name of Sasha, who is a constituent in Minister Flaherty's constituency of Whitby-Ajax. She's about 23 years of age. She has an eight-month-old little girl. She's going to school. She's trying to complete a program; I didn't exactly get it, but I think it's in business, accounting. She is already saving \$10 a month for Rianna, her little girl. I thought that was the most practical application, the most specific way in which we as legislators can affect the lives of people beyond this place.

I thank the member for Trinity-Spadina for his remarks. However, I have to radically depart from my comments. I think if he saw that young lady—and I've met other young ladies and gentlemen who are doing their best to approach the challenges of the 21st century. There are specific, practical means by which we as legislators can help these people, because they aspire for their families, for their children. To me, this is one of the effective ways of empowering individuals and families, rather than simply relying on the state for financial assistance. It has to be an effective two-way partnership. Unfortunately, the member for Trinity-Spadina persists in the old ideological mantra that the only way to save for one's education is the OSAP approach. That's fine, but it does debt-load people coming out of programs who sometimes do not have jobs.

I think the other practical dimension of this proposal is that it will allow education planners to track where the dollars are going in the programs that are required for the 21st century. In that spirit, I hope every member in this House, including the member for Trinity-Spadina, would reconsider and rethink about the people who are now two, three years old and are coming. It doesn't help me, but I believe it's incumbent that we try to help future generations, and this bill, the Saving for Our Children's Future Act, is one of the most practical and effective on-the-ground ways of doing so.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate. The question will be put following the second ballot item.

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR L'OBLIGATION
DE RENDRE COMPTE
DES VOYAGES MINISTÉRIELS

Mr Bartolucci moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 2, An Act respecting Accountability for Ministerial Travel / Projet de loi 2, Loi concernant l'obligation de rendre compte des voyages ministériels.

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

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): First of all, I'd like to thank the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for changing the order of the private members' hour so that we can debate this today. I would also like to thank the House for unanimously supporting that change.

I'm going to divide my 10 minutes into three different sections: the why for the bill, the how of the bill and the what of the bill. I think all three are very important to the taxpayers of Ontario.

Let me start with the how of the bill. This is not a cute political ploy to try to embarrass the government or anything else like that. I think it's important that the history of the bill be explained to the people of Ontario. This bill has been introduced three times before. It was first introduced on September 29, 1998, as Bill 64. It was introduced a second time on April 26, 1999, as Bill 7. It was introduced a third time on May 16, 2000, as Bill 77. It is now being introduced for a fourth time.

In fairness to everyone in this House, this is the very first opportunity that the House has had to debate the legislation. It happens, though, that we're debating this legislation after a throne speech that used the word "accountability" eight times and that used the words "fiscal responsibility" four times. Certainly, in pre-throne-speech news coverage, one paper headline indicated that accountability would be the catch phrase for the Harris government over the course of the next few years.

I suggest to you that "accountability" should be our catch phrase always. That's why I introduced the legislation back in 1998. I saw that there was a need for this type of legislation. I say that because I don't know if the people of Ontario are aware that as individual members we make our expenditures public every year in a document reporting individual members' expenditures for a particular fiscal year. It is a matter of public record that is reported widely by the media, and I think that's very important. It covers topics like travel between residence and Queen's Park, travel within the riding to do constituency business, assembly travel, family travel. It documents how many trips you take a year, the amount for your Toronto accommodation and total expenses.

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Then it breaks it down into support staff expenditures: how much you pay for your support staff, your constituency office rent, your office operations, your com-

munications, your global total, your long-distance charges and Assembly support total, for the grand total. I think this is a very healthy exercise, because we in this House all know we are using taxpayers' dollars, that at the very end of the day we are accountable to the taxpayers of Ontario, and we do that when we go to the polls, whenever an election is held, usually every four years. I think it's extremely important that this accountability and this fiscally responsible approach that we want to use must be made public. It must be open, it must be transparent in all aspects of government business. That's why I introduce this bill today, the first time it's going to be debated but for the fourth time.

Colleagues, what will this bill do? Well, there will be accountability for ministerial travel. Let me explain to you what that means. More importantly, though, it's important for the people of Ontario to understand what that means. Any member of the executive council of Ontario who travels to areas outside Ontario on government business shall, within 60 days of returning from his or her travels, submit the information which is set out—and I'll read this later. That person is to submit it to the Legislative Assembly if the Assembly is sitting or, if the Assembly is not sitting, which happens frequently in this place, to the Clerk of the Assembly.

What type of information do we think working families in Ontario should have about ministerial travel? We think a written summary of the purpose of the travel and of any accomplishments resulting from the travel, including a listing of the benefits in terms of tangible investment and employment opportunities that the travel will bring to Ontario.

Let me suggest to you that I am not opposed to travelling outside this province. In fact, I encourage it. I don't ever want to build a wall around Ontario. But I believe it has to be meaningful travel, and it has to ensure that Ontarians get the best bang for the buck they are spending. It is imperative that this be a transparent process. We think a detailed statement of all expenses incurred by the member, as well as by any staff accompanying the member, should be published.

Certainly a minister is going to bring staff and experts with him. There's nothing wrong with that. It is important, though, that the taxpayers of Ontario understand what the cost is. We think it's important that a listing of individuals and organizations contacted, and with whom meetings were held, should be published as well.

Finally, we think a detailed summary of the significant terms and conditions of any contract signed during the travel period must be published, without divulging any confidentiality in any agreement. What we want the people of Ontario, the hard-working families of Ontario, to understand is that when this government, our government, any government travels in Ontario, they have access to the information, they have access to the why of the travel and they have access to the success of the travel. Will contracts be signed on every trip? Probably not, but it is important for the people of Ontario to understand that these trips do take place, that there is a

cost attached to them and because we are using your money, the Ontario tax dollar, we must ensure that we are held accountable and that the taxpayers, the ones who are footing the bill, know how much we are spending.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Same as when David Peterson was the leader.

Mr Bartolucci: I hear a little heckling about previous governments from a person I have a lot of respect for. I don't care about previous governments. Pass this into law and we can look at the present, we can look to the future and we can ensure that this information, which belongs to the taxpayers of Ontario, is put in effect.

Past governments of all political stripes can be held accountable. So don't say it was the Liberals or the New Democrats or the Tories or anybody else; it was all past governments. Let's rectify that shortcoming with positive legislation so that progressive legislation will be the order of the day for the government of the day and for future governments.

I don't think it's asking too much for ministers, by example, to be accountable to the people of Ontario for their fiscal responsibility. In fact I think it is imperative that that happen. If I thought this was frivolous legislation, I certainly would not have introduced it in this House, because I like to bring serious legislation to this House.

I suggest to you that if you want public institutions to be held accountable, there is no more public institution than the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, this provincial Parliament. We, the elected people of Ontario at the provincial level, have a duty, a responsibility to be accountable in a very fiscal way, and as ministers and as the executive council, I ask you to take the lead.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm please to rise today and speak to the member for Sudbury's private member's bill, An Act respecting accountability for ministerial travel.

In the last session, I had the pleasure of supporting the member's private member's bill on protection of children from prostitution, and I commend him for both his private member's bills. I also want to welcome here this morning our colleague from Parry Sound-Muskoka, Norm Miller. It's his first morning of private members' business.

Our government believes we should be accountable to the people who elect us, and that is why during the throne speech the government chose accountability as one of the three priorities on the challenges we face in the 21st century. I believe that the government does not own the money. It is the people's money, and that should never be forgotten. The hard-working families of our province expect and deserve that their tax dollars will always be spent in an accountable and efficient manner.

I think Her Honour said it best in last week's throne speech: "Accountability is required, not just of Ontario's government, but of all governments and indeed of all institutions funded by taxpayers.

"Government is the servant of the people, not master. Citizens are more than 'customers' or 'clients'; the entire

public sector belongs to them. Citizens are entitled to transparency in the operation of public institutions, including openness about how they spend and reporting of their performance and results."

As a government we have introduced a number of measures aimed at improving accountability in the manner in which government operates. First of all, in education we have introduced a fair funding model for education that allows everyone to see where money is being spent in our system, and measures that protect classroom spending.

In last week's throne speech a number of additional accountability measures were introduced to make sure that monies are spent properly. In fact the phrases "accountability" and "fiscal responsibility," referred to by Mr Bartolucci, were used over 15 times in the throne speech. Because our government believes in accountability and because I believe in accountability, I will be supporting the private member's bill.

In fact, I think it is long overdue. I kind of wish the member for Sudbury had been here a few years ago. Although I am relatively to this House, compared to members like the members for Davenport and York South-Weston, when this bill came up, I was talking to a good friend of mine, Mr Runciman, the member for Leeds-Grenville, about a wonderful four-star tour the provincial Liberals took when they were on this side of the fence. I think we should bring this to their attention, because it adds to the need for accountability.

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In November 1989, Premier Peterson led a group of politicians and business people on a trade mission to Italy. The business people paid for their trips, while the Premier, 13 Liberal MPPs and 12 staff members went along for the ride. The Liberal MPPs' tab was picked up by the people of this province. Included among those who went along for the ride were the member for York South-Weston, the member for Davenport and someone called Greg Sorbara, the Liberal candidate for Vaughan-King-Aurora.

I understand that travelling is necessary to build trade and cultural relations, but what is also important is being accountable. That is why I was shocked that the cost of the pasta tour was approximately \$310,000. About half of this total was spent on hotel, food, travel and entertainment bills for the Premier and his immediate 25-member entourage of ministers, backbenchers and staff.

The hotel suite of the Premier of the time, Mr Peterson, was \$1,000 a night. To give you an idea of how much this is, I called the Royal York this morning and asked how much a night in the most expensive hotel suite they have costs, and it is \$339. That's in 2001 dollars and includes breakfast for two. I did a bit of research and found that during the trip the Petersons and friends stayed at the Principe Di Savoia, which the Penguin Guide to Italy calls "properly luxurious." It says it offers "peace, luxury and efficient staff." The night manager said, "We're a five-star hotel by the train station, one of the best in all Milan and in all of Italy."

The purpose of my bringing out this example is exactly what Mr Bartolucci is saying. It has gone on in the past. There's no question that probably in each party there have been cases of abuse. But the fact of the matter is, I think we have to be accountable, and I have no problem with some kind of record being kept of each trip. I know that's the feeling of this House.

A number of other people want to speak to this. I appreciate the time today, and I'll turn it over to them.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): I'm very happy to stand and speak in support of my colleague Mr Bartolucci's bill on ministerial accountability.

It is of interest to hear those who choose to speak on behalf of the government that ultimately they too will be supportive of this bill. What it means essentially is that they agree with us that this government has to be accountable for its actions. This government, all of a sudden, is on this plane of greater accountability for Ontario, as though accountability for the rest of us was never there before. They intend to bring in various accountability measures for the government, for the broader public sector, for school boards, for hospitals—all laudable goals. We'll ask these members of the broader public sector today, if they feel accountable, who they report to when a hospital budget today has to be submitted to the Ministry of Health for approval, when a school board can't get their own budgets being submitted to the Ministry of Education approved in a timely fashion, and yet we ask the government why they would put further measures on these broader public sector groups when they can't even deal with the rules they have in place now or the so-called guidelines they have now.

Mrs Marland: Sandra, we're supporting the bill.

Mrs Pupatello: The former minister for children wants to stand and quip in the House. I encourage her to stand up and speak to this bill. This former minister for children should be responsible for her actions as a minister for children.

Mrs Marland: I am. I went out of the province once.

Mrs Pupatello: I suggest it be on the report card of how children are doing today. How are they doing in our schools today? Coming from Windsor, this is a very good question to ask today. This is the government that brought in a funding formula that is totally unworkable, completely inflexible and is the root cause of all the chaos that exists in our schools today: why we have strikes, why we have contracts being settled for a year at a time and that's it, when they used to settle for a minimum of three years. We will see chaos in one centre after another from now until, at minimum, the next election.

But I want to bring to attention the wonderful question my colleague from Sarnia asked the new Minister of Finance in the House yesterday: "Why would you ask all of Ontario to tighten up, to be accountable, to watch spending, to cap spending," when we look at the numbers from the Office of the Premier? In 1995-96 the total expenses out of that office were \$2.1 million. And what

are they in the latest round of figures, for the year 2000-01? They're up to \$3.2 million. That should make all of us gasp.

What were the salaries and wages for the office of the Premier in 1995-96? They were \$1.4 million. This was Mike Harris the big tax cut fighter, let's not forget—tighten the seat belts. Do you know what they were for the office of the Premier in salary and wages in the year 2000-01? They were \$2.3 million. That's the sampling.

As best put by my colleague Mrs Di Cocco from Sarnia, there's one rule for Harris and another rule for the rest of us in Ontario. That's something we're not going to abide. We think there should be accountability in every office of government. We're going to start at the head of that, and that is the office of the Premier.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased to participate in the debate this morning. We will be supporting Bill 2, put forward by the member for Sudbury, and we will be pleased to do so.

I want to make a couple of comments with respect to the bill. First, I should say I was a little bit surprised by the member for Simcoe North's raising the issue of the expenses of previous governments. Before this debate ends this morning, I'm going to wonder whether or not someone in here is going to raise the issue of the Premier's expenses to travel to the Olympics.

I think Al Palladini was also with him at the same time. I don't know who else accompanied the Premier. I'm sure there were a few more staff people. Maybe there were a few more ministers as well. I didn't follow it all that closely because I thought it was probably legitimate for the Premier to be there, given that Toronto is making a bid for the Olympics. But if we looked at those expenses, they would probably be very high too. I suspect it would probably be pretty unfair to make a comparison between a hotel in Ontario and a hotel in Australia, especially during the Olympics. I'm not trying to defend David Peterson in terms of what he did, or trying to defend the Premier. I do want to put on the record that I know it was expensive to travel and it was expensive—

Mrs Marland: Not \$1,000 a night for a hotel.

Ms Martel: Let me finish, Mrs Marland. I'm going to put this on the record. When I was minister and travelled to a dimensional stone conference in Verona, the cheapest nights we could find in a hotel—believe me, I had my staff work with Ontario's attaché to find the cheapest—was C\$400 and that was in 1992.

I'm not trying to defend anyone in terms of expenses. Maybe David Peterson and entourage didn't look for the cheapest. Maybe the Premier of this province didn't look for the cheapest when he was in Australia either. But having been in that boat myself and having been very conscious of trying to find the cheapest price, because I sure didn't want it to come back to bite me, there was a huge discrepancy and difference in prices, and that was just the fact.

Having said that, I'm glad to see the government is going to support this bill, because it would have sent a very strange message to the public if the government

were to have come here today and said they weren't interested in accountability. If the government had not supported this bill, it probably would have made the public think the government and its ministers had something to hide. I'm sure that while the Premier is out trying to promote the throne speech across Ontario instead of being here in the Legislature, the government wouldn't want that message delivered when it's trying to do everything it can to deliver a message that it is accountable. That is allegedly one of the three tenets the throne speech is based upon.

We've heard from two different members that the throne speech mentioned the word "accountability"; someone said eight times and someone said 15. I don't know. I didn't go back to count. It doesn't really matter to me that much to go back and give an accurate reflection. But it was mentioned rather routinely by Her Honour and it has subsequently been mentioned rather routinely by the ministers as they've been getting up to answer questions in question period since the throne speech was debated. So there's no doubt that as we continue another debate, the speech writers for the government members are going to throw in that word as many times as they can, and we should just get used to that right now.

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It would have been rather bizarre, I think, for the government to come here and say, "We want accountability. We expect it of our transfer partners. Not only do we expect it, but we demand it of our transfer partners. We're going to ensure the Provincial Auditor has an opportunity to actually go and look at the books of our MUSH partners," and then at the same time come and say, "But we will not have accountability, we will not have public disclosure, we will not have a reckoning of ministerial travel and those costs of taxpayers' dollars of people who travel outside the province," assuming they're on business for the people of Ontario.

I think it would be a good thing to take this a step further. If this bill actually goes to committee, I would make the following recommendation to the minister: it's important not only to be accountable and to disclose to the taxpayers of the province the cost of travel by ministers outside Ontario; frankly, I think we should have a very clear disclosure of that travel within Ontario too.

I say that because all of us know, because we all have to do our own travel claims, that there is a very clear line item that is disclosed to the public, rightly so, of MPP travel between Queen's Park and our ridings. That is very clearly disclosed, whether you drive or whether you fly etc, and if you fly, all of the other associated expenses that go with that. Very clearly in our expenses as well there is a clear disclosure of travel within the riding. As you drive around by car, and for some of our northern colleagues, as you fly around by plane, because that's how big how their ridings are, there's a clear disclosure of that cost as well. So our constituents know how much it's costing us to try to do our job. If the constituents don't like it, we're surely going to hear about it.

It's the same principle for ministers as well, because ministers also have to disclose publicly their costs of travel in their own ridings, presumably when they're working as MPPs, and their costs, in their other role as MPPs, to travel from their ridings to here at Queen's Park. But there is no direct line item that reflects the costs of ministers' travels throughout the province. That gets absorbed in the overall global budget of each ministry. I think there's something wrong with that.

I think most travel taken by ministers in the province is quite legitimate. I feel quite confident that is true. But I think the public has a right to know what that cost is. If the government or government minister were not prepared to really disclose that, it would give the public a perception that something was wrong. I don't think that at the same time as the government's promoting accountability, they want that perception to come back and hit them.

I would suggest we amend the bill, if it gets to committee—I make the suggestion to the member—so that we disclose travel of ministers within the province too. You could do the same as is in the bill: have accountability in terms of what has to be reported on; for example, whom the minister met with, what the purpose was, what the announcement might have been etc, so that that's all public knowledge. I think that there is a fair amount of taxpayers' dollars wrapped up in that kind of travel that is never disclosed in a clear fashion because it remains hidden under the global budget of the minister. It's time we changed that. I'll give you an example why.

Two years ago, when our expenses were reported, a member of the media made a rather interesting comparison of travel. This particular member of the media compared the travel for our leader between Queen's Park and his riding to Dave Johnson and his travel as MPP between Queen's Park and his riding. Speaker, you would know that Dave Johnson was close enough to take the TTC from his riding to Queen's Park. So clearly I didn't expect, you wouldn't have expected, and no one would have expected that Dave Johnson would have had a very large claim in terms of his travel between the riding and Queen's Park, and indeed the claim wasn't very high.

Most reasonable people would have expected that the leader of our party, whose riding is the farthest away from this place, where it takes two planes to get to, would have had a slightly larger expense claim for travel than Dave Johnson. Of course, that's the case.

The member of the media, though, never thought about, what was Dave Johnson's travel as minister? Shouldn't we have that disclosed too? Then, perhaps the comparison would have made a bit more sense, would have been a bit more legitimate, would have probably got on the record costs that were a bit more reasonable, because I assume that Dave did travel when he was Minister of Education. I would have encouraged him to do that, like I encourage other ministers to get outside of Queen's Park and get out to the rest of the province to see what's happening.

Based on that experience, I really do think it's time that we had that type of disclosure too. I don't think there's anything unfair about requesting it, because it's already covered within the global budget of the minister. What I think we should do is clearly delineate it, though, allow it to stand as a separate line item that is also included in our expenses as they are outlined to the public when our MPP travel is disclosed.

I don't know what the member from Sudbury thinks about that. I don't know what the government thinks about that. It seems to me, though, if we're talking about ministerial travel generally, whether it's outside the province or inside the province, there should be a way for the public to know what that is.

I say again that I'm pleased to see that the government members are supporting it. If the member can actually get it into committee and it's considered, I just ask them to consider expanding it as well so we cover both kinds of travel and so it's very clear to the public what those costs were, for what purpose, whom the minister met with, and what was the outcome of all of that travel.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I rise today in support of Bill 2, the Ministerial Travel Accountability Act, and I want to thank my colleagues for sharing their time with me.

There are several levels of planning and accountability already in place for ministerial travel which we should inform the public about. Ministerial travel is also reflected in the business plans of the ministries and is subject to a number of accountability mechanisms. These include (1) reporting under the public accounts process; (2) review by the Provincial Auditor and again by the public accounts committee of this Legislature; (3) required government approval of all missions abroad.

Ministry business plans reflect the strategic directions of the government to further Ontario's goals for job creation and a competitive economy. This may include advancing Ontario's international objectives, which can involve international travel.

As you know, all ministries are involved in a rigorous business planning and review cycle, which determines their activities, how they spend taxpayers' dollars and how they achieve set performance measures. Business plans are developed by ministries and approved by cabinet. They are further reviewed by Management Board of Cabinet to ensure that they support the objectives of this government. These business plans are easily available to all Ontarians in hard-copy form from ministries directly or their Web sites.

In addition, the public accounts of Ontario, which are published annually by the Ministry of Finance, provide a detailed accounting of how each tax dollar is spent across the government on a ministry-by-ministry basis. This public accounting is further scrutinized by a review by the Provincial Auditor. In his annual report, the auditor examines the use of taxpayers' dollars and highlights inappropriate use. The auditor's disclosures are all public and receive a great deal of media attention, as we saw

after the release of the auditor's annual report late last year.

We, as the Legislative Assembly, also closely monitor Ontario's public accounts. As you know, all parties are represented on the public accounts committee, which is a standing committee of this Legislature. The terms of reference for the public accounts committee are as follows. As per standing order 106(g), the standing committee on public accounts, in addition to any matter that may be referred by the order of the House, is empowered to review and report to the House "its observations, opinions and recommendations on the report of the Provincial Auditor and the public accounts, which documents shall be deemed to have been permanently referred to the committee as they become available."

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The combination of mechanisms that have been discussed by those of us on the government benches are put in place to make our government dealing as open to the public as possible.

There's one other point I feel I should bring to the attention of this House. Quite simply, it is important for the people of Ontario to be represented abroad at a certain level. Dignitaries from other countries expect to meet with senior-level officials visiting their countries. Sending members of our cabinet to meet with officials abroad sends a message that Ontario takes what they have to say seriously and that we are there to do business. These types of contacts are valued highly by other countries, just as we value and appreciate when they send high-level officials to meet with us.

I was very fortunate and privileged to meet with the Prime Minister of Italy a month or so back in terms of dealing with his mission to Canada. I think he was here for the G7 and met our Prime Minister in Ottawa, and fortunately he was able to come to Toronto to visit with members of the Italian community.

These types of contacts, as I say, are valued by other countries. However, as my colleagues have also said in dealing with this bill, it's dealing with ministerial accountability, and I observe it's dealing with ministerial accountability after the fact in terms of reporting within 60 days of the particular visit.

Mr Bartolucci, the member from Sudbury, has put out his position, and I've stated mine.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): The member from Sudbury, Rick Bartolucci, has to be commended for giving us all an opportunity to talk about the issue of accountability generally but also in the context of providing a very practical tool for accountability. We are not talking about accountability in the abstract here; we are applying it to ministerial travel, and members of this House have already expressed their support for it. But let's all realize, at the same time, that the member from Sudbury is leading a charge here on behalf of accountability, and this has to be just the very first step because we know how little accountability we have here.

While I would make the case that there's less accountability under this government than previous governments,

the problem with that argument, of course, is it leads to both sides saying, "You did it in the past," and then we say, "You did it more in the past." We've heard from the member from Sudbury, "Let's forget about the past." Yes, let's forget about the past for the moment, because if we let tradition and the traditions of our parliamentary system drive accountability, then we are really practising the democracy of the dead; we are practising democracy under 1867 rules which just don't apply in the year 2001.

We found ourselves, quite honestly, when we took a step back, it was easy for me and for the rookie MPPs, when we first came here, to see how little accountability there is. We were amazed. We spend hundreds of hours in opposition, preparing for and speaking to debates, preparing amendments only to have them never heard, attempting to hold the government to account in question period and not getting answers. Of course we find out that they call it "question period" for a reason. It's not answer period; it's question period.

We found pretty quickly that, really, one of the last effective means of holding a government to account is through nothing less than an undemocratic means of accountability, the judiciary. That's one way to hold government to check, but that is clearly an undemocratic way of holding the government to check—a necessary way. You have to have a separation between the judiciary and government, but how do we hold government to check? And then it gets worse.

We know the centre becomes tyrannical. No matter what, the government, the first minister's office starts controlling everything and the fight for accountability by both government members and opposition members becomes a losing battle. Today we have an opportunity to fight back in that battle, because you can't argue with legislation. Legislation that requires accountability will get accountability. You can be sure that the voters of your constituency, and I know the voters in my constituency, expect MPPs to hold the government to account and aren't satisfied when told that somebody who works in the First Minister's office is going to deny that because politically it would be harmful to the government.

Well, the government is supposed to be the people's government, so the people should be able to get access to this information. But sometimes we just shrug our shoulders and tell our constituents and get used to it and say, "Well, look, that's just broken politics in this dead democracy that we're in. That's just the way it is. It's part of the game."

Every once in a while you get a glimmer of a change. Here's a glimmer today; here's an opportunity. I'm going on about this opportunity because we all know what's going to happen next. We need the members to come in here and support the member for Sudbury's bill. But we also need to get it to the committee of choice of the member and we need the bill to move forward. This is the fourth time that the member has introduced it. If we are all in agreement here that it should pass, then who exactly should stop it from moving forward? Who?

It must not be somebody who is held accountable to this House and to the people of Ontario. All of this lack of accountability degrades the entire political process. Everybody loses confidence in government and our Legislature if we feel we can't get the answers, if they're somehow hidden. This is one means in which we can get some accountability, and then the people can decide whether or not the expenses made for travel were good or bad. They're not always going to be bad; we know that. They're not always going to be good; we know that too.

So this is our opportunity to hold the tyrannical centre to account. This is our opportunity to fight back against the democracy of the dead. I congratulate the member for Sudbury and all the members in this House who support this bill. Rick Bartolucci, you've done a great thing today.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I also want to say that I think this is a timely piece of business that we discuss here this morning, given, as my colleague from Sudbury east said earlier, this government's, in the speech from the throne and in speeches they have made subsequently out there, talking about accountability, but we know from the last five or six years what they mean by that. They mean that if things go well and there are successes, they're accountable, they're responsible; but if they go wrong and things start to fall apart, then somebody else has to be accountable and somebody else is responsible.

I think it's important that from time to time we get an opportunity to challenge the government on where they're spending their money and how they're spending their money and this whole issue of getting value for dollar—particularly this government, and I think the member from Sudbury has done a valuable service to this place by putting this piece of business on the table this morning.

I'd like to, in the short few minutes I have, focus on just a couple of things. You've heard here already the kind of travel that has happened under the leadership of this government, the flying here and flying there and the issue of whether we get value for dollar for that or not, and others will speak to it. I want to focus for just a second on what they're not doing when they're meeting with all the dignitaries around the world and wining and dining and playing golf and having a good time.

In this province, everybody who is connected in any serious or significant way with the economy knows now that we're moving into some pretty challenging times. The government has benefited from a tremendously positive, driving economy out of the US but has done nothing over the last five or six years to restructure the domestic economy of the province so that we might be in a better position to sustain a downturn in the US economy, to actually hook us into other economies or to make sure that trading between jurisdictions in the province that we govern in fact is healthy, and that each section of the province is taking advantage of the money that was flowing, due to the good economy in the US, so that we might stabilize the local economy and make it sustainable over the long term: a place like the area I

come from, northern Ontario, that has not done well under the present regime, and the economy that has changed so dramatically and stands to probably suffer even more with the downturn in the economy because there has been no significant investment in that part of the province over the last five or six years.

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In fact, I would suggest that's probably what's happening in rural Ontario as well. You heard a proposal by this government for rural Ontario. If you look at it, it's a sham; it's a shell. There's nothing there, nothing of any substance. Northern Ontario doesn't even have a strategy in place by this government, and I worry about that.

The other thing I wanted to touch on briefly in the few seconds I have left is the question my colleague from Sudbury east raised about in-province travel of ministers. I'd like to know how much travel this government, by ministers, has done in relation to the very successful fundraisers they've been having across this province over the last five or six years. Every time I turn around, they're having another fundraiser in Sault Ste Marie, and there are another half-dozen ministers coming up, organizing, yes, meetings to which they can go to justify the travel. But I would like to like to know how much of that is tied directly into actually participating in those fundraising events.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to speak to Bill 2, which is the Ministerial Travel Accountability Act. Almost all members of the House have referred to the item in the throne speech dealing with accountability and how it's needed in this province. Many of our transfer partners, it has been submitted by this government, need to be more accountable, and I think it's most timely that Mr Bartolucci brings this bill forward to the House. I would hope that all members of the House will support the bill.

Some members have talked about some of the access to this information that already exists. I take the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who spoke of business plans and public accounts committees and provincial auditors and estimates, those sorts of things. There really isn't too much access to this information. So I think he's right in bringing this forward, other than the brown envelopes that are received from time to time or applications that are made under the freedom-of-information legislation.

It's not as if there is no information available; it is available. Mr Bartolucci is suggesting, of course, that this information be filed with the Legislative Assembly, if sitting, and if not sitting, be filed with the Clerk, who in turn would put it into the Ontario Gazette. That probably is a better process, because the other process is freedom of information. When the NDP were in office, I used to have all kinds of freedom-of-information applications. Some ministries were very good; some were terrible. Sometimes you never heard from them and you had to have an appeal. So it's OK, but really we need to improve on the process.

My friend from Simcoe North talked about the David Peterson junket on which almost everyone of Italian descent on the government side went to Italy, presumably

to appease the Patti Starr scandal that arose. Comments could be made about the Bob Rae government. Comments can be made about this government. The point is that we need to be more accountable, no matter who is in office. I accordingly support the bill.

He does go a little further, though. He talks in subsection (2) about providing "a written summary of the purpose of the travel and of any accomplishments resulting from the travel, including a listing of the benefits in terms of tangible investments and employment opportunities that the travel will bring to Ontario." I raise the question—it may be appropriate that that be dealt with in another forum, a committee or some other forum—whether or not that additional information is too restrictive.

Some of these travel items by ministers aren't strictly done for economic purposes. It may be done for other purposes. I happen to be in the Ministry of the Attorney General. It may be appropriate that the Attorney General may travel outside the province to have discussions on matters that have nothing to do with the economy; it may be that particular minister. It may be that some of these tours—and some of them are tours, very legitimate tours—may be confidential. It may be that for the people who are speaking from other governments the conversations may be confidential.

There's talk in the bill of listing the agreements—sorry, "a detailed summary of the significant terms and conditions of any contract signed during the travel period." It may be that those contracts would need to be approved by cabinet, the Legislature or, in turn, by whatever government is being dealt with.

I do have a hesitation on some of the items from section 2, specifically that it's too restrictive on the government of the day. But certainly the philosophy that ministers need to be more accountable on the expenses that are being paid, that's a good philosophy. If we're saying to school boards, hospitals and other transfer sources that we're providing transfer payments to, "You need to be more accountable," I'm sure the member will agree that what's good for the goose is good for the gander, and that's a fair comment.

Accordingly, I would hope that all members of the House would support this bill. But I do draw it to the member's attention, and perhaps in the few minutes he'll have left he will comment on whether or not it's too restrictive as far as section 2 is concerned.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): I am pleased to speak on this bill brought forward by Rick Bartolucci, the member from Sudbury, because this bill clearly shows the Liberal caucus believes in true accountability by those and from those who serve in public office. From what I have heard, and for the past six years, the provincial government of the day, the Harris Tories, has not had the backbone to bring in a bill that is as clear as this when it comes to accountability, simple accountability on members of the executive council of Ontario to submit to the Legislative Assembly or to the Clerk of the assembly information relating to travel outside of this province.

To me, this is not something that is complex. I don't understand the fact that a government that is moving forward, that has been here for six years, has not had that fortitude. It has had a lot of hammers with a lot of other sectors. I believe the member from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington mentioned that the transfer partners need to be accountable. This is the proof of the pudding, because this bill is about true accountability by those who are on the executive council. If true accountability is what you want—and I'm glad to hear you're going to support the bill, but I'm certainly going to watch carefully to see if this bill is going to see the light of day in committee, because that will be proof if you really, truly believe in accountability and what it stands for.

To me, true accountability means transparency for how and why ministers are spending public dollars in any way, particularly when they are travelling and particularly when they're going outside the province. To me, the purpose of why they're travelling outside the province must reflect doing business for the province of Ontario. I don't mean business in the sense of economic business, I mean business in the context of government business.

One of the things I have watched closely is how often this government berates every ministry and sectors across this province for overspending. "We must cut." This is the "Cut, cut, cut" government. Yet when I did a small check to find out what the cost was for running the cabinet offices in 1995, I found that cost in 1995 was \$7,858,149. I figured, "Well, they've been cutting the Ministry of the Environment by 40%." I went to look because I was expecting to see how much you had cut it and how much you had become more effective, because after all your mantra is, "Smaller government," your mantra is, "Less government, less expensive government." That's why you do everything you do: less expensive government.

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What did I find? I found that you had actually more than doubled the cost of cabinet offices, which astounded me. That is irresponsible. There is no other sector in this province that could justify that kind of increase.

You are just like all of the others that you point your fingers at. You have a government that's saying, "Everybody must be accountable. Everybody has got to spend less because we're a tough government and we have to make sure that these ministries can't spend like they used to in the past." What do you do for yourselves? You more than double cabinet offices, the operating costs of cabinet offices. I'd like to see which hospital in this province has doubled its costs. I'd like to see which other administration in this province has doubled its costs. But the Harris Conservatives more than doubled their costs. You certainly used the hammer for everybody else, but for yourselves you have another rule—

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): A double standard.

Ms Di Cocco: —a totally double standard. Those figures are your figures, they're not mine.

In my estimation, this bill reflects what the clear position is of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus about open, honest government. I am appalled at hearing the members from the Harris government consistently pointing fingers to everyone else. You have to clean up your own act first before you try to point fingers at others. I will be watching carefully to see if you mean anything about accountability when we move this bill forward and when it goes to committee and when it comes back to the House for third reading.

Mr Bartolucci: I'd like to thank all the members on both sides of the House who have spoken in support of the bill. I think the members who have offered some constructive suggestions—for example, the member for Dufferin-Peel—certainly bring some good information that must be considered.

I look forward to the passage of this bill at second reading, and then I look forward to a full, rigorous debate with meaningful amendments. I believe it is wrong for us and it is a disservice to the taxpayers of Ontario to look back and throw stones. I believe we must move forward today with establishing meaningful legislation.

The purpose of the debate is to ensure that there are amendments that will make the bill even stronger. It is, though, the foundation from which I hope strong legislation will be put in place.

At this time, I'd like to thank my intern, Rachel Sheer, for the enormous work she has put in, in anticipation that this bill will be referred to committee for debate. I want to publicly thank her. She personifies excellence. Thank you very much, Rachel.

I would suggest that all of us, when the time comes, support the legislation. I will be asking that it go to the general government committee, and I would ask the Chair of general government to call the bill quickly. Our order table is pretty free, pretty open. It is the appropriate time to make this type of legislation, enshrine it in law for the present government and for future governments.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on this ballot item.

SAVING FOR OUR CHILDREN'S
FUTURE ACT (INCOME TAX
AMENDMENT), 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR L'ÉPARGNE
EN PRÉVISION DE L'AVENIR
DE NOS ENFANTS (MODIFICATION DE LA
LOI DE L'IMPÔT SUR LE REVENU)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 1. Mr Hastings has moved second reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide a tax credit for contributions to registered education savings plans. 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.

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR L'OBLIGATION
DE RENDRE COMPTE
DES VOYAGES MINISTÉRIELS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 2. Mr Bartolucci has moved second reading of Bill 2, An Act respecting Accountability for Ministerial Travel. 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. We will deal first with Mr Hastings's Bill 4.

The division bells rang from 1206 to 1211.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Would members please take their seats.

SAVING FOR OUR CHILDREN'S
FUTURE ACT (INCOME TAX
AMENDMENT), 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR L'ÉPARGNE
EN PRÉVISION DE L'AVENIR
DE NOS ENFANTS (MODIFICATION DE LA
LOI DE L'IMPÔT SUR LE REVENU)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Hastings has moved second reading of Bill 4, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act to provide a tax credit for contributions to registered education savings plans. All in favour will stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Mushinski, Marilyn
Arnott, Ted	Dunlop, Garfield	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Ecker, Janet	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Elliott, Brenda	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bartolucci, Rick	Galt, Doug	Peters, Steve
Beaubien, Marcel	Gilchrist, Steve	Phillips, Gerry
Bisson, Gilles	Gill, Raminder	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hardeman, Ernie	Ramsay, David
Boyer, Claudette	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Bradley, James J.	Jackson, Cameron	Ruprecht, Tony
Bryant, Michael	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Caplan, David	Johnson, Bert	Smitherman, George
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Stewart, R. Gary
Clark, Brad	Kwinter, Monte	Stockwell, Chris
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Tasca, Joseph N.
Clement, Tony	Marchese, Rosario	Tilson, David
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Turnbull, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wilson, Jim
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Witmer, Elizabeth
Curling, Alvin	Miller, Norm	Wood, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline	Molinari, Tina R.	Young, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	Munro, Julia	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 74; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Hastings: I move that Bill 4 be directed to the standing committee on general government.

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

MINISTERIAL TRAVEL
ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR L'OBLIGATION
DE RENDRE COMPTE
DES VOYAGES MINISTÉRIELS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Bartolucci has moved second reading of Bill 2.

All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia
Baird, John R.	Dunlop, Garfield	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Ecker, Janet	Newman, Dan
Bartolucci, Rick	Elliott, Brenda	O'Toole, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Galt, Doug	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bisson, Gilles	Gilchrist, Steve	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gill, Raminder	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Hastings, John	Ramsay, David
Bryant, Michael	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Caplan, David	Johns, Helen	Ruprecht, Tony
Chudleigh, Ted	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Churley, Marilyn	Klees, Frank	Smitherman, George
Clark, Brad	Kormos, Peter	Spina, Joseph
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Marchese, Rosario	Tasca, Joseph N.
Colle, Mike	Marland, Margaret	Tilson, David
Cordiano, Joseph	Martel, Shelley	Tsubouchi, David H.
Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony	Turnbull, David
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Curling, Alvin	Maves, Bart	Wilson, Jim
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Dombrowsky, Leona	Molinari, Tina	Young, David

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

Nays

Wood, Bob

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 72; the nays are 1.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I ask that this be referred to the standing committee on general government.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the bill being referred to the standing committee on general government will stand.

All those opposed will please stand.

A majority is not in favour of the bill being referred. Pursuant to standing order 96, the bill will be referred to the committee of the whole House.

All matters relating to private members' public business now being complete, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1220 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):

Bill 132 was introduced in April with no consultation, no prior warning, no discussion in the Legislature on a Friday when students were in exams or had already gone home for the summer. There was not even a line in the Blueprint on private universities.

Bill 132 was rammed through the Legislature with three days of public hearings. The only reassurance that was offered to students was the fact that a quality assurance board would be established to oversee the process, to monitor applications by private universities but also to oversee the implementation of applied degrees in colleges. A chair has finally been found for the board, but it still lacks membership.

The colleges in Ontario were promised the ability to offer applied degrees. They have set up their agreements, they have hired the additional staff required and they are prepared to move ahead. But they have yet to receive the green light to move ahead with these trial projects.

I have spoken to representatives of the college system: presidents, vice-presidents, students and their industry partners. This holding pattern is quickly becoming unsustainable. They cannot wait until August 30 to be given the go-ahead to offer an applied degree and be able to fill the program and offer a quality education.

Post-secondary education is not like a Jell-O mix, where you add water and stir. This government seems to believe they can introduce something like private institutions, new types of degrees and let it all sort itself out in the mix. This is our future, the future of our children. Our competitiveness and prosperity are in the balance. When can the colleges expect to know when they can offer these programs?

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): In recognition of International Year of the Volunteer and, in Canada, National Volunteer Week, I rise in the House today to thank and acknowledge all the volunteers across the province who devote their time and effort to volunteerism in their communities. I would also like to particularly thank the volunteers in my riding of York North who give so much of their time and energy to make our community a better place to live.

Currently, there are over 7.5 million volunteers in Canada involved in 180,000 not-for-profit organizations that make up Canada's voluntary sector. These people are

committed to improving the quality of our lives. They are found assisting seniors with shopping, organizing fundraisers, teaching English as a second language or volunteering for a political party. In my riding of York North, thousands of volunteers give their time to hundreds of different organizations.

This week honours those who make a difference. Last night in my riding of York North, the township of King celebrated and recognized the commitment of volunteers who work hard to improve the quality of life for the residents of King. Many will tell you they volunteer to take on new challenges, to share knowledge and abilities, to feel good and build self-esteem and to have fun. I believe it is very important to recognize our volunteers, because they are key players in holding together the fabric of our communities.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Yesterday the Premier of Ontario outlined a proposal and idea for adding tolls to existing highways across the province. These highways have already been built and paid for by the taxpayers of Ontario.

Every day in my community of Hamilton, tens of thousands of people commute back and forth between Hamilton and Toronto on the QEW. This would mean a toll, a user fee, an additional payment for those people for highways they have already paid for.

We're not sure who to believe here, because this morning on Hamilton radio the Minister of Transportation, who represents Stoney Creek, wasn't quite as committed to toll roads on existing highways as the Premier. So is the Premier right? Is the Minister of Transportation right? Is this government going to go ahead with this silly idea of tolls on already built highways? It is an additional tax that you are imposing.

You've also committed in the past to ensure there is always an alternative. Does this mean that if this toll on the QEW goes ahead, the good people of Burlington and Oakville and who live out on Lakeshore Boulevard and in Mississauga will be imposed on with the additional traffic of the alternate road? Is Lakeshore Boulevard through those neighbourhoods of Oakville, Burlington and Mississauga going to pick up the additional traffic?

This government's got to come clean. Is it the position of the Minister of Transportation that he's opposed to tolls on existing highways, or is it the position of the Premier, who wants to tax and gouge Ontarians again with another toll, another tax for a road they have paid for already?

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I'm pleased to rise and inform the House about an extremely successful event that took place in my riding. On Tuesday, April 24, the city of Woodstock had the pleasure of hosting Lieutenant Hilary M. Weston at a community volunteer

summit. Her Honour helped celebrate National Volunteer Week, which runs from April 20 to 27. Her Honour spoke eloquently of volunteerism and youth in Ontario and presented special International Year of Volunteers plaques to the mayors of all the municipalities as well as student council representatives from the county's secondary schools.

The summit and volunteer week were a tremendous success because of the hard work of groups such as the Volunteer Network of Oxford County, which consists of 30 community agencies that utilize volunteers throughout Oxford county. The volunteer network works to enhance and promote volunteerism through organizing workshops, volunteer fairs and special events. While countless people work very hard organizing volunteer appreciation week, I'd like to specifically thank Kimble Sutherland of the United Way of Oxford; Terry McCartney, chair of the Volunteer Network of Oxford County; and Irene Priest of the VON.

As part of the community volunteer summit, I had the honour of leading a presentation on the Ontario's Promise initiative. During the presentation we had the pleasure of hearing from John Lessif, of McDonald's restaurants in Oxford county; Deb Landon, executive director of the Ingersoll Big Brothers/Big Sisters; Wendy Perry of the early years challenge fund; and Curt Harnett, three-time Olympic medallist and representative for the Sport Alliance of Ontario. All the speakers demonstrated the value and inspiration one attains from volunteering in their community.

FARM PRACTICES PROTECTION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I rise today to call on this government to immediately introduce the much-promised and overdue agricultural operations act.

Nearly a year and a half ago the wheels were set in motion: two rounds of consultations, a promise to table the legislation last fall, and still we have seen nothing. The throne speech said provincial standards were necessary, but we were warned that they should not eliminate local responsibility. This is doublespeak for more downloading.

I am warning this government: don't you dare abdicate your responsibility to Ontarians.

This is what we can look forward to if the government continues to drag its feet. A farmer in west Perth is appealing an OMB decision to impose limits on the size of his farm. Why? The justice wisely argued that "the province has legislation governing normal farm practices that overrides municipal power." The ruling was that "no municipal bylaw may restrict a normal farming practice." The justice said there is no proof that randomly imposing caps on livestock units has any environmental benefit.

This scenario will be acted out time and again—our judicial system will be clogged with appeals, unnecessarily dragging farmers into court—until this government takes immediate action and shows strong leadership by

tabling a fair agricultural operations act with the proper capital funding.

If this government wants a strong rural economy, it must ensure there is a strong agricultural engine to drive it. Table the legislation and start flowing the necessary improvement dollars now.

SUMMIT OF THE AMERICAS

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This is a piece of that infamous fence in Quebec City that everybody is talking about, a base of that fence. Yes, I went to the wall, and although I did not engage in any violence I was tear-gassed along with many thousands of other peaceful protesters: grandmothers, young children, youths, workers, Canadians, Americans, Mexicans. Everyone of all stripes, colours and shapes joined together to send a message to governments across the Americas. The message was that the people would not tolerate backroom trade deals that put corporate profit ahead of human rights, ahead of protecting the environment, ahead of protection for workers, ahead of social programs.

I was there to engage in peaceful protest, but let me tell you when I walked down to where the conference was taking place and saw that dreaded fence, I was infuriated, and so I went there. That fence is a symbolic barrier, a barrier that sees government shutting out the voices of the people.

For those who say that we elect a democratic government and that they therefore have the right to make those decisions, let me say this: you only have to look at the end of apartheid in South Africa and at the civil rights movement in America to see that it has been mass social movements by which, in spite of the actions of elected officials, the world has changed, and changed for the better. If it weren't for Rosa Parks standing up to those elected officials and the law, she might still be sitting at the back of that bus.

I say right on, and congratulations to the thousands and thousands of people who went to Quebec City to fight the tyranny and the absolute secrecy in which this is being done.

1340

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is a pleasure once again to pay tribute to volunteer organizations in my riding of Simcoe North in this, the International Year of the Volunteer, and National Volunteer Week.

On Tuesday evening I was able to attend the banquet of Hospice Huronia. Over 60 people were recognized for their work in the Midland-Penetanguishene area and received Ontario Volunteer recognition pins. I thank president Bev Gerow and her volunteers who have made Huronia a better place to live.

Tomorrow I will be attending a volunteer appreciation luncheon at the Trillium Manor, a home for the aged and

long-term care facility in Orillia. We will congratulate and thank the dozens of volunteer workers who give so much of their time in assisting the staff and families in making life more comfortable and caring for the residents of Trillium Manor. I appreciate the efforts put forward by administrator Sharon Turner and her staff in recognizing the value of volunteers.

On Saturday, over 60 OPP officers, auxiliary officers and board members of the Ontario Education Leadership Centre will gather to do a spring cleanup of the camp at Longford Mills. The Ontario Education Leadership Centre is home to the training facilities of the over 850 OPP auxiliary officers in the province. As well, the camp graduates over 2,000 young leaders for tomorrow. I thank Mr Terry Harkins, the leader of both the OELC and the OPP auxiliary, for organizing this event.

Again, in this, the International Year of the Volunteer, I appreciate the efforts put forth by all volunteers to make our province such a wonderful place to live, work and raise families.

HOUSE SITTINGS

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): How many people in this province know that the Ontario Legislature was not in session from the third week of December until the third week of April—a full four months of empty chairs in our provincial Parliament. How many Ontarians know that in 1999 Premier Harris allowed the Legislature to sit for only 39 days, and that since the provincial election in June 1999 their elected representatives have been in the House only 124 days?

Elected representatives, to do their job appropriately, should be permitted to raise in the provincial Parliament the important issues of the day for the province and their own constituencies. Premier Harris has prevented the opposition from holding him accountable in the House by refusing to allow the Legislature to sit for any significant length of time.

Can you imagine the outrage and furor in Ottawa if the federal Liberal government had announced that the House of Commons would not come back in January, as it did, but in late April, as was the case with this Parliament? The Reform-Alliance hound dogs, the National Citizens' Coalition, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the Ottawa press gallery would be in a huge uproar, and cries of arrogance and dictatorship would abound.

The democratic system works best when elected representatives are debating, discussing and questioning in the legislative body to which they were elected when the head of the government and the ministers are present to be accountable to elected members and their constituents. The contempt of the Premier for this Legislative Assembly is so very apparent today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Members' statements? Members' statements? The member for Sudbury.

GOVERNMENT TRAVEL EXPENDITURES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today was an example of how responsible this government really is to the people of Ontario. Today this government had an opportunity to support meaningful legislation with regard to ministerial accountability when they travel. This is what this government did: this government chose to pass it on second reading and then bury it in committee of the whole. I suggest to you, the members on the government side, that you have done a disservice to the people of Ontario through your flagrant abuse of Parliamentary order. I would suggest to you that you have to be accountable to the people of Ontario. You have to tell the people of Ontario how much money you are spending when you travel out of province. You have to tell the people of Ontario when this Premier travels out of the province or out of the county, who he's going with and how much money it's costing. We want to make sure that you, me and every Ontario taxpayer gets the best bang for the buck.

I'm telling you that by you burying this legislation deep in the holes of the committee of the whole, you will pay the price at the polls next time, because the working families of Ontario want accountability. Dalton McGuinty, the Ontario Liberals, believe in accountability to working families. You don't and you will pay the price.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Thank you very much. I'm afraid the time is up for statements. I did call it a couple of times, to the member. I also apologize to everybody. I understand that I should have just carried on and not had another member's statement. There shouldn't have been another one and I apologize for that. I'm sure Mrs Bartolucci is watching and thought it was great, but I'm afraid we did pass it and we can't continue on. I apologize, but I did call it a couple of times.

The member for Mississauga South.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I'm apologizing, Mr Speaker. I missed the rotation and I would ask for unanimous consent. It's not a political speech; it's about congratulating volunteers. I would ask for unanimous consent to deliver that statement.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed.

VOLUNTEERS

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I appreciate this opportunity, Mr Speaker, to acknowledge a very special designation, National Volunteer Week.

In Ontario we have over 2.9 million people who donate their time each year to some area in their community. Do we realize that if volunteers were paid the average service sector wage, volunteerism would be Canada's largest industry in terms of that salary paid? Whether it's driving a vulnerable senior to a medical appointment or sharing a few hours each week with a disadvantaged youth, the people of Ontario are dedicated

to building a better tomorrow. It's the people of Ontario who are making that happen.

My constituents in Mississauga South are fine examples of this outstanding commitment to community. I am always proud and moved by the fact that so many are willing to work throughout our churches, hospitals, community centres, sports and arts programs, all of which truly make a difference. With the time I have today I cannot identify all the groups that contribute to our community such as the Boy Scouts, the Girl Guides, our local cable station volunteers like Rogers Cable 10, the Volunteer Centre of Peel, the hockey teams, the baseball leagues and countless others.

We are all indeed indebted to the generosity of these people with their personal time.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 13

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I have a very important announcement. I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 69(b), the House leader of the third party, the member for Niagara Centre, has notified the Clerk of his intention to file a notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 13, An Act to resolve labour disputes affecting the Toronto District School Board and the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board.

The order for second reading of Bill 13 may therefore not be called today.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can I just try and clarify this? Because the third party has filed that amendment or motion—it's a motion? It can't be a motion.

The Speaker: It's intent.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Intent, fine. That means that the second reading to get the kids back to school in Toronto and Windsor would now not commence until Tuesday of next week—could it be properly called by the House?

The Speaker: Just to clarify—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Minister of Labour might want to know this information. What can happen is it can be called Monday unless this was an intent to file a motion, unless by noon on Monday they filed the actual amendment, then it would not be able to be called at that time. But it is only the intent to file, so it could be called on Monday if the third party motion is filed by noon on Monday. You might want to pass that on to the third party House leader.

1350

Hon Mr Stockwell: To further clarify—and I appreciate the liberty you're extending me—by filing that motion today, they've in fact deferred debate for today. So ultimately, they've slowed the process down by at least one day, and if they filed the intent, they would ultimately slow the process down by two sessional days.

Well, OK, thank you so much, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: You made it sound like it was my fault. I just want to be very clear to my good friend the labour

minister, who I'm sure wouldn't want to be putting that point. For those of you who do want to take a look at it, it is under a standing order, and I will remind everybody, as I have often done, that I don't write the standing orders, I enforce them, although I suspect this may be one that may be changed in the future. It's pursuant to standing order 69(b), if the House leaders of all three parties want to look at it.

Hon Mr Stockwell: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I've just been also notified that there has been an opposition day filed by the NDP for next Wednesday, which would have to be debated on Wednesday. I would seek unanimous consent of this House and all sane, reasoned and thoughtful people to give me unanimous consent that we defer that debate for Wednesday so we can actually debate the bill that gets kids back to school in Windsor and Toronto. I would expect any reasonable person to accept that.

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

MEMBER'S PRIVILEGE

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Earlier today, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, Mr Colle, provided me with a written notice of privilege as required by standing order 21(c). I would like to thank the member for giving me sufficient time to carefully review the matter.

I wish to advise that I will be deciding on this matter without hearing further directly from the member at this time, as standing order 21(d) permits me to do.

The member's point of privilege relates to difficulties he has encountered in attempting to obtain property assessment information for properties within his electoral district from the Ontario Property Assessment Corp, OPAC. The member alleges that OPAC's lack of co-operation in this matter has frustrated his ability to carry out his duties as an MPP and therefore is a breach of privilege.

In similar previous instances, and as recently in this House as October 16, 2000, Speakers have consistently found—supported by the procedural authorities and a multitude of precedents—that privilege is attached only to members' parliamentary duties, and not to subsidiary duties away from Parliament.

Citation 92 in the sixth edition of Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms states, "A valid claim of privilege in respect to interference with a member must relate to the member's parliamentary duties and not to the work the member does in relation to that member's constituency."

The matter raised by the member for Eglinton-Lawrence clearly relates to activities outside of this chamber and are unconnected with the member's parliamentary duties.

Therefore, I find that a prima facie case of privilege has not been established, and I would hope that the member and the appropriate minister would work out some of those differences. I thank the member for his submission.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (RESTORING PEACE IN OUR SCHOOLS), 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (RÉTABLISSEMENT DE LA PAIX DANS LES ÉCOLES)

Mr McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 16, Act to amend the Education Act to restore peace in our schools / Projet de loi 16, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation pour rétablir la paix dans les écoles.

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

The leader of the official opposition for a short statement?

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): Yes, briefly. My bill recognizes that there are really three parties essential to the resolution of the ongoing disputes in Windsor and Toronto. My bill would enable us to resolve those disputes quickly and fairly.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to seek unanimous consent to move a motion that the House sit tomorrow to discuss Bill 13.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Unanimous consent? Agreed.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Before you get too excited, that was to allow the motion to be presented. Now we have to have the motion.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I move that the House come back tomorrow to finish second and third readings of Bill 13.

The Speaker: The government House leader has moved that we come back tomorrow to debate second and third readings and vote on Bill 13. At what time, if we could clarify that?

Hon Mrs Ecker: At 1:30 of the clock.

The Speaker: Just so we're clear, I'll try to be slow. We usually have this written down, and this time we don't. The motion is—

Interjection.

The Speaker: I'll proceed while you discuss it. It is a motion. Basically what it says is that we will come back tomorrow at 1:30 of the clock to debate second and third readings of Bill 13.

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.

I'm sorry, only four members rose. The motion is carried.

Applause.

The Speaker: I've never seen anybody so happy to come in to work in all my life—a standing ovation.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS (continued)

ONTARIO NATURAL HERITAGE ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LE PATRIMOINE NATUREL DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Gilchrist moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to ensure responsible and acceptable development and to protect the natural heritage of the Province of Ontario / Projet de loi 17, Loi visant à assurer l'aménagement judicieux et acceptable du territoire et à protéger le patrimoine naturel de la province 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 Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): This bill would defend the Oak Ridges moraine by ensuring that every aspect of that land feature, which has been designated by the Ministry of Natural Resources as an area of natural and scientific interest, would be protected from any development.

But the scope of the bill goes far beyond the Oak Ridges moraine and amends the Conservation Land Act to prohibit any authority from permitting development on any wetland or area of natural scientific interest greater than two hectares anywhere in the province.

The bill will strengthen official plans to show support for the thorough work done by municipal governments to frame the best possible use of land in each community, and allows the imposition of development charges for the acquisition of parkland, but prohibits the imposition of development charges on brownfield sites to facilitate the redevelopment of commercial and industrial land that is currently sitting idle.

In total, this bill goes a long way toward defending our natural heritage and the rights of citizens to determine the long-term planning of our communities.

1400

FRANCO-ONTARIAN EMBLEM ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR L'EMBLÈME FRANCO-ONTARIEN

Mr Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 18, An Act to recognize the emblem of the Ontario French-speaking community / Projet de loi 18,

Loi visant à reconnaître l'emblème de la communauté francophone 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 Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Le projet de loi reconnaît officiellement le drapeau de la communauté francophone de l'Ontario comme emblème de celle-ci. The bill officially recognizes the flag of the Ontario French-speaking community as the emblem of the community.

As most of us are aware, Ontario, most precisely Ottawa, will be hosting the francophone games in July. Also in July, Windsor will be celebrating the 300th anniversary of the French arrival in Ontario. Therefore, it would be appropriate at this time to officially recognize the emblem of the French-speaking community.

ONTARIO STUDENT LOAN HARMONIZATION ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR L'HARMONISATION DES PRÊTS D'ÉTUDES DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs Cunningham moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités.

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

The minister for a short statement?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): The purpose of this bill is to allow the Ontario government to join other jurisdictions in finding an alternative way of delivering student loans in light of the fact that national banks are withdrawing from student loan programs later this year.

The act, if passed by the Legislature, would allow the Ontario government to put new financial and administrative arrangements in place to ensure that Ontario student loans are available to students as of August 1, 2001. It would also provide the Ontario government with the authority to enter into an agreement with the federal government for joint administration of the Canada and Ontario student loan programs.

TOWN OF NEWMARKET ACT, 2001

Mrs Munro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr9, An Act respecting the Town of Newmarket.

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

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

PREMIUM AUTO COLLISION INC. ACT, 2001

Mr Hastings moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr7, An Act to revive Premium Auto Collision Inc.

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

Pursuant to standing order 84, this bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

GOOD SAMARITAN ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LE BON SAMARITAIN

Mr Gilchrist moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 20, An Act to protect persons from liability in respect of voluntary emergency medical or first aid services / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à exonérer les personnes de la responsabilité concernant des services médicaux ou des premiers soins fournis bénévolement en cas d'urgence.

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

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): This is generally known as the Good Samaritan Act. I'm sure many of the members will recall that in the last Legislature we held a debate during private members' hour and this bill made it to third reading. Unfortunately, it died on the order paper. The bill will protect health care professionals and other individuals from liability for negligence in respect of services they provide in certain circumstances to persons who are ill, injured or unconscious as a result of an accident or other emergency except, of course, if they cause damage through gross negligence.

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE CONSEIL EXÉCUTIF

Mr Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Executive Council Act respecting an institution of democracy in the Legislative Assembly / Projet de loi 21, modifiant la Loi sur le Conseil exécutif concernant une institution démocratique de 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.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): This builds on the principle of accountability spoken of in last week's throne speech. It adds a new section to the Executive Council Act. Under the new section, if at the

end of a legislative session a minister of the crown has not attended 60% of the oral question periods held during the session, \$100 must be deducted from the minister's salary for each occasion by which his or her attendance fell short of 60%.

WYCLIFFE COLLEGE ACT, 2001

Mr Smitherman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr2, An Act respecting Wycliffe College.

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

Pursuant to standing order 86(a), this bill stands referred to the Commissioners of Estate Bills.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN INVOLVED IN PROSTITUTION ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS QUI SE LIVRENT À LA PROSTITUTION

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 22, An Act to protect Children involved in Prostitution / Projet de loi 22, Loi visant à protéger les enfants qui se livrent à la prostitution.

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

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The purpose of the bill is to protect children under 18 who are involved in prostitution. The bill gives police officers the power with a warrant to apprehend a child involved in prostitution and return the child to his or her family or to place the child in a protective safe house. A police officer may also apprehend a child without a warrant where the child's life or safety is seriously and imminently in danger.

The bill makes it an offence for a person to encourage a child to engage in prostitution. The penalty for the offence is a fine of up to \$25,000 and imprisonment of up to 24 months, or both a fine and imprisonment.

1410

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (YOUTH PROTECTION), 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (PROTECTION DE LA JEUNESSE)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 23, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to require a driver's licence to be suspended if a motor vehicle is used when purchasing sexual services from a child / Projet de loi 23, Loi modifiant le Code criminel pour qu'il exige la suspension du permis de conduire

d'une personne qui utilise un véhicule automobile alors qu'elle achète les services sexuels d'un enfant.

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

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Section 41 of the Highway Traffic Act provides for the suspension of a driver's licence of a person who is convicted of committing specified offences while using a motor vehicle. The suspension is for one year for the first conviction. The bill adds to the list of offences in subsection 41(1) of the offences under subsection 212(4) of the Criminal Code of Canada relating to purchases of the sexual services of a person under the age of 18.

MUNICIPAL AMENDMENT ACT (ADULT ENTERTAINMENT PARLOURS), 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS (LOCAUX DE DIVERTISSEMENT POUR ADULTES)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 24, An Act to amend the Municipal Act with respect to adult entertainment parlours / Projet de loi 24, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les municipalités à l'égard des locaux de divertissement pour adultes.

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

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Among other things, the bill prohibits a person licensed to operate an adult entertainment parlour from employing a person who is under 18 years of age or who does not hold a licence to work or perform or provide services in that parlour.

The bill also amends the definition of "adult entertainment parlour" to include premises from which dates, escorts or nude or partially nude dancing is arranged for a fee and in which telephone, electronic or Internet sex lines are available.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask the indulgence of the House to consider moving second and third reading of the Good Samaritan Act that I introduced a few minutes ago, recognizing that we had all-party support for the bill in the last Parliament.

Just a week and a half ago, Minister Newman and I were witnesses to an accident right in front of this building. A car came off the sidewalk and ran over a woman in front of the Frost Building. We were very fortunate that an employee of the Toronto Hospital attended at the scene and gave immediate first aid, but under the current legislation he would theoretically be exposed to liability if, even with the best of intentions, he had done anything that had caused any negative consequences to that victim.

I would ask for unanimous consent for second and third reading of the Good Samaritan Act.

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

The consent was to move it, and now you have to move second reading of it.

GOOD SAMARITAN ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LE BON SAMARITAIN

Mr Gilchrist moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to protect persons from liability in respect of voluntary emergency medical or first aid services / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à exonérer les personnes de la responsabilité concernant des services médicaux ou des premiers soins fournis bénévolement en cas d'urgence.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Any debate? No further debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Gilchrist moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to protect persons from liability in respect of voluntary emergency medical or first aid services / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à exonérer les personnes de la responsabilité concernant des services médicaux ou des premiers soins fournis bénévolement en cas d'urgence.

The Speaker: Any debate? Seeing none, that is carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we proceed, we have in the Speaker's gallery some honoured guests. We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a parliamentary delegation led by the Honourable Jozef Migaš, president of the National Council of the Slovak Republic. Mr Migaš is joined by Mr Miroslav Mikolášik, the ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Canada. Please join me in welcoming our special guests.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EARLY YEARS CENTRES

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Last Thursday, the Lieutenant Governor told this House that step 12 in our government's journey into the 21st century is to provide a plan "to support parents and ensure children get the best possible start in life."

Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret Norrie McCain, who co-authored the Early Years Study, presented a new way of thinking about child develop-

ment. In that study, Mustard and McCain make the point that recent advances in neuroscience represent a major leap forward in our understanding about the importance of early brain development in children.

Notre gouvernement est extrêmement fier, our government is very proud of the work we have done to date to support parents and children in this province. In the first phase of the implementation our children's agenda, we launched the Healthy Babies, Healthy Children program, a service that reaches mothers and newborn children across the province. The preschool speech and language program was another key element of our first-phase initiative.

In the second phase, Ontario built on this foundation by commissioning the groundbreaking research of the Early Years Study. We then launched five demonstration projects and the beginning of the early years challenge fund. At the same time, we established Ontario's first-ever early intervention program for young children with autism and enhanced children's mental health services right across the province. In Ontario, we are leaders in providing services and supports to children, and we are determined to remain so.

Nous sommes des chefs de file dans le domaine de la prestation de services et de mécanismes de soutien aux enfants, et nous sommes déterminés à le rester.

The third phase of the Mike Harris government's children's agenda proposes to establish a system of local early years centres across the province that will help build stronger communities, that will help support parents in their important roles, and that will give children the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

One of the main objectives in creating the early years centres is to help prepare children for lifelong learning. To do this, we will build on what's working in communities in order to help parents ensure that when their son or daughter gets to school, they'll arrive ready to learn.

We want parents to have choice and flexibility at the early years centres. We want these centres to be a place where parents can go to find the answers to the questions they may have about their child. The centres will serve as a focal point for communities, allowing different groups and agencies to come together and work with parents to support their children. It will be important to parents that the early years centres serve as a valuable resource. As such, they will offer a mix of universal supports that address common needs across the province, like literacy programs, nutrition programs and parenting courses. In addition, these centres will include other targeted services tailored to meet the unique needs of local communities, such as supports for children with special needs.

Given what we know today about early brain development, this sets the foundation for learning, behaviour and health throughout one's life. The Harris government is eager to continue to move forward with the implementation of the early years agenda.

Following the budget on May 9, we will come forward with the next phase in our early years plan and specific details on how we will use the national children's agenda

funding to improve the lives of Ontario's children. It's encouraging, I want to say, to see that the federal government is joining the Harris government in addressing the important needs of children.

None of this agenda would have been possible without the very hard work and dedication to the early years initiative by my predecessor and good friend, Ontario's first minister responsible for children, the Honourable Margaret Marland.

Enfin, j'aimerais remercier, and finally, I would like to thank the early years task group and co-chairs, Dr Robin Williams and Philip Donne, for their advice and commitment to the children and families of Ontario. We appreciate the time and effort that they invested, along with the members of their group. Their contribution has been invaluable.

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EDUCATION REFORM

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Nothing we do as a society is more important than the education of our children. It's key to our prosperity as a province, and it gives our young people the knowledge and skills they need for success in today's competitive world.

The key elements of our education plan to reform our publicly funded education system are: fair funding focused on students, more resources in classrooms, a new and more rigorous curriculum, regular tests to show how well our students are doing, standard report cards and a stronger voice for parents in their child's education. All are about increasing quality and accountability.

During the last election, our government's Blueprint document outlined our commitments to continue our plan for quality reform. We've been meeting those commitments, doing what we said we would do, but also listening to the advice from our education partners on how best to succeed.

For example, we believe that one foundation for quality education is teaching excellence, and we're implementing a comprehensive teacher-testing program. We recognize that Ontario has many excellent and dedicated teachers, but we need to work with our partners to ensure that all teacher training is as consistent, effective and rigorous as it needs to be.

To ensure our schools are safer, more respectful places to learn, we've passed the Safe Schools Act. It gives new authority to teachers to suspend and principals to expel for a variety of disruptive behaviours and serious infractions. It includes participation in strict discipline programs for students who are fully expelled and mandates criminal background checks for all school employees who have regular access to students.

Because our government believes in educational accountability and a performance-based education system, we are implementing standardized province-wide testing of student achievement. Recent test results show we were right to stress basic skills and higher standards

in the new curriculum, but while showing we've made progress, they also clearly show there is much more work to do.

Our plan has put the system on a path that is entirely new and different. We've taken difficult decisions, necessary decisions to create an education system where excellence, achievement and accountability are the highest priorities.

Last week's throne speech promised additional steps to ensure flexibility and choice in education and continued support for high education standards and performance-based accountability. These commitments set the stage for the next steps in education reform, which I'm announcing today.

A secure supply of trained and capable teachers is critical to the education of Ontario's young people. To accomplish this, the government will work with the Ontario College of Teachers and the Ontario Teachers' Federation to develop an action plan to recruit the finest candidates to the teaching profession in Ontario.

Parents, students and taxpayers also need the assurance that all teachers are doing the best job possible. Therefore, we will continue our implementation of our teacher-testing program to ensure all Ontario teachers have the up-to-date knowledge and the skills they need to help our students reach their full potential.

The government also believes it's essential to provide more choice to parents in making decisions about their children's education. However, our government also respects that some parents choose to educate their children at home. To assist these children in getting the educational supports they need, we will eliminate the institutional bias against home schooling and will facilitate home school parents' access to our standard tests and other learning tools.

Ontario's new curriculum sets more rigorous standards for what is to be taught and what is to be learned in our schools. We recognize that some students need extra help in order to achieve. The government will require that our schools are providing students who are falling behind with the extra support they need to catch up and to meet those standards.

To ensure that Ontario's students have the skills and knowledge they will need, the government will require that schools promote only those students who do achieve at an acceptable level.

Standardized student testing helps measure where we are making progress and where we need to improve. Recent test results prove that there remains much room for improvement in our education system. To help parents and teachers judge how well students are learning core subjects, the government will expand standardized testing to all grades and will be making further announcements about that later.

Continuous improvement is key to increasing student excellence and achievement. In order to ensure that our schools are improving, the government will require that school boards set targets for improving student achievement and that plans be established to help low-

performing schools and school boards, and we will recognize and encourage schools that demonstrate sustained or significantly improved student performance. Again, we'll be making further announcements about this.

Starting in November 2001, the government will launch annual surveys to measure parent satisfaction with the education system.

Finally, this government believes in the value of innovation and bringing new ideas to meet the challenges of education. Therefore, we will explore ways to encourage creative, groundbreaking school models such as the proposed regional centre of excellence for skilled occupations in Ottawa.

This government has now been focused on education reform in Ontario for almost six years. Our government is staying the course. The challenges of education reform are many, but we believe the cause and the objective is right. We are making progress. We are realizing the promise of education reform, but much more needs to be done.

In the week of May 7 to 11 we will all be celebrating Education Week, which is an opportunity to recognize the dedication and hard work of all our education partners, from parents, students and teachers to staff. Many members representing our partners are here today in the galleries of the Legislature.

The theme of this year's Education Week is Excellence in School Performance, Excellence in Student Learning. That theme accurately summarizes the goals of our government's plans for education quality reform. I look forward to continuing to work with our education partners in order to achieve this. Our students deserve nothing less.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): We heard in last week's throne speech that this government places great importance on having the skilled workforce necessary to attract investment and jobs and, in so doing, keep Ontario's economy flourishing. To help achieve this goal, I'm pleased to report that our ministry has already introduced a number of measures that make excellent use of public funds and give Ontario students the high-quality education they need to find employment.

We are committed to ensuring that every willing and qualified Ontario student secures a place in a post-secondary education program. As part of our plan to meet that commitment, we, with our partners, are strengthening our publicly funded colleges and universities through a \$1.8-billion SuperBuild commitment to create 73,000 new student spaces. We will be providing students with increased choices in flexible, relevant programs through new applied degrees at colleges and the potential for new private degree-granting institutions to set up in Ontario.

We are increasing accountability by measuring and reporting on key factors such as student graduation rates and the percentage of our graduates who in fact find jobs.

These are key components of our plan to ensure Ontario students receive the highest quality education and training programs, which will give them the skills and education they need to find good jobs.

Now I'm pleased to reveal further elements of our plan. The government will introduce a new charter for our colleges. This would reform the governance model of Ontario's colleges to allow them to become more flexible, entrepreneurial, responsive and market-driven. It will support the strategic skills investment program to address critical skill shortages with the goal of producing a skilled workforce in strategic sectors that attract investment.

The government will, of course, help attract the world's best and brightest to Ontario by helping our foreign-trained professionals qualify for employment and meet skills shortages.

To assist our students in acquiring the skills and experience they will need to find jobs, the government will require that all secondary school students have access to work experience. These initiatives will build on programs and policies that our government has already put in place.

The government began to expand spaces at colleges and universities through the access to opportunities program—we refer to this as ATOP—that was announced in the May 1998 budget. During the first three years of ATOP, the government made a \$228-million investment to create 23,000 new spaces for students in hi-tech programs. This has been well-received by our students and by our business community.

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Of course, not every graduate of our secondary schools chooses to attend a post-secondary institution. To ensure that workers have the relevant skills in the right quantity that employers need to compete in the new economy, the government has introduced new initiatives to prepare students for the workplace. The Passport to Prosperity program, launched in 1999, is a unique partnership with industry that encourages more employers to provide high school students with hands-on training through workplace experiences. Over the past three years, the \$50.8-million Ontario summer jobs strategy helped 179,000 students find summer jobs. We look forward to the same success rate with employers and students this summer. We have more than doubled the funding for our Ontario youth apprenticeship program, referred to throughout Ontario as OYAP, which helps students start an apprenticeship while still in high school—a very popular program, very practical and something that has been long overdue in Ontario. Ontario's new Apprenticeship and Certification Act, proclaimed in January 2000, is expected to double the number of people entering apprenticeship programs from 1998-99 levels of 11,000 people.

I would also like to point out that in all we have done, accountability for the use of public funds has been of the

utmost importance. We have taken action to increase accountability for tax dollars that are given out as student loans. For several years now, we have required post-secondary institutions with high default rates to share in the cost of loan defaults. We now also require colleges and universities to make available to the public information on their performance in key areas such as student and employer satisfaction and the employment rates of graduates, to name a few. This year for the first time, a portion of the institution's operating grant was allocated based on their performance in these areas.

I am very confident that our plan for post-secondary education, which we continue to improve upon, will prepare our students for a productive future and will ensure that Ontario has the skilled workforce necessary to attract investment and jobs in the 21st century.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I want to speak to the Minister of Education's statement today and, at the same time, to the Premier's speech delivered a short while ago. It has become perfectly apparent to all objective parties that public education in Ontario is in a mess. There is simply no other way to put it. We have schools without enthusiasm, we have students without extracurricular activities, we have parents experiencing a tremendous loss of confidence in what is happening to their children's education.

The minister tells us today that essentially she's going to impose more obligations on school boards and on teachers to get it right. I think it's important to take a long, hard look at the record. The fact of the matter is that the Mike Harris government has had its hands on public education for close to six years now, and the results are in. In addition to those things I've just described, half of our children are failing to meet the basic standard in reading, writing and mathematics. That's according to this government's own standardized test. In addition to that, we have recently learned that one third of our grade 10 students are failing to meet the basic literacy standard. These are this government's results. Those children are producing in that way, not as a result of their own failings, but as a result of the failings of this government.

The throne speech recently delivered in this House made ample reference to responsibility and accountability. It seems to me that this government better start to take responsibility for what's happening in public education and specifically with respect to what is happening to the test results for Ontario's children.

Working families want this government to begin to understand that, first of all, putting money into education is an investment and not purely an expense, as this government sees it. We've put forward a comprehensive plan that is designed specifically to bring about improvement in student learning. That's what it's all about at the end of the day.

Here are some of the details of that plan. First of all, we believe in public school choice and the government has cherry-picked this particular aspect of our plan. I congratulate them for that, but they're missing, as usual, the big picture. Here's some of the rest of it. We think if we're going to bring about real improvement in student learning we've got to start by reducing class size in the early grades. We believe that there should be a hard cap, a real cap on class sizes for those children between the ages of four and eight. That's junior kindergarten through to grade 3. Studies tell us that if children get more individual attention up front they experience remarkably better success academically, both at the beginning and later on in college and university, they are better behaved and better and more productive citizens. We believe we should have smaller class sizes.

We also believe that we should be recognizing much of the excellence that can be found in public education today. To listen to this government, you would think that there was nothing good happening anywhere and has never happened at any time in the history of this province when it comes to public education. So we've put forward a lighthouse school program that would recognize excellence in schools in whatever facet that might manifest itself. If a school has some kind of excellence, we would give some additional funding to that school on condition that they share those best practices with other schools, the intention being to lift all schools in the system up.

The other component to our plan involves turnaround teams. We recognize that there are some schools that are experiencing some difficulties. We would lend a hand. We would want to offer some assistance. So we would create these turnaround teams, which would be designed to support schools which are having problems. They'd be people of expertise—educators, principals and others—who are well informed in the matters of bringing about improvement in our schools. The overall thrust of our plan is to bring about improvement in all of our schools.

The government, as we understand it, is cherry-picking another idea today. They want to bring about this notion of some perverted form of lighthouse schools where they're going to give money to schools if they perform well. Our plan specifically is designed to ensure that schools get additional money if they're doing well and on condition that they use that money to support other schools. It's all about lifting all schools up.

EARLY YEARS CENTRES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Children's advocates have been waiting on pins and needles for this government to announce something good for children in the province today. Many of them are here in the gallery hoping for good news. They've been waiting patiently as this government announced and re-announced and re-announced again a \$30-million Early Years challenge fund that never seems to go anywhere and, I'm sad to say, isn't going anywhere today.

They've been frustrated that this government has slashed licensed child care funding across the province. The direction has been to starve quality licensed child care by cutting funding by 15% and by downloading responsibilities on to cash-strapped municipalities. This government has cut \$43.41 per child per year from licensed child care. Waiting lists for subsidized child care keep growing throughout the province and the pressures on the province's child care system are greater than ever.

In Niagara, we talked to a single mom who had to leave her job because subsidized, licensed child care wasn't available for her two children.

In Kingston, that community is so cash-strapped from provincial downloading it may have to close one of its two municipally run child care centres, even though 273 children are waiting for subsidized child care in that city.

Here in Toronto the waiting list for subsidized child care has grown to over 14,490 children this year because this government refused to help fund Toronto's plan to open up 2,000 new spaces.

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We've been waiting to hear what this government plans to do with the \$844 million it will receive from the federal government for early years development over the next five years, and \$114 million of those federal dollars have been sitting in Ontario's coffers since April 1 and this government has refused to say what it will do with that money.

Today the government claims it will open up early years centres in the province. Well, six years ago when this government took office there were early years projects underway. This government cancelled them and still, though we've heard the announcement and the re-announcement and the re-announcement, nothing has happened to reverse that decision.

The reality is that this government has ignored the recommendations from its own early years study, which it commissioned Dr Fraser Mustard to write. This government has ignored the recommendations from its own Education Improvement Commission, which says the government should invest in full-day junior and senior kindergarten throughout the province.

If you really care about kids, take the \$844 million the federal government is flowing for early years development, match or even better the funding and create the seamless, integrated series of child care and family resource centres that Dr Fraser Mustard talked about when he called for better early years education in Ontario over two years ago.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Then we have the Minister of Education. At a time when more and more people across the province are worried about the state of our public education system, at a time when they want to see a vision from this government, at a time when they know that \$1.5 billion has been taken out of the funding of elementary and secondary education in

this province, at a time when people are crying out for a vision, what do we hear today? No vision, just a series of announcements and re-announcements, many of which are further aimed at penalizing and going after people who are already having a hard time in the education system.

It's interesting that the Fraser Institute completed a study that purported to rank schools in Ontario. This government, if you believe the Premier, thought that was a good idea. Now we find that the Fraser Institute has had to withdraw their report because it was inadequately researched and contained information that was frankly false, not true.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: That's the road that this government is on, and I can tell by the protests of the government members that they think this road promoted by the Fraser Institute is somehow going to better our schools. The reason there are so many labour disputes in our education system, the reason there is so much turmoil, is because the government continues to underfund the system, continues to vilify teachers, continues to attack the system rather than come forward with a plan to invest and improve.

So these are very disappointing announcements today, just more re-announcement, no substance.

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Consent for each party to take five minutes to speak to the day of mourning.

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

Hon Mr Stockwell: This Saturday is the national day of mourning for workers killed and injured on the job. This is an important opportunity to honour these workers and also to recommit ourselves to workplace health and safety.

In recent years, a consensus has emerged that workplace health and safety is far too important to be played with as a partisan tool or bargaining chip. Employers and employees, whatever their other differences, are increasing united in the drive for safer workplaces.

The same goes for this chamber. Each party has held the responsibility of government and knows the sadness and sorrow that each workplace fatality brings to family, friends and loved ones. I think former Ministers of Labour here today would agree that there is no more empty or futile experience than reading about another preventable tragedy in the morning accident reports.

In Ontario, our health and safety record continues to improve each year. We are headed in the right direction, but more needs to be done.

One achievement of which I am most proud is the work we did last year to protect workers from exposures to hazardous substances. This will no doubt lead to fewer occupational illnesses down the road. The key is prevention.

Shortly after taking office, we gave the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board a broad new mandate to focus on the prevention of injuries and illnesses. The board took its new mission to heart. It now stands at the centre of a health and safety system completely dedicated to preventing injuries and illness before they happen.

In just the past few years, young worker health and safety has emerged as one of the most serious and challenging issues facing society today. The trends are undeniable. The injury rates of young workers are consistently higher than the rest of the working population. The health and safety system is moving to protect these workers and prevent future tragedies. It's an issue that cuts across all partisan and political boundaries. I know first hand of the tireless efforts offered by many of the members in this House, including the member for Peterborough with respect to the health and safety concerns he's brought to me; the member for Thunder Bay in the Liberal caucus has also been pushing very hard for health and safety records in the north; and of course the member from Sudbury, who has worked very diligently with the health and safety work community in her riding.

So, I welcome the continuing interest and input of honourable members—

Interjection: Sudbury East.

Hon Mr Stockwell: —Sudbury East, I'm sorry. Thunder Bay-Superior North and young worker health and safety was the particular comment I was making. I hope for his advice and counsel as we develop new initiatives in this area.

Education and information are key. We worked tirelessly with the Ministry of Education to get health and safety instructions into the high school curriculum, and we were successful. This instruction is now being carried out using the Live Safe! Work Smart! resource materials, which also includes strong support materials for high school teachers. We're working to get health and safety awareness into elementary schools.

We've also established the Young Worker Health and Safety Advisory Panel. This panel of dedicated stakeholders will ensure that no angle goes unexplored in our drive to make the working world safer for our young people.

This year, the focus of North American occupational safety and health is again on young workers. Starting Sunday, May 6, activities will take place across the province highlighting the importance of health and safety for young workers. That's a timely focus given that the first of the thousands of young people have already started their summer jobs. Still, programs, pamphlets and information can only achieve so much. It is crucial that employers and parents devote the time and energy to making sure that young workers know the hazards they will be dealing with. Nothing can replace personal, hands-on contact and interest. A combined approach of prevention, inspection and enforcement has helped make Ontario workplaces among the safest in the world.

On just one personal note, it's very important for all those parents today whose children are going out to work

for the summer—for the first time potentially or even the second or third time—to talk to their children before they go to work and tell them, "If you believe you're entering an unsafe work area, don't do it." It's very important, crossing all political boundaries, that parents speak to their kids and say, "You have rights in your workplace. Don't put yourself in a position where you could cost yourself your life."

These efforts will continue, but right now I ask you to join me in honouring all those who have been killed or injured on the job. After every party has spoken, we'll ask for a minute of silence for those who have died in the workplace.

The Speaker: Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus to pay tribute to those men and women who have died or have been injured in the workplace across the province of Ontario and across this country.

April 28 is significant as the designated day of mourning. This day commemorates the date of April 28, 1914, when this Legislature passed the first Workers' Compensation Act in the province of Ontario. Although much progress has been made since 1914, much more still needs to be done.

The statistics of workplace injuries and deaths are staggering. In the past 10 years, 4,261 men and women have died on the job as a result of workplace injury or disease. In 1999 alone, 409 men and women lost their lives as a result of workplace injury or disease. Over 358,000 Ontarians were injured on the job in 1999. Those are staggering, sobering statistics for all of us. Each one of those statistics was someone's father, someone's son, someone's mother, daughter, brother, sister. Each one of those people were folks who went to work in the morning thinking they would come back to their family at the end of the day as they had left. Unfortunately, more than one per day last year did not come back to their family. Unfortunately, 350,000 of them were injured on the job in Ontario.

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Young people, as the minister mentioned, have to continue to be a particular focus of everything we do. Many of these tragedies, unfortunately, have included young people, young people who held full-time jobs; 16- and 17-year-olds who went to work at part-time jobs while they were in school.

Beyond each person there's a tragedy and there's a story, and there's a human component to each statistic and each individual we talk about. The human cost is beyond understanding. The suffering, the pain, the agony, the loss of dignity, the stress, the family breakups, the poverty: these are all the hidden prices that families and people pay in Ontario as a result of workplace injury and death.

I can speak of this from first-hand experience. I remember, as a young boy, my father going to work in the morning and kissing him goodbye, and the next time I saw my father was in a hospital in a wheelchair, where he

spent the last 30 years of his life as a result of a workplace accident—30 years of pain and agony and suffering, unable to do the things he had done for the first 33 years of his life. So I certainly understand, I think as all members of the House do, the price that is paid when someone is injured on the job, the price that they and the family pays when someone is killed in the workplace.

I think we all have a special responsibility today to commit ourselves: every death, every accident that occurs in Ontario in the workplace is one that can and should and must be prevented.

We have much to do in this. I believe more education is essential. I believe more training for workers is essential. There has to be more responsibility placed on employers to ensure that they provide safe workplaces for Ontarians, and Ontarians must be educated to understand that they have the right to refuse unsafe work, because, at the end of the day, their health and safety, the well-being of their family and being there to take care of their family becomes more important than any job or any task that they undertake.

Today, as we salute and mourn and pay tribute and honour to those men and women who have given up their lives as a result of simply going to work and those hundreds of thousands who have been injured as a result of simply going to work and trying to take care of their families, we owe it, all of us, to commit ourselves to doing everything we can in a non-partisan way on all sides of this House to try to prevent every death, every tragedy, every injury that occurs across Ontario. We owe it to all of them. We owe it to their kids, to their families, to ourselves, as responsible Ontarians, as responsible government.

I certainly know that my caucus commit themselves to that. I know the two other parties in this House hold the same commitment, and I hope that today begins another effort and that when we stand up here next year we can proudly state that the number of dead and injured in Ontario has gone down, that fewer families, fewer people, fewer Ontarians have suffered the tragedy of workplace death or injury.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): We pay tribute today to the memory of all those who have died in workplace accidents or from occupational disease. On April 28 we remind ourselves that it is important to continue to mourn the dead and to fight for the living. As you know, there has been official observance of the day of mourning in Ontario since 1988, when the Ontario Legislature passed a resolution introduced by the opposition NDP.

All of us here can be proud that something that began in this House has spread not only across Canada; the day of mourning is now recognized in Australia and even by the United Nations.

Today, in the year 2001, I am honoured to speak on this issue. We all know that even one workplace death is too many, and we cannot rest until we are assured that everyone is safe from danger on the job.

Three years ago, when I stood with friends in Hamilton to mark this day, I said that in the first 10 years

since the tradition of the day of mourning began in Ontario we saw a steady decline in the annual totals of deaths and injuries recorded in Ontario, from almost 300 deaths in the workplace in 1988 down to below 200 in 1997. Two hundred workplace deaths is still 200 too many. But unfortunately, since 1997, we have been moving in the wrong direction again. I regret to say that in 1999 the number of workplace deaths in Ontario increased to 231. Last year it increased again, to 243. But far more importantly, the rules that govern our workplaces are changing in a way that I believe will further increase the likelihood of workplace accidents and even the number of deaths and will reduce the ability of workers to make their workplace safe.

In the very near future we'll face a reality in which workers will be forced to work 60 hours a week, to work 12 days straight without even one day off, to give up the right to a half-hour lunch break in the middle of their shift and lose the right to an unbroken annual summer vacation. Is that cause for concern? Yes. I believe it will lead to more accidents and more deaths in the workplace.

The laws in Ontario have also changed with the specific purpose of making it easier for employers to get rid of trade unions, the very organizations that have done more than anyone else to bring safety to Ontario workplaces. Employers are now required by law to post information in the workplace to instruct workers about how to decertify their trade union. Is that cause for concern? Yes. Our history tells us it will increase the likelihood of accidents if unions are not in the workplace.

There is also a proposal to force the merger of various labour tribunals—these are like informal courts for workers—to fuse them into a megatribunal. That includes the Workplace Safety and Insurance Appeals Tribunal. That means that fewer cases will be heard and the ones that are will be ruled on by single arbitrators instead of a three-member panel and will be decided by people with less expertise than we now have. So the ability of workers to seek justice on health and safety matters will be diminished. Is that cause for concern? Yes, it is. Will it add to the likelihood of more workplace accidents? Our own history says it will.

My friends, while we organize and fight for the living, it is fitting that today we observe a moment of silence in memory of all those who lost their lives on the job in Ontario. Our thoughts are with their families and friends. But before we do, I ask everyone in this Legislature to think very carefully about the coming changes I have mentioned and to consider these things from the standpoint of what impact they may have on health and safety in the workplace—the likelihood of more workplace accidents and deaths—and ask yourself what the numbers will be next year. How many more workers will die on the job in Ontario and how many more will be seriously injured, and are we really doing everything we can to reduce the likelihood of more accidents?

The Speaker: Would all members and our friends in the galleries please join us and rise in a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker: Thank you, everyone.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question today is for the Minister of Education. Yesterday our party put forward a plan to get the children in Windsor and Toronto back in the classroom. Today we've incorporated that plan into a bill. I hope you have had the opportunity to give it some attention. It would appear that the pressing matter, when it comes to Windsor and Toronto, has been or will shortly be resolved. You should take no credit for that, Madam Minister, nor should the Minister of Labour. To do so would be like the arsonist claiming credit for helping put out the fire.

The fact of the matter is that you have sown the seeds which have led to this discord and will continue to lead to discord throughout the province as contracts come to an end and new ones have to be negotiated.

My bill is very simple. It recognizes there are really three parties that are essential to the resolution of any of these disputes. Will you support my bill, which will have the effect of resolving these matters quickly and fairly both now and into the future?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): It is better late than never with a bill—and perhaps the honourable member is interested in taking credit. We over here are not interested in debating who takes credit; we're interested in getting the kids back in the classroom, which is certainly what we've been trying to do.

I appreciate the honourable member is attempting to assist in resolving this labour problem, but how do you legislate to encourage someone to agree to do something? We've already had both parties wrestling with all the options open to them: binding arbitration, all those different things that are available to them under the labour legislation. They didn't agree to do that. His bill is not going to make them agree to do that. That is why this government has put forward back-to-work legislation to get those children in the classroom. It has simply not been fair to those kids to have them out.

Mr McGuinty: There have been 60 work stoppages on the watch of the Mike Harris government. There is every reason to believe that our working families will have to suffer through dozens more between now and the end of this government.

I'll tell you why my bill is necessary. Your government now controls not only how much money boards receive, but you tell them in specific detail how they are going to spend it. They don't have any flexibility, in any real sense of the word, to manage their negotiations. That's why we need your government at the table if

there's going to be a real effort on your part to make sure our families don't have to suffer through more work stoppages.

That's what my bill is all about. It recognizes that in order to resolve these things into the future, as long as the rules you put in place obtain, it's going to be essential that we have three parties at the table when it comes to binding arbitration: you with the money, the boards and the workers. Will you support my bill?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, your bill does not put them at the table with binding arbitration. That's the first thing. Secondly, let's be very clear that, yes, Bill 160 tied the boards' hands from raising property taxes to pay for whatever they wanted. Boards have been asked to live within a budget. The honourable member's policy—his proposal is that he wants school boards to go back to taxing, so we're not asking boards to respect taxpayers' money, to live within budgets. He is suggesting they should be able to tax again and increase property taxes for senior citizens and all those folks who are out there. We don't think that is right. We ran promising the voters we would protect them from those kinds of uncontrolled property tax increases. We have indeed done it.

The other thing is, where was he on April 12 when I announced over 310 million new dollars to school boards in a local priorities grant? They have the flexibility to put that according to local priorities.

Mr McGuinty: A couple of matters to set the record straight. First of all, the monies you recently gave to our school boards were less than what was necessary and in keeping with the cost of living and growing school enrolment. So don't take any credit for doing something you in fact did not do.

Secondly, to make it perfectly clear, we have no intention of allowing the school boards to raise taxes at the local level. Let's be very clear about that.

Finally, it is pure fiction to suggest our school boards have any real flexibility today when it comes to bargaining with their employee groups. They don't have that flexibility. You tell them not only how much money they're going to get; you tell them specifically how to spend it. You're telling them in no uncertain terms that you have no faith in them whatsoever to do their job.

I would recognize that they have certain abilities and they've been elected by people at the local level and ought to be entrusted, at a minimum, with deciding how the money should be spent.

Again, if we're going to ensure that we don't have to subject our working families and their children to work stoppages dozens of times over between now and the end of your government when it comes, mercifully, I'm asking you to support my bill.

Hon Mrs Ecker: He's asking me to support something that will not resolve those labour disputes, with all due respect.

Let's be clear. The honourable member is now telling us he is not going to let school boards raise taxes. Their policy is to scrap Bill 160. That is the control that says

school boards cannot increase taxes, so maybe it's one part of 160 he wants and another part he doesn't.

He also said he wanted to scrap Bill 74. Let's be clear. Bill 74 says school boards have to take special education money and spend it only on special education. What he is proposing is we should let school boards spend special education dollars on, what?

We also say in Bills 74 and 160 that classroom dollars, money for teachers in a classroom, for schools, for textbooks in a classroom, can only be used in a classroom, but he is opposed to the very legislation that does that. Maybe he would like to let school boards—God bless school boards, but maybe he'd like to let school boards use classroom dollars for, what?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr McGuinty: The question is to the Minister of Education. I would remind her, as she looks at herself in the mirror in her capacity as Minister of Education, to remember that, on this government's watch, one half of Ontario children are failing to meet the basic standards in reading, writing and mathematics. That is undeniable and that's pursuant to her own standardized tests.

Working families understand that tax cuts alone just won't cut it. They will not do enough on their own to ensure that our province is competitive. On behalf of working families, I ask you, will you take a dime out of every dollar that you're planning in new tax cuts for your well-connected friends and invest that in education by making our class sizes smaller, with a real cap of 20 students between junior kindergarten and grade 3?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, we've taken more than a dime. We increased money last year for education, we've increased it again this year for education, net new dollars above and beyond enrolment.

But the honourable member, the flip-flopping here is absolutely breathtaking. After opposing our legislation that brought in standardized testing, he didn't want testing. We wanted testing because we knew our kids were not getting what they needed, and you didn't believe us. You didn't agree that these reforms were needed, that the curriculum and the testing were needed. Well, they certainly were and the tests prove it. They show that our kids were not getting what they needed. That's why we brought in the new curriculum.

His solution to this problem? He wants to water down the high standards in the curriculum. That is exactly the approach that got us into this mess in education in this province.

Mr McGuinty: You talk about bringing us into this mess. I want to remind the minister, one half of Ontario children are failing to meet the basic standard in reading, writing and mathematics, all of this on Mike Harris's government's watch, six long and painful years.

If you are really committed to improvement in student learning, to making sure we have better measurable outcomes, then you should invest in smaller class sizes for our children between the ages of four and eight, junior kindergarten through to grade 3. Research tells us, and you know this, if we give our children more

individual attention, especially during the early years, they will perform better academically at the outset, and later on they'll be better and more productive citizens.

Why won't you take just one dime out of your tax cut and commit it to a hard cap on classes of 20 students in the early years?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, the new curriculum only started three years ago, and do you know what? It took three years to get ready. It's been phased in over three or four years. Now we're saying the reason we did the new curriculum is because we knew what our kids weren't getting—we knew what those test results were going to show. That's why we put in place the new curriculum. Now he's suggesting that somehow or other it should have been brought in faster. I mean, really.

1510

Now he's claiming he is concerned about small class sizes. Again, this party has pledged to scrap Bill 160. Bill 160 is the first piece of legislation that started to put limits on the average class size. He was opposed to it. In Bill 74 last year, we brought that average size down again. We invested \$263 million of taxpayers' money in class size, not only at elementary. I agree, smaller class sizes are good also in high school, which he's ignoring right now. He opposed that legislation. Now, after opposing it all, he says he's in favour. Where does the Leader of the Opposition stand on these matters?

Mr McGuinty: I'll remind the minister that she still hasn't answered my question and I'll remind her of her government's record. We have an unprecedented number of work stoppages—60 so far. We have 75% of Ontario's high school students who are being deprived of their extracurricular activities. We have one half of our children, according to your standardized tests, who are failing to meet the basic standards in reading, writing and mathematics. We have one third of our grade 10 students failing to meet the basic literacy standard. That, Madam Minister, is your record and you're going to have to live with that.

We are trying, on behalf of Ontario's working families and our future prosperity, to clean things up, at least just a little bit. We're asking you to simply commit 10% of a tax cut that you would otherwise commit to your well-connected friends. We ask you to commit 10% to making class sizes smaller for our youngest children between junior kindergarten and grade 3. Will you devote that money to that important investment?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member doesn't want to take yes for an answer. We put new money in last year, we put new money in again this year, and I hope we can put new money in again next year, money above and beyond school enrolment.

Are there work stoppages? Yes, there are work stoppages out there. Do you know why? Because, for the first time, the school boards are having to live within a budget. We are saying to our education partners that, difficult as it is, they have to have respect for taxpayers' dollars, as we do. So yes, they're having to live within a budget, yes that is difficult, but we are protecting our

property taxpayers out there, the senior citizens and those that have it.

Secondly, you said we didn't need to test those grade 10 kids. We said we did because we knew they weren't getting what they needed. Those grade 10 kids were in elementary grades when they should have been learning to read under your government's watch. What were you doing with the curriculum when they should have been learning to read? They need those skills. That's why we've brought in a new curriculum. Your solution is to water down the curriculum, water down the standards—

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

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, we've seen how determined you are to force through your draconian legislation which will affect employees at the Toronto board of education and the Windsor separate school board, and we've also seen how willing the Liberals are to help you with that.

But, Minister, I ask you: have you read the legislation? Have you read that the arbitrator need not have any experience in arbitration, that the arbitrator need not have any record for neutrality, for fairness? Have you read that the legislation essentially doesn't provide for an arbitrator who would have the confidence of the workers and the board of education? Forcing that kind of unbalanced, unfair legislation into this kind of labour dispute is only going to lead to a worse situation. Why would you want to do that?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I'd refer this to the Minister of Labour.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Yes, of course I've read the piece of legislation and it's very simple. If you're suggesting that either of the two arbitrators that have been appointed don't have a wealth of experience and vast knowledge in labour relations, you're sadly mistaken. If you're suggesting that should something unfortunately happen to one of those individuals in the period of time while they're arbitrating, we have the flexibility to appoint someone quickly so the arbitration process could finish. We would also appoint someone equally as qualified as the two individuals we have appointed. If you want to talk about the two people who have been appointed, I ask you, give me one example of either individual who you do not consider to be highly qualified to do this job and I will have that debate, but until you do, I don't think there's any debate to be had.

Mr Hampton: We did do some inquiries about the individual you want to name in the Toronto Board of Education dispute and I think you have to acknowledge that very recently this individual was actually doing the labour relations work for the Toronto board. Not only that, he has done the labour relations work and been a labour relations adviser to the Ontario trustees.

When the person you want to name as arbitrator has obviously been very recently conducting business on behalf of one side in the dispute, how can you expect they will have the confidence of both sides? How can

there be a perception of coming to the arbitration with an open mind, with a sense of independence, with a sense of credibility for both sides?

I ask you further, since that's the scenario you've created, do you not recognize that you can further poison, further upset the working relationships more than your government already has and create an even worse working environment in those schools than already exists with the legislation you've passed already?

Hon Mr Stockwell: If there was a thread of consistency in your argument, it might be worth entering into a debate. The first question you asked me was, "You have the potential to appoint somebody who doesn't have any experience in this field," and your second question was, "How can you appoint somebody with so much experience in this field?" What is the consistency? Mr Raymond is a respected arbitrator. Yes, he's worked in the field. It would seem to me that he'd have a pretty good understanding of how to arbitrate a binding arbitration process because he's worked in the field. He's been at the Ontario Labour Relations Board as a vice-chair, a neutral I might add, got called to the general committee to be reviewed by the appointment process and the opposition party said he was eminently qualified and a very bright individual with a very strong curriculum vitae.

All I can say to you, Mr Hampton, is, do you want me to appoint people with this kind of history, this kind of knowledge, this kind of intelligence? Then I did. I think he's a reasonable person. If you have an exception, give me an example of one decision he's made as a neutral that would not be considered reasonable.

Mr Hampton: The minister tries very hard to miss the point. We have a tradition in this province, and frankly a tradition across all the provinces in Canada, that when there are contentious issues at the bargaining table, the arbitrators who are appointed do not have a long history of having acted recently for one of the sides. What you've done here is appoint somebody to be the arbitrator who until very recently was in effect giving the labour relations advice to the Toronto Board of Education. How can you expect the workers to have any confidence in that situation? How can you expect that there would be any perception of fairness and justice?

I'm not asking you whether this individual is a reasonable person. He may be a very reasonable person. But you can't go around the province appointing to arbitrations people who until very recently were acting for one of the sides and expect that it's going to have any credibility and expect that the workers who have to be submitted to this are going to go through it with any sense that they're being treated fairly.

That all impacts back on our schools and our workplaces. That's the point here. The board has said that they don't want your process. The board said that. The union has said that they don't want your process, that they would rather you leave them to work out the difficulties, as they've been trying to do. If you really want to help, put back the money you've pocketed, which now

amounts to \$17 million, during the course of this labour dispute and then you'd really be doing something—

The Speaker: Minister?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Let's be clear. We don't want to enter into this process either. We would rather see a collective agreement at the local level. But unlike your party that says, "Leave the kids out as long as it takes. Leave them out for a couple of months if that matters to you, leave them out, don't make a decision, don't show leadership"—we could be like the Liberals and try and tickle them into a negotiation and say, "Here's a little resolution we're going to pass that's got no authority in law, no binding ability to bring the parties together, but we'll do this because we'll bump and nudge them together and the kids can stay out for a couple of months, as well."

No, we did not want to get involved in the process, but there comes a time when you have to take some leadership. You've got to show that you represent parents and children and bring parties together, force them into binding arbitration, open schools and get kids back in them. Yes, we didn't want to become involved, but if we need to we will, and that's called good leadership.

1520

HYDRO RATES

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My second question is for the Minister of Energy. We asked the Minister of Energy earlier this week about the announced 8% increase in hydro rates and the soon-to-come further increase in hydro rates, and we asked him if he was concerned about the loss of jobs and the impact this was going to have on Ontario industries.

Today, Minister, I want to ask you about a specific case. The Abitibi Consolidated paper mill in the city of Kenora has announced that it is not going to be working for the next two weeks. When the manager of the mill was asked why this is, he referred specifically to the following: one of the main reasons for the shutdown is high energy costs, including the government's recent increase that will cost this mill an additional \$3.7 million. Then manager Dave Kerr said that any future increases, "could put us out of business."

There are over 850 jobs tied to this mill, but this is just the tip of the iceberg, because we're talking about a whole industry here.

Minister, in promoting your agenda of privatization and deregulation of hydro, which is going to lead in the same direction that it did in California and Alberta—higher prices—how many jobs are you prepared to sacrifice in Ontario?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): The increase that we announced recently affects all Ontarians and it has nothing to do with introducing competition into the electricity marketplace in this province. In fact, we think competition will bring us the best guarantee of the lowest possible costs in the electricity sector and consumers will benefit over the long run.

It has everything to do with both the Liberal Party in this province and the NDP in this province doing nothing about the ever-increasing and staggering, today, \$38-billion debt of the old Ontario Hydro. That's where the money of the increase will go, toward the debt, and also, about \$1 billion that we have to spend to further improve the environmental record of the electricity sector in this province and Ontario Power Generation. That's where the money is going. It should have been dealt with under the two previous governments but, sadly, they did nothing. There's no other explanation than that.

Mr Hampton: I thought we'd already settled this issue. You told this Legislature a year ago that debt repayment was already part of the Hydro bill, that in fact a substantial amount of Hydro debt was already being paid down because it's part of the Hydro bill. This recent announcement about a rate increase has nothing to do with debt repayment. It's all about your corporate energy friends telling you that you've got to get the rates up for them so that when they come in and buy, they can make a sizable profit. That's what it's about. You have to ask yourself, again, how many jobs are you prepared to sacrifice? Because it's not just the pulp and paper industry.

Falconbridge, with 2,000 employees in Sudbury, has notified you that what amounts to a 14% industrial rate increase for them is putting jobs at risk there. Since we know further rate increases are coming, how many jobs are you prepared to put at risk across Ontario just to suit your private sector corporate energy friends who want the rates up before they buy in? How many jobs are you prepared to sacrifice, Minister? Because they're coming, and they're going to come more and more often. Tell the people, how many jobs?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Time's up. Minister?

Hon Mr Wilson: Yes, 35% to 40% of people's hydro bills goes to paying off debt. In fact, what the auditor showed us in his special report in January is that that wasn't enough money to actually—it's like a mortgage on the house. We were paying principal and interest. Where you're supposed to pay principal and interest, a little bit each month, we were barely paying the interest. In fact, we were \$647 million short last year, as the auditor correctly pointed out, because we've spent \$2 billion—and I don't know what part of this the honourable member doesn't understand, because I've answered it before—\$2 billion over the last few years improving the environmental record, which is the top priority in the energy sector. The environment, clean air, is very important to this government.

That's \$2 billion less that we had to put toward the debt, because the only money that comes in for the debt comes from Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One. They spent a considerable amount of money on the environment. That was less money toward the debt, and therefore we haven't been able to keep up with the debt repayments.

The Speaker: The Minister's time is up.

MINISTRY OF
THE ENVIRONMENT STAFF

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

This question is for the Minister of the Environment. Madam Minister, Ontario's working families want to know that the water that they drink is safe. In fact, they want a guarantee from you and your government, they want every possible assurance that you are doing everything you should be doing to make sure that their water is safe. That includes all the necessary inspections and re-inspections.

Understanding that, can you tell me why, since Walkerton, over 67% of the staff hired to ensure that our water and our air are safe have only been hired on a temporary basis?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): We would concur with the Leader of the Opposition that it is extremely important that people in the province of Ontario have assurance that the water that they drink is safe. Certainly last year there were many, many steps taken by our government in order to ensure that the drinking water protection regulation was put in place, and additional staff have been hired in order to ensure that the appropriate measures can be taken to give the assurance to the public that drinking water is indeed very safe.

Mr McGuinty: Our working families don't want your blithe reassurances, Madam Minister. They want real, hard and concrete action.

What are they going to think when they learn today that 67% of those inspectors that you have hired have been hired on a temporary basis? There's a very real doubt here that you understand how important it is that you take positive action and hire the necessary people on a lasting basis. We went through the Job Marts since Walkerton and we have learned that, again, 67% of the inspectors that you've hired have only been hired on a temporary basis.

Is this a public relations exercise designed to tide you over until Walkerton blows over, or have you really drawn the necessary and painful lessons from Walkerton? Why have you not, at a minimum, hired those inspectors that you have hired on a permanent basis?

Hon Mrs Witmer: As the Leader of the Opposition knows, the new resources that have been added at the Ministry of the Environment relate in particular to the new SWAT program. That SWAT team, of course, added 69 new staff and is costing \$10 million. Initially that was intended to be a temporary program and now, as we move forward, of course, that program will be continued. It will be expanded for all Ontarians in order to ensure that we have the safest drinking water possible.

EDUCATION REFORM

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I have question for the Minister of Education. During the last four months, when the Liberals, by their questions and

statements lately, seemed to think that they were on vacation, I was spending 16 to 18 hours a day meeting with constituents in my riding. During these meetings, parents and teachers expressed to me their views that today's students need to be extremely well educated and well trained to compete for jobs with other students, not only from this province but also from elsewhere across Canada and around the world. Parents have told me they like the higher standards we have set for the students, they like the more demanding curriculum, they like the teacher testing and they like the province-wide testing. But they have also said that more needs to be done. They want a role in their children's education to ensure they are getting the best possible education.

1530

I also spoke with teachers—and by the way, I also engaged in job shadowing of teachers—and they assured me that they like the new curriculum and they like the standardized testing because they now have an idea what needs to be done in their classrooms, what they need to achieve. Minister, what can I tell these teachers and parents about how we are going to ensure that their students are always getting the best possible education in order to lead productive lives?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): We can assure them that in the goals of our education quality reforms, our plan is to have more quality, more accountability, more investments in classrooms and higher standards. That's what we're working to do with our education partners. The reason that some of those changes to date have been working as well as they have is because of the excellent work by our teachers, by our staff, the co-operation of our parents across the province. We have put in place school councils so that parents have a clear role and clear responsibilities, on turnaround plans, for example, to make their schools better. The honourable member likes to say he invented turnaround plans and teams. He must have been reading the education improvement commission report that talks about that. I'm very glad he supports that. He'll support our stuff when we come forward with it.

The parents will have role in setting policies on safe schools, on the evaluation of teachers, on the facility surveys, on dress code. So we are clearly saying parents have a role, higher standards have a role, testing has a role, setting targets; all of those things are there to ensure that our students get the education they need—

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

Mr Wettlaufer: I know that the parents in Kitchener Centre will happy that they're going to have a greater role in terms of choice, in being surveyed and in terms of dress codes, but these parents and the teachers have also asked me that standardized testing be extended to all grades.

Professors and administrators of colleges and universities have indicated to me that we must do this. I have spoken with Jim Downey, the former president of

the University of Waterloo. I have spoken with Bob Rosehart, the president of Wilfrid Laurier University; to David Johnson, the present president of the University of Waterloo; and to John Tibbits who is the president of Conestoga College. They all advised me that if we are going to have our students compete with the students around the world, these things are going to be necessary.

We also need to ensure, according to them, that the education system is accountable to the parents, students and those excellent teachers in the system, and I wonder what you are going to do to ensure that.

Interjections.

Hon Mrs Ecker: You know the Liberal Party over there is hooting and hollering, saying, "How about results?" And then when the honourable member here on my side recommends further tests to get results, they hoot and holler that suggestion down. So here we have the Liberal Party policy in full display again. They want results, but they don't want to take the steps to get results. It reminds me of Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz: you click your heels three times and everything's warm and fuzzy.

Well, we're not in Kansas any more—we're here in Ontario where we need higher standards, where we need tests for students to identify problems so we can fix them, where we need turnaround plans for each school, where we need targets so there's accountability, so parents know how well their kids are doing in school so they can make intelligent choices.

Yet again the Liberals say, "We're in favour of parental choice, but we're against anything that gives parents the information to make that choice." We're on the side of making the system better, and we're not going to stop until—

CHILDREN'S SECRETARIAT

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): My question is for the Deputy Premier. My leader, Dalton McGuinty, said in the First Steps document that Ontario needs a minister for children to prevent a fragmentation of services. In your 1998 business plan for the children's secretariat, it is indicated that although several ministries fund or provide services to children, an overall perspective is needed. Your former minister without portfolio was put in her job to develop a unified and coordinated approach to policy planning for children.

In a time when it is amply apparent that our families and children need support, direction and leadership, your government is missing in action. Explain to the people of Ontario why this government has all but collapsed the children's secretariat and why it has removed the minister with responsibility for children. Why has that happened?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I refer the question to the minister responsible for children.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I find the member opposite's question rather odd. This government continues to have a minister responsible for children. We continue to have a children's secretariat working for children. What we've heard from just about all corners of the province is we've got to integrate services for children, that we have to tear down the silos within the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

We have an assistant deputy minister who is responsible for integrated services for children, who reports to both my cabinet colleague the Minister of Health and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. In my capacity as minister responsible for children, I continue to work with all my cabinet colleagues, whether it's the minister for recreation or the Minister of Education, to ensure that children's issues are constantly thought of, whether we're looking at seat belt laws or at issues affecting things like pediatric cancer.

Mrs Dombrowsky: Your Premier established the children's ministry to demonstrate your government's commitment to children. The Early Years study, a document commissioned by Mike Harris, states that, "The creation in 1997 of the role of a minister responsible for children is viewed by many community groups and provincial children's organizations as a long overdue step. The government appointed a minister to give children's issues a higher profile within government."

Recommendation number 2 of the Early Years study says, "To ensure a strong voice around the cabinet table...we urge the Premier to give the minister responsible for children a strong mandate and resources." Your government has done the opposite. Children in this province deserve more than a part-time minister. The ruse is up. The people of Ontario know this government has no commitment to children in a time when children need an advocate more than ever before. Explain why your government is ignoring the recommendation of your own commission.

Hon Mr Baird: I don't think the member opposite does herself or her party any credit with that type of rhetoric. This government is tremendously committed to children's issues. This government has increased support for children's aid societies by more than 114%. This government is providing more funds to help disabled children than ever in the history of Ontario. The recommendation says very strongly that we need a strong minister responsible for children. That continues to exist and we continue to work very hard for that.

The member opposite is clearly only interested in engaging in name-calling and, in my judgment, that doesn't do her credit, it doesn't do her party credit and it doesn't do these issues credit.

We continue to work very hard on an Early Years agenda. We made a statement earlier, and she didn't even get up in the House. We need a children's critic to get up in the House. Her leader didn't even respond to the children's issues earlier today. Could you please put a

higher profile critic for children's issues so they can get up and respond when this government announces things for children?

STUDENT LOANS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. My question concerns the Ontario student loans program. I trust that you are very aware of the importance of this loan program and how concerned students can become prior to going to university when there is some question about getting that particular loan.

Recently, I found out that the financial institutions providing student loans will no longer be involved in the program after July 31 of this year. I want your assurance that students in my riding of Northumberland will not be disadvantaged by this change. What will you do to ensure that students in Ontario will continue to have access to student loans so they can pursue their dreams through post-secondary education?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): It's always a pleasure to answer a question from the member from Northumberland, who is constantly representing his students. He should assure his students that the loans we have made available to students in the past will, with new legislation that was introduced today, continue. Not only will they continue, but we will now harmonize with the federal loan system and reduce the red tape. It's very cumbersome and it will be more effective and efficient, not only for our students but our taxpayers. This is governments working together and this is what we want.

On top of that, I hope you will remind the students that this government has increased tuition by only 2% year over year for the next five years, as opposed to 10% by the Liberals year after year after year, and 10% by the NDP year after year after year. It's 2%, and I hope the member from Northumberland will take that message back to make sure our students only pay their fair share of their education in this province, which we have kept at some 35%. That's our promise. There will be a space for every qualified and willing student.

1540

Mr Galt: Minister, as you're aware, some students come from families that certainly can afford post-secondary education. However, others are not nearly that fortunate. Today, OSAP loans are given on the need of students. Students in my riding who are thinking of college or university want to know if they will be treated differently under the new harmonized loan arrangement. Will students applying for assistance after August 1 be treated differently under the terms of this new legislation?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We have a commitment to our young people. The legislation we introduced today will not only provide the same level of assistance to our students, but it will make it more convenient for our

students to manage and repay their loans. It's extremely important that we work with one harmonized service provider. Students then, of course, will face less red tape. It will be less cumbersome when they're trying to manage both their Ontario and federal portions of their loans. We are totally committed to helping those students, especially those students who are in need. They are our first priority. We will continue to provide interest-free loans as long as the students are in school and beyond, and we will be improving that commitment to our students and making announcements in the near future.

The honourable member and every member in this House knows that we have worked with the federal government in this regard, that we hope that together we are making things better for our students. In fact, if we were to work together more often, we would have these kinds of enhanced programs that are efficient for our students and their families.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Deputy Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock. Order. We can't have people yelling back and forth. That question has been asked. It's now the member for Sault Ste Marie's time.

Mr Martin: Minister, I attended a press conference this morning that was yet another scathing condemnation of your government's record where child poverty is concerned. Campaign 2000 released a report that states one in three children in Toronto is living in poverty. We're talking about Toronto here, the industrial heartland of this province. With economic growth like we've not seen before, with jobs being created like we've not seen before, one in three children is living in poverty. This is a growth in child poverty and a depth of child poverty that we've not seen in this province before. How can your government allow this kind of poverty to exist under your watch?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the minister responsible for children.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): This government believes that one child living in poverty is one too many.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: That's very funny. This government believes that one child living in poverty is one child too many, and we're tremendously concerned. If spending a whole lot of money on our welfare system was the way to address child poverty, we wouldn't have had the instances of child poverty the honourable member spoke of in the early 1990s.

We're working to build a strong economy. The single very best thing we can do for a young child is to help

their parents get a job. That's why we've worked on an economic growth agenda, to see more parents be able to realize the dignity that comes with a job and the pride that comes with being independent. We will put forward a whole series of initiatives aimed at addressing these types of concerns.

Mr Martin: Minister, there's a plague stalking the children of this province, the plague of poverty, and you have the ability to do something about it. You have the responsibility as minister to do something about this horrid situation. One in three children in Toronto is living in poverty. We're not even talking about the north or rural Ontario. We're talking about Toronto.

Will you today do at least one thing to send a message to the families across this province who are living in poverty, trying to look after their children? Will you stop the clawback of the child tax benefit supplement today? You can do that and you can put close to \$100 per month into the pockets of parents to feed their children in this province, starting tomorrow. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Baird: I addressed that question yesterday, but when you look at the measures, look at the report, I'll say two things. One, they looked at low-income cut-offs whom Maryanne Webber, the director of the income statistics division—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Baird: The member opposite asked me a question. Would he like an answer?

Maryanne Webber, the director of Statistics Canada, said—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. You did ask the question. If you then yell at him, it's very difficult. I couldn't hear him.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): That's why you get the big bucks.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Hamilton East, don't be a smart aleck. When I'm up here saying it, you're not going to throw the comments up here or you'll be named. It's as simple as that. We haven't done it this session but we'll do it very quickly if you want.

Now, you ask a question, you yell across, and then you wonder why the minister gets frustrated. He listened patiently to your question and didn't yell across. I think it's only fair that he answer, if you want to hear it.

Minister, it's up to you.

Hon Mr Baird: Thank you very much. The report the member cited uses low-income cut-offs. Maryanne Webber, the director of the income statistics division at Statistics Canada says, "... some people and groups have been using the Statistics Canada low-income lines as a de facto definition of poverty." This is not something that Statistics Canada does.

The report also uses 1998 figures. Since 1998, we've seen hundreds of thousands of jobs created in the province of Ontario. Since 1995, in fact, we've seen more than a quarter of a million children escape the welfare system. We've seen a substantial reduction in the number of people requiring economic assistance. Job creation and economic growth are helping lift more and

more people out of poverty. The job is not done. This government will remain committed to ensuring that—

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

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, your predecessor, Attorney General Flaherty, supported two judge-bashing, so-called judicial accountability bills, one introduced by the member for Scarborough Centre, which passed second reading, and one introduced by the member for London West.

His predecessor, Attorney General Harnick, very quickly shot down, quashed, did not support a similar judicial accountability bill introduced by the member for Oshawa.

My question for you is, you now have a judicial accountability bill before you introduced yesterday, Bill 15. Will you stand up here and fulfill your statutory and constitutional duties, stick up for the separation of powers in the province of Ontario and tell us that you clearly will not support Mr Wood's bill?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I trust that the member opposite isn't suggesting to this assembly that he does not believe that private members should have an opportunity to come forward and to bring issues that are debated in the public into this chamber?

Certainly, I don't believe that. I think it is open to any member of this assembly to introduce a private member's bill and I think that is a fundamental right that I will continue to defend.

But I do want to say this, and I have said it publicly: there should be absolutely no doubt that judicial independence is something I am prepared to fight for.

Mr Bryant: I appreciate the member's answer, but it was very clear when Attorney General Harnick—actually, his parliamentary assistant—said in this House that he was strongly opposed to a Judicial Accountability Act introduced by the member for Oshawa. You voted in favour of the equivalent of the Judicial Accountability Act bill in December. You then told the Globe and Mail that you were going to oppose these bills in April this year.

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The question is, are you going to be a squeegee-rattling, judge-bashing Attorney General like your predecessor, or are you going to follow in the footsteps of Roy McMurtry, Ian Scott and Charles Harnick and say very clearly that you are going to oppose this Judicial Accountability Act? Which is it going to be? Are you going to support the bill like your predecessor, or are you going to oppose it like Minister Harnick would have?

Hon Mr Young: Before I attempt to answer what might have been a question in some form, let me start by saying I don't for a millisecond accept his rendition of history as it relates to either of my predecessors. He clearly is interested in sound bites, not solutions.

Let me quote from another Liberal member, who put in writing very clearly her position on one of the issues he has brought to this assembly today, and that is a former leader of the Liberal Party, Ms McLeod. She said as follows, and I quote from page 49 of the Red Book: "A Liberal government will make sure that when a crime has been committed, the punishment fits the crime ... creating, in consultation with judges, a province-wide database with up-to-date information about sentencing decisions in Ontario, to help judges make sentencing decisions that are consistent, predictable and fair." That sounds a lot like the type of debate that my colleagues are encouraging in this assembly.

LIVING LEGACY

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. I understand Ontario's Living Legacy has recently celebrated its second anniversary. On the eve of the second anniversary, I noticed a story in the Toronto Star entitled Tories Deserve Credit on Parks, saying that "if we stick to the facts as we know them ... rather than suspicions or innuendo, it is hard to argue with the progress the government has made on Lands for Life." It also notes that "the previous NDP government, supposedly environmentally friendly, did far less with the same file."

Minister, can you tell us the truth about Ontario's Living Legacy and some of what has been accomplished in its first two years?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): As you know, Mr Speaker, the member for Peterborough is famous for quoting from the Toronto Star on a regular basis, and I thank him for introducing that in the Legislature today.

In fact, as the member probably knows, some five years ago my predecessor, Minister Hodgson, and Premier Harris announced the largest public consultation on public land use ever in the history of the province under Lands for Life. That resulted in Living Legacy: 378 new parks and protected areas, six million acres of protected land in the province, the largest announcement ever made. I am told by reliable sources that this is the equivalent of 11.9 million CFL football fields. I leave it to the Speaker's imagination how many NFL football fields that might be.

But I want to say that in addition to this, we have an accord that allows our environmental community and our forestry community to move forward with what is the best, most sustainable forestry in the world.

Mr Stewart: Actually, Minister, I use the Star in a very small room in my House—strictly for information, not as a joke.

Minister, putting an end to the generations-long war of the woods, bringing the environmental community and the forestry community into a partnership that is strong and lasting and protecting more land than at any other time in Ontario's history might be enough for most governments. But we didn't say that. We did more. As I recall, Ontario's Living Legacy has recently expanded

beyond what was already a huge achievement into something even greater. In fact, I saw that on Earth Day this past weekend you were involved in expanding Ontario's Living Legacy even further down in southern Ontario.

Minister, can you tell us about the expansion of Ontario's Living Legacy?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I didn't catch the start of the member for Peterborough's question, but I noticed from the member for Scarborough north that it must have been very graphic, from the look on his face.

I can tell you that we have in fact expanded this program. On March 23, 2000, Premier Harris expanded Living Legacy into the most comprehensive natural heritage program in the history of the province. We included greater protection for species at risk, more protection and enhancement for fish and wildlife and their habitats, more protection by acquiring more natural areas, support in the efforts to regulate our 378 new parks and protected areas and on and on.

With the natural areas protection program, I was able to announce that we have had 11 additional areas in southern Ontario this year alone, including a 39-hectare addition to the Terra Cotta Conservation Area, a 61-hectare addition to the Nottawasaga Bluffs Conservation Area in Simcoe county and a 40-hectare addition to the Bruce Trail in the town of Halton.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. I understand there was a recent transfer of the Family Responsibility Office from the Ministry of the Attorney General to your ministry. We are aware, of course, over the history of that, what we have encountered with the problems with that ministry handling the affairs of the Family Responsibility Office. My constituents asked me if you could reassure us that your ministry will now handle this matter better than the Attorney General's office was in the past.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We all believe that children and families who rely on receiving support payments are entitled to receive every cent possible. We've undertaken to expand the number of services and supports to allow the Family Responsibility Office to do a better job. Year after year we're doing better. Certainly over the last three or four years we've done a demonstrably better job than when I first arrived at this place. We continue to try to ensure that a family that requires that support, that is entitled to that support, gets every cent they're entitled to.

Mr Curling: My constituents don't agree with your history. They feel it was handled terribly by the Attorney General, and caused a great amount of confusion. Let me tell you why they're concerned. They felt, although the optics may look even better, that the Attorney General's

office was able to enforce some of these payments. Now that it's under your jurisdiction, they feel it will be worse. Now that it's not under the Attorney General's office, can you make sure that the enforceability is better than it was? They thought the Attorney General's office was more enforceable under these conditions.

Hon Mr Baird: In the first part of his question he says, "You were doing a terrible job in the past. Will you make things better?" In his supplementary question he's saying, "Things were really great with the Attorney General. Can you promise that you'll do just as good a job?" I promise that we'll continue to work very hard to ensure that every family gets every dollar they're entitled to. We have made a number of changes in recent years with the Family Responsibility Office to try to do better, things like drivers' licence suspensions, things like a whole range of supports in terms of going back and collecting money that never was collected in the past. We are collecting more money this year than we have ever collected in the past. Year after year we're doing a better job, and we continue to be focused on doing better. We continue to be focused on—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It being 4 pm, I am now required to called orders of the day, pursuant to standing order 30(b).

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I have a statement of business of the House for next week.

On Wednesday afternoon there will be an NDP opposition day.

On Thursday morning during private members' business we will discuss ballot items number 3 and number 4.

The remainder of the week's business is still to be determined, subject to the debate on Bill 13.

CONSIDERATION OF BILL 13

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The order is for next week.

I wish to advise the House on the arrangements for tomorrow's special sitting of the House which was agreed on earlier today. So all members aren't tardy, they may want to hear this. The motion adopted by the House says "that the House come back at 1:30 tomorrow to finish second and third readings of Bill 13." Therefore, at 1:30 tomorrow the House will immediately proceed to orders of the day and the order for second reading of Bill 13 will be called. Debate on second reading will proceed to its conclusion and the question on the motion for second reading will then be put. If the motion passes, the bill will be ordered for third reading and that order will then immediately be called. The debate on third reading will proceed to its conclusion and the question on the motion for third reading will then be put. The House will then stand adjourned to the next sessional day.

I interpret the special orders adopted earlier to mean that no deferrals of the vote on second or third reading

may be permitted and that the House may continue to meet past 6 pm as required. Hopefully that clarifies everything for everyone involved under the special circumstances.

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ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

DÉBAT SUR LE DISCOURS DU TRÔNE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 25, 2001, on the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It is indeed an honour and a privilege to rise this afternoon and reply to the speech from the throne on behalf of the government caucus and on behalf of the constituents of Simcoe North. I'd also like to take a moment to thank Her Honour for delivering the throne speech last week. She does it in such an eloquent way and she's a fine representative of the Queen here in Ontario.

The speech from the throne is one of the more important documents that we as members of the Legislature address in this House. It highlights our government's plans for this session of the Legislature and sets out a plan to predict the real economic gains that the hard-working men and women of this province have earned for Ontario over the past six years. It also prepares the province for a future that offers new economic challenges, hope and a future filled with tremendous opportunities.

All of the steps of our 21 steps to the 21st century focus on strengthening our economy, since a good economy and a good quality of life go hand in hand. Only by strengthening our economy can we continue to invest in priorities like health care and education, and offer Ontario's families the promise of a better life. As we have said many times, we need the revenues flowing in from a strong economy to pay for all the services the people of this province expect and deserve.

The throne speech included several initiatives to keep Ontario competitive. We are committed to more tax cuts to create more jobs. Of course, we know that's been very successful and we will continue down that road. And we will apply a new business impact test to all proposed regulations that might impair our ability to attract investment and jobs.

A new task force will measure and monitor Ontario's productivity, competitiveness and economic progress and compare Ontario to other provinces and some of the American states. This task force will be led by Roger Martin, dean of the Joseph L. Rotman School of Management, and will report to the public on a regular basis.

For me, one of the highlights of the throne speech was when Her Honour talked about the need for skills development, or step 14 in our plan to create a stronger

economy. I know I could not duplicate Her Honour's eloquent words, but I would like to reread the section, step 14:

"Step 14 is to address skill shortages—including among the trades—and ensure that Ontario boasts the skilled workforce necessary to attract investment and jobs.

"The government intends to establish an innovative new post-secondary institution that would link education and skills training with the needs of the marketplace." Details of that initiative will be announced in the budget, and I believe that's on May 9th.

As most of you in the House know, before being elected as the MPP for Simcoe North, I was managing our family construction business, where I had the chance over 25 years to meet a wide range of highly skilled tradespeople. These people work hard and are rewarded, and they're rewarded in a fine way, particularly in our part of the province, with the wonderful geography we live in, with a good, livable wage, and they enjoy a profession that most of them truly love.

As a member of the Premier's Task Force on Rural Economic Renewal, I had a chance to tour the province and listen to the people on a number of occasions. I remember in Orillia when Tony Telford, the president of Orser Electric Ltd, addressed the committee about the need for more plumbers, carpenters, bricklayers, electricians and other important tradespeople who help build Ontario. The people of this province have said that there could be a shortage of skilled labour. I am pleased that we are prioritizing this as a very important issue.

I know the people in the Ministry of Education are not surprised about how passionately I talk about skills training. Before, and since I was appointed as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education, it is a topic that I continue to talk about, and for good reason. The number of construction projects and plans that are in place right now for the future will require a number of skilled tradespeople, and as we grow our economy we will continue to require a strong construction workforce.

If we look at some of the provincial initiatives, things such as the redevelopment of our hospital projects—over \$1 billion in announcements on those—and the 20,000 long-term-care facilities and 13,000 redevelopment beds of long-term-care facilities and all of the expansions of the colleges and universities to meet the double cohort for the year 2003, these will require more and more skilled tradespeople. We have to continue to look at skilled tradespeople as well as the other important positions that are required across the province like doctors, lawyers and academic positions.

Throughout this week, our government has been releasing more information about initiatives that support our throne speech. On Monday, the Ministers of Labour, Consumer and Business Services, Management Board, Economic Development and Energy, Science and Technology talked about the measures that we are taking to remove barriers to jobs, investment and growth.

On Tuesday, the associate minister and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care talked about the need for national leadership in health care reform. I cannot mention health care without mentioning the quality of health services in my riding of Simcoe North. Actually, I would like to thank the Minister of Health for providing \$1.1 million to support quality health care services at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in Orillia as well as the announcement today of another \$143,000 that will help with heating cost improvements at that hospital. Soldiers' is continuing its hospital expansion, thanks to the financial support of this government. There was a major hospital fundraising campaign kicked off in Orillia just recently, led by the Honourable Doug Lewis, the former federal member of Parliament from 1979 to 1993, and that fundraising drive of course is to provide local funds to the \$56-million redevelopment project that our government is committed to.

As well, the North Simcoe Hospital Alliance in Penetanguishene is proceeding with plans to construct the permanent dialysis unit, and I was so pleased when the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, the former Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, made that announcement last fall.

I'd also like to thank the Premier for coming to Orillia in March and touring the new 112-bed Stephen Leacock long-term-care centre that will be opening its doors later this month. The Premier had a chance to tour the facility while it was under construction and met with local construction workers, local leaders and the Jarrolett family, who are building this facility.

Last year, the previous Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer, as I mentioned earlier, came to Midland and opened the 100-bed Hillcrest Village Care Centre. This new 100-bed centre features four resident home areas, each with dining rooms, lounge and recreation areas, as well as access to the outdoors through a secured patio or balcony. There are also large common spaces that include a chapel, a large auditorium and meeting rooms. As well, state-of-the-art call systems have been installed for the residents' safety and well-being.

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For people who haven't had the opportunity to tour some of the new long-term-care facilities, I would encourage members from all sides of the House to participate in a tour, because they are extremely beautiful facilities for our senior citizens.

Yesterday, the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Transportation talked about our Smart Growth initiative, which is our plan to continue to encourage more economic growth, create strong opportunities and protect the environment. This will be done with broad consultations throughout our province.

Last month, I had the opportunity to hold a non-partisan symposium on the Oro moraine, which is an environmentally sensitive area in my riding. It's an area just north of Barrie, between Barrie and Orillia, in the Highway 11 area. I was pleased to see over 250 people attend the symposium. The guest speakers talked about

balancing growth and preserving our resources, the challenges and opportunities we face as a growing province.

At this time, I'd like to thank Kerry Green, who is the project coordinator for the Oro Moraine Habitat Project. It's a two-year initiative undertaken by the Couchiching Conservancy. I was very pleased to see that the Trillium Foundation helped to fund this Oro Moraine Habitat Project. Ms Vicki Barron, the manager of the Credit River Conservation Authority, works for the board of directors of 12 watershed politicians to develop and implement watershed management policies and programs for the Credit River, and she was a speaker as well. Mr Hugh Simpson is a rural groundwater specialist with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and Brian Beatty is a water resources engineer who specializes in groundwater. I'd like to thank them for participating in this event.

I'd also like to thank all those people who came out to listen to these experts in the field. It was a good feeling to be in a room with so many people who cared about the environment and were looking at everything from a constructive-criticism type of position.

I think we have to do that in all areas of the province. I know there's a tremendous demand. I believe there will be a demand on the growth in the area north of Barrie, between Barrie and Muskoka. I know we've got plans in the Midland area to open a new Wal-Mart store, and usually where Wal-Mart goes, there are plans for a lot of growth in that area.

Just a week ago, I was happy to participate in the opening of the new Home Depot store in the city of Orillia. Of course, that's taking a lot of work as well. I want to thank Minister Clark for his assistance because we have to four-lane a piece of Highway 12 near the Wal-Mart centre because of the increased traffic that's a result of the development in that area. Mr Clark's ministry and his staff have been very helpful in providing that help.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Wasn't that Highway 12 down there?

Mr Dunlop: No. Highway 12 has always been Highway 12.

Since being named as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and government House leader, I've had a chance to learn more about our education system—and it is a very complex system that we have—and more about the way this House operates. I would like to thank the Premier and the Minister of Education for the faith they have placed in my abilities in naming me to this position. I have a great deal of respect for the position and I hope to do a good job in it.

Quality education and skills for the 21st century: today, the Minister of Education talked about three of the next steps in our action plan to move Ontario into the 21st century. We will increase flexibility and choice in education by supporting creative new school models and making sure home-schooled children have access to standard tests and other learning tools.

We know there is still room for improvement in our education system. That's why we will continue to set high education standards and increase performance-based accountability in our schools. Parents will have more say through annual parent satisfaction surveys to be launched this November. We'll expand standardized testing to all grades and make sure schools promote only those students who achieve at an acceptable level. School boards will have to set clear targets to improve student achievement in schools that aren't performing and make sure that students who are falling behind get the help they need to catch up.

Ontario needs the best and brightest to build a smart, strong, growing province.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities talked about a new charter that will make Ontario's colleges more responsive and entrepreneurial so they can offer more opportunities to our students. We'll invest in building a skilled workforce in high-growth sectors and help foreign-trained professionals qualify for employment and meet skills shortages.

Since the government came to power, I'm very proud of the accomplishments of our government, particularly when we see that we have eliminated the huge deficit that we inherited, the number of jobs that we've created, and the respect that the private sector has for the opportunities to invest in our province. I believe these are all very important achievements by this government and I think the province of Ontario has a brilliant future.

We have set an ambitious but achievable goal in the throne speech: that within 10 years Ontario will enjoy the best-performing economy and the highest quality of life in North America. This is the plan that will get us there.

Mr Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words to you today. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Questions and comments?

Mr Caplan: The member touched on a lot of subjects and one of them was in regard to skills training. I do have a question for the member from Simcoe North. Does he remember Bill 55? It was an amendment to the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act where, at a time when we were facing a very severe skills shortage in the province of Ontario, it was the Harris government which tried to introduce what they called "restricted skills sets." They tried to fragment the trades. They tried to downgrade the trades. They tried, frankly, to make it less attractive to get into the trades. Does the member from Simcoe North recognize what the Harris government's track record is when it comes to skills training in this province?

I have a second question as well. The member talked about the environment. The environment is a very, very important quality of life but it's also an important health issue here in Ontario. My question to the member is: it was revealed today in question period, in a question from my leader, Dalton McGuinty, to the Minister of the Environment, that of the hiring that has been done at the ministry for water testing and inspection, 67%—two-

thirds of the people hired—have only been hired on a temporary basis. So my question to the member is: if the environment is important, why has the Harris government decided to hire inspectors only on a temporary basis? Why is there no long-term commitment? Why have they cut 40% out of the Ministry of the Environment and decided to rehire people—who they fired—on a temporary basis only? I hope the member will answer those questions in the spirit in which they were put.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I listened intently to the comments from the member across the way talking about job growth in the province of Ontario. I think any government, I don't care whose government would be in power during the time of the American rebound—as we saw through the mid-1990s, all the way till now—could have taken credit for some of the job growth. But what really worries me, and I think what worries a lot of people, is the almost deindustrialization of some parts of the province. We're starting to see it certainly in northern Ontario and we're seeing it in other parts of the province, where the number of industrial jobs that used to provide really good employment at good wages for people across this province is really diminishing. What we're seeing is an increase in the number of jobs at places like Wal-Mart, most of those places that pay anywhere from minimum wage up to 10 or 12 bucks an hour. I think for an economy like Ontario's, those jobs are good as second jobs but not really as the main jobs to provide for families.

So I ask the member, the parliamentary assistant across the way, what is his position vis-à-vis Ontario Hydro? We're seeing now that the government of Ontario has moved to privatize Hydro and deregulate, and we now know that this is now going to result in hydro increases to industrial users as well as residential users across the province. So the taxpayer, whom you've given the tax cut to, is going to have their hydro bill increase because of changes your government has made. That's the first issue.

But the biggest issue is what is going to happen to hydro rates to companies like Falconbridge, Tembec, Algoma Steel and others out there who rely on Ontario Hydro—I should say other than Algoma Steel—in order to operate their plants. In a place like Falconbridge, a 20% increase is going to mean a serious problem on the books when it comes to their ability to operate next year. So I say to the parliamentary assistant, why don't you guys stop your stupid attack on Ontario Hydro and try to provide an infrastructure that's good for Ontario?

1620

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I'd like to make some comments about the member for Simcoe North's comments about the throne speech. There isn't any doubt in my mind that the foundations and the points laid out in that throne speech clearly indicate where we want to move Ontario from where it is today. All you have to recall is the past. Go back to 1991-92.

It's interesting to hear the members opposite. I remember in our first term the mantra was, "Where are

the jobs?" We've proven to some extent—we did not create, but we created the environment for the private sector to bring about 825,000 jobs in this province. That's what I call economic growth. I know they still don't believe the idea. We have to keep kicking the tires about it, though. Economic growth is predicated on lower taxes, whether they be personal, corporate or a user-fee type, when you buy gasoline or anything in the area of consumer goods. When you have lower taxes, you actually have increased revenues. Where did we get the increased revenues? From the economic growth over the last number of years.

I know the critics across the way say it's exports to the United States only, but guess what? The jurisdictions in the Great Lakes have shown consistently that they have competitive tax rates. When you have higher ones, you have people flee, you have companies flee. I was just talking with one of the major manufacturers in my area, who has indicated that if we can't keep our taxes competitive, they have other choices. They're not bound like an anchored tree to stay in one place. They'd like to stay here, but they are mentioning time and again that we must continue down the road to have a competitive tax environment. Otherwise we will not have the economic growth we need for our vital services.

The Speaker: Further questions or comments? Seeing none, response?

Mr Dunlop: It's a pleasure to get up to respond to some of the comments. First of all, to Mr Caplan—I'm sorry about the riding. I'll never get the riding straight, I'm sorry. Maybe we'll change the names in another term or something and get some more clarity to them.

Your comments about downgrading the trades and about our government: I spent the last 25 years in trades and—this is an honest opinion coming from my heart—all the way through my high school career I felt there was almost a stigma attached to people who entered the trades, that it was lower than being an academic. Of course, you know that some of the building contractors and trades contractors we have throughout our province are some of the most successful companies and business people we have today. They employ a lot of people in our province.

My own son has been through the apprenticeship program. One of the things I noticed: he was 22 years old when he got his papers and I think he was, by 15 years, the youngest person in his class. He told me all the other tradespeople were 36, 38 or in their 40s, and they were in their apprenticeship plans. I don't blame that on any particular government. I attach that to the fact that there has been a stigma attached to the trades, and I'd like to see that removed. I will be taking a strong approach to that in the future, because I think there are so many people we will need in a growing province and a growing economy that we will have to have the skilled workforce. I will be doing whatever I can as a parliamentary assistant or as a member of this government to try to promote the development of skilled trades in our province.

The Speaker: Further debate? The member for Don Valley East.

Mr Caplan: The Speaker can get it right, I say to the member from Simcoe North. I will be sharing my time with the member from Hamilton East.

It is a pleasure, on behalf of the people of Don Valley East, to address this Legislature on Her Honour's comments from the throne. In my comments I want to contrast Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party and our vision and our plan for the future with what we heard from the government via Her Honour. I also want to talk about what wasn't contained in the throne speech, because a critical element was missing.

The first thing I would like to tell, not only this Legislature, but the people who are watching and listening and the people of Ontario, is that there is a marked difference between the vision Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party has and that which Mike Harris and the Conservative Party have, and it's simply this: over here we are fighting for working families in Ontario; the Harris government looks after its wealthy friends. They are the party of a very narrow special interest, an elite. That is a marked difference in philosophy. It is a marked difference in the way we approach things.

I believe, and this has been shown time and again over the past several years, quite frankly, that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have a positive plan for Ontario's future, a positive plan especially for our working families. I think the government is stuck in the past. If you read this throne speech, you will find recycled elements from the throne speech that was read here, lo, six years ago in 1995. There are no bold, new ideas for the future to embrace a new century, to embrace a new millennium.

We want to ensure there is prosperity over the long term for all of us. The government's focus is very narrow. It is only for their friends. Our vision, our goals, our drive is for our future and for our families. I really see the government as being arrogant. It doesn't represent the views and values and principles of Ontario's working families.

I talked a little bit earlier about what our plans were, and we've unveiled many of them. In fact, when you look at the throne speech, some of the ideas from our education plan, for example, have been cherry-picked by this government. I would say that's OK, but you cannot selectively take parts of the plan. It is an integrated plan, and there will be more to come. We propose a real cap on class sizes from junior kindergarten to grade 3, not this average class size across the board. When you get the early years right—and their own consultants, their own studies, their own experts, their own panels have told them this—that's the best investment you can make. Education simply is the best investment.

Oftentimes it comes down to a question of priorities. We're saying, take one tenth of what you promised in tax cuts, invest that in our children and you will have the best return this province has ever seen.

We talked about our plan for lighthouse schools and turnaround teams, and of course the idea the government has chosen to move on is public school choice, although I must admit I don't believe they should. Since they don't share the same values we do, it will not be implemented in the same way a McGuinty government would.

We've had a lot more to say about education and unveiled our plans. We think we need peace in our schools. After six long years of chaos and turmoil, enough is enough. Today we had some comings and goings in the Legislature, and yesterday we had back-to-work legislation after the 60th labour disruption in our schools. Isn't it time we had some stability? Isn't it time we had some peace? Isn't it time that the kids spent more time in their classrooms than they do being out because of these constant disruptions? It's an indictment of the policies of this government, of the direction they've taken and their methodology in implementing it, that the kids have not been in school, that we can't get past a rigid, inflexible funding formula and micromanagement here at Queen's Park.

In fact, if you read Bill 160 or Bill 74, it is the minister who will make regulations, the minister will decide, and if you do not comply with the dictates of the Minister of Education, you can be fined, you can be removed from your position, you could be dismissed. Heck, I think the minister might even try to jail somebody.

1630

I was really amused when Her Honour read the throne speech where it said, "Queen's Park can lead without centralized micromanagement and control." What chutzpah. That's all this government has been about. "For example," and I continue, "4,746 schools and," almost 75,000, "classrooms cannot be run from the Ministry of Education." That's exactly what you've done. Talk about Orwellian doublespeak. I find it very hard to believe.

I want to continue. Unfortunately my time is very limited today. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have a plan to address the physician shortage crisis we have in Ontario. The government has decided to cherry-pick a few of those ideas, but they don't have the right mix, the right formula.

We have a six-point plan for safe drinking water. I want to share one of the elements with the members present here today: an immediate release of the drinking water surveillance program, the reports from 1998 and 1999. That's three years and two years ago respectively. You see, the ministry monitors the results but they don't publish the results. I found that very interesting because another cute little passage in the throne speech said, "Government is the servant of the people, not master. Citizens are more than 'customers' or 'clients'; the entire public sector belongs to them. Citizens are entitled," and here is the operative word, "to transparency in the operation of public institutions, including openness about how they spend and reporting of their performance and results."

If that's true, why does the Ministry of the Environment not release its results from 1998 and 1999 on drinking water quality in Ontario? Good question.

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have a plan for our emergency rooms and for health care. Again, the government has decided to try to cherry-pick a few of our ideas. I can tell you that a tired, arrogant, drifting, aimless government is just not going to be able to do it. We have the vision; we have a positive future.

In this so-called 21-step plan—when you have 21 priorities, you have no priorities. You want to try to do all things. That's ridiculous. But there was one glaring omission and I want to talk to the members here a little bit about it today. I'll talk to it by way of a submission that was made to the committee on finance and economic affairs a couple of months ago. It was from a group called the Toronto Board of Trade, a group of business leaders and advocates here in the city. This is what they said.

“Another infrastructure aspect that is directly correlated to the liveability of cities is access to affordable housing. The board recognizes the measures taken to date by the province. However, they are targeted largely at emergency shelters or hostel allowances with little action on increasing the stock of affordable housing. Lack of affordable housing in our urban area is a significant contributor to the rising level of homelessness—it must be a pivotal part of any provincial urban strategy.” That's the Toronto Board of Trade.

There's another report I want to bring to the attention of the members here and that's the city of Toronto's Report Card on Homelessness 2001, some very interesting information. In any month the average number of new applications for social housing, for the waiting list, is 1,400 applications. I did a little bit of quick math. That translates into two households, two hard-working Ontario families every hour applying for social housing. In fact, eviction applications in Ontario have grown. On average about 2,300 eviction applications are applied for in one month alone. That's three families per hour potentially losing their housing as a result of the actions of the Harris government.

This government has shown no leadership. They've shown no plan in their throne speech. There's not even a drop of ink, not even a breath of air devoted to tackling Ontario's housing crisis. This is a serious issue, and we are all going to pay for it if the province of Ontario does not show any kind of leadership, because that is what's required.

I can tell you that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party do have a plan for Ontario's hard-working families, we do have a vision and we do have a bright future. I look forward to seeing that realized. I'll now turn the floor over to my colleague.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to follow my colleague from Don Valley East, who I think very clearly outlined the differences between this government, the Mike Harris government, and the Dalton McGuinty Liberals in Ontario. Clearly it's a difference we're going to continue to outline to Ontarians every single day until Mike Harris has the courage to go to the polls and call upon Ontarians to once again judge this

government and its record. It's a difference we're proud of; it's a difference we are very confident with in going to the people of Ontario with and asking them to choose the vision and the plan they want for the future of this province.

When you look at the throne speech, it really was in many ways an admission of a government that has failed. It's a tired government. It clearly is the throne speech of a government that has lost its way, of a government that has lost the vision, that has lost the drive and the will to govern Ontario.

We saw a throne speech that had no vision, that did not tell Ontarians where they want to take them in the next year, two years, five years, 10 years.

We saw a throne speech that talked about reforming health care. It sounds like the same broken record. Six years ago, when this government came to power, they were going to reform health care. Six years later in the throne speech they still talk about reforming health care. They've had six years to fix the problem. They can't blame the NDP or the Liberal government before that or go back to Mitch Hepburn, as they did, in the 1940s to put blame on someone else. The health care crisis in Ontario belongs at the desk of Mike Harris, and six years later they come in and tell us they're going to fix it, again.

What is their plan for education? They're going to reform education, again. Six years ago this government came to power and they were going to reform education, because those bad NDPers or the Liberals before them had messed it all up. What do we hear in the throne speech six years later? They're going to reform education, again. Talk about six long years in this province of a government that clearly has no direction.

As my colleague from Don Valley East stated very well, this is not a government for hard-working families and hard-working Ontarians; this is a government for its wealthy friends, a government that only looks after those who agree with them, a government that only looks after the rich and the powerful in Ontario.

When you look at the throne speech, it is not only what is in there that is disturbing, but what is missing. If we look for a moment at what was in there, it talked about all possible solutions being on the table for the federal commission on health care. Talk about a backdoor code word for saying that two-tier health care is on the table. That's not surprising. These are the friends of the party led by Stockwell Day, who campaigned on two-tier health care. These are the folks who supported, backed and worked for Stockwell Day through the federal election, so we're not surprised that today they're here talking about two-tier health care again.

The average, hard-working Ontarian can't afford two-tier health care, but the friends of the government can afford two-tier health care, because money is no object for those folks. They can afford to go to private clinics or private hospitals or across to the States. Hard-working families don't have that luxury. This government would

be more than content to take us down that road of two-tier health care.

Let me tell you, Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals are going to fight with every ounce of energy we have and everything we can give to ensure that there is never, ever two-tier health care and two tiers of Ontarians when it comes to being sick. If you're sick and you go to a hospital for care, the doctor should be asking you what is wrong with you, not how much money you have in your bank account or how much money your credit card can hold. That is not the Ontarian way; that is the American way. But this government is content to take us there.

We have looked at the health care crisis in Ontario. My colleague has talked about dealing with the emergency room crisis here and the plans we have put forward for this government, and they've ignored it.

1640

We talked about dealing with the shortage of doctors and this government has ignored it. There are answers or ideas out there, but this government is not interested in those ideas because those ideas do not include two-tier health care.

We believe that all Ontarians should be treated fairly and equally when it comes to their health and not one standard for the rich and one for average, hard-working Ontarians. We, as the next government, are going to make sure that happens.

Look at what the throne speech lacked when it came to water. Again, after the Walkerton tragedy you would have thought that this government, after this tragedy—if you think about it, in the year 2000 seven Ontarians died simply because they picked up a glass and drank water.

What has this government done ever since? They've hired part-time inspectors. They've taken staff out of Ministry of the Environment positions, which were already diminished, and moved them to a SWAT team. What have they done to enforce drinking water quality standards in Ontario? Absolutely nothing. They have not released their reports on past water quality standards in Ontario, as my colleague has said.

As we see the Walkerton inquiry unfold day by day, we see clearly that the government is going to have to be held accountable for the tragedy in Walkerton, because their cuts and their decisions contributed to seven people dying unnecessarily in this province. What does the throne speech say about that? Absolutely nothing.

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals, shortly after the Walkerton tragedy, unveiled a plan that would deal with many of the problems that came out as a result of Walkerton: the safe drinking water plan in June 2000. It talked about expansion of the surveillance program. It talked about inspections every six months across this province of every single facility. It talked about hiring 100 additional inspectors. But this government chose to ignore that. This government is still willing to play Russian roulette with the lives of Ontarians when it comes to quality in safe drinking water. Ontarians deserve better, and under the Liberal government of

Dalton McGuinty they will get better. It is a disgrace how this government has not learned from its mistakes and the tragedy of Walkerton to ensure it could never, ever happen again.

What did the throne speech continue to talk about? At a time when our hospitals are hurting, when our schools are in chaos, when we lack computers, textbooks, equipment and supplies, and teachers have large classrooms, you would think this government would understand that the priority for Ontarians is not tax cuts to the wealthiest, but accessibility to quality education for all Ontarians. But that is not the priority of this government. They're more concerned about continuing to give 50% of the tax cut to 20% of the people in this province, the 20% who are the wealthiest.

We outlined a plan that would only take 10 cents out of every dollar of the next run of tax cuts, that would ensure that we have classrooms from junior kindergarten to grade 3, not averaged out, but capped at 20, that there would not be any classroom in that group above 20. That is the case today.

That would be 10 cents out of every dollar of the tax cut. This government does not believe that is a worthwhile investment in our future and in our kids. We, the Ontario Liberals and Dalton McGuinty, believe that 10 cents out of every dollar from the future tax cut is a better investment in those kids who are sitting in front of you, Mr Speaker, than it is to go into the pockets of rich Ontarians.

There is a difference in priorities between the Liberals and Dalton McGuinty and the tired Tories of Mike Harris. Our priorities are working families; our priorities are quality health care; our priorities are quality education; our priorities are to ensure that no Ontarian should fear turning on the tap and drinking a glass of water. A clean environment: that is the priority of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals.

Accountability: we believe that ministers and Premiers have a responsibility to be in the House, answer the questions and be accountable to the people of Ontario, not carrying out dog-and-pony shows every day across this province, and we are going to ensure as a government that we are accountable to the people of Ontario.

I ask Ontarians to clearly look at the difference between what the Conservative government of Mike Harris is offering and have offered in the throne speech, and the proposals put by the opposition, by Dalton McGuinty and by the Liberals, because we're going to have one heck of an interesting debate in the next two years in this province and people are going to see the difference and they're going to see that it's time to get rid of this tired Tory government that has lost touch, has lost reality and no longer represents the views of the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I happen to agree with 90% or so of what the members from Don Valley East and Hamilton East have said, but I do have

some disagreement on some of the things they have talked about. The member from Don Valley, David, says that the Tories are only focused on a narrow band of special interests, meaning the very wealthy.

The Acting Speaker: I can't see you. There are two bodies in front of me.

Mr Marchese: While I understand that, I want to say, David, that when Liberals have a fundraiser and it's \$600 a pop and the Tories have a fundraiser at \$700 a pop, it's not the working guy who's coming to those events. It's that narrow band of people that you are accusing only the Tories of having. My concern is that while Chrétien has a \$1,000 fundraiser, it's not the little guy who's going to go to that fundraiser; it's going to be the big guy. It's that narrow band of special interests that supports both your party and them. I know you need to advance those arguments and I appreciate you need to, because you need to defend against the arguments I'm making.

Secondly, Dominic says tax cuts are really, really bad and most of the tax cuts go to the very wealthy. I happen to agree with him, but in the last election the Liberals said, "Tax cuts are bad, but if we get elected we won't touch them." You see the inconsistency of those arguments. So while I agree with you, I'm arguing that you need to be consistent and I'm arguing that you also need to reflect on the special interest groups, because you people feed from the same people.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to respond to some of the comments: first of all, the two-tier health care system. I don't know what throne speech the member from Hamilton was reading, but I see nothing about two-tier health care in here. You can fearmonger all you want on two-tier health care, but the fact of the matter is spending in the province of Ontario is \$22.7 billion this year on health care, the highest in history. Finally, after Premier Harris embarrassed the federal government into returning some of the funding, which is supposed to be 50-50 under the original Canada health and social transfer, we're getting it up to something like 14 cents on the dollar, and we're still putting in 86 cents.

Tax cuts: I think the member from Trinity is right on. I don't know where you really stand on any kind of a plan over there. The feds were saying that tax cuts were wrong too, but then they came back when they saw the success of tax cuts in Alberta and Quebec and Ontario. They realized it works and they started using tax cuts in the last federal election. As the member from Trinity also said, it's embarrassing to hear you talk about your own tax cuts. Are you going to restore the tax cuts that we made? You say you're not, on one hand; on the other hand, you probably will.

I don't know what your plan is on education. Is it to give the power back to the school boards so we can have a 140% increase over the next 10 years in education costs? Is that what you plan, which happened in the previous 10 years? I'm sorry, we on this side of the House are trying to figure out your plan, because we think you're going nowhere with it and all it is is a tax-and-spend plan.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): On the contrary, I say to the member opposite. You on that side of the House are on the defensive playing political games while we on this side of the House are trying to provide solutions. You talk about consistency, you talk about, "What are you going to do? You said this. What about that?" We're saying we are supporting universal health care and close the door on two-tier. You say that you refuse to close the door on two-tier health care. That's what the Premier said. That's what the member for Thornhill said. We were having a discussion on a media show last week. I said, "We're against two-tier health care." Is that clear?

1650

Mr Caplan: That's clear.

Mr Bryant: That's clear to me. The question was asked of the member for Thornhill—same question to the Premier that same day—"Are you against it?" "Well, we want to do everything through one-tier health care, but," he said, "we've got to leave our options open." Why would you leave your options open? Is it because you want to introduce it down the line? Is it because you want to be able to say to those who support two-tier health care, wink, wink, "We're on your side"? Which is it going to be?

On this side, the Ontario Liberals could not be more clear. We're in favour of a universal, one-tier health care system, and on your side, you're not. If you want to play political rhetorical games, I'll tell you, after six years I find it hard to believe that the people of Ontario are going to have any appetite for that. As Dalton McGuinty says, "That dog won't hunt."

In the meantime, we're putting forward positive proposals in health care, in education, in every area where working families need our support. If you want to play games, fine. On this side of the House, we're going to put forward positive alternatives for the working families of Ontario.

Mr Bisson: Again, I've got to make the point: the government is trying to paint a picture that all of a sudden the economy is rosy and everything is going real well and nobody should worry, but there's a real problem underlying inside the economy that we need to recognize. Quite aside from what's happening in the markets—I was reading the other day in one of the papers that there were 800,000 less people last year in the United States who were millionaires. It means a lot of people lost a lot of money in the market. But aside from that, one of the things that underpins the economy of the province of Ontario is our ability to provide cheap, affordable hydro to the industries across this province. That's one of the things that makes us competitive. This government has an idea—I would say an ideological idea—that it wants to privatize and deregulate that system, supposedly to the benefit of the private sector.

Well, we look in California, we look in Alberta and we find it has been completely the opposite. Everywhere in North America where we have privatized or deregulated hydro we have found that we've had increasing hydro prices. In California and Alberta, certainly that has

been the case, and we now know, as a result of the first piece of the dismantling of Ontario Hydro to what it is now, we're looking at a 20% increase in hydro in this upcoming year.

The government across the way is proud to stand and say, "Oh, we're giving people tax cuts. That's going to get people working." Let me tell you what a 20% increase in hydro means to companies in my area. It means some of them are not going to be able to do the kinds of things they need to do to be able to operate. It means they're going to have to lay people off. It means in some cases they may have to close their doors. I say to the government across the way, wake up and smell the coffee. Your idea is a bad one. It's going to undo one of the basic tenets of our economy that makes it competitive. So I say to the government, get off this ideological kick and recognize that you have a responsibility to continue what has been a good tradition in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton East has two minutes to respond.

Mr Agostino: I'd like to thank the members for Trinity-Spadina, Simcoe North, St Paul's and Timmins-James Bay for their contribution to the debate.

I'll just respond to a couple of points. My colleague from Trinity-Spadina talked about tax cuts and our position for rolling back past tax cuts, and that points out a clear difference between the official opposition, Liberal Dalton McGuinty, and Howard Hampton of the NDP. We understand that you're still stuck in that time warp where you believe that raising taxes is acceptable. Let me make it clear: the Liberal Party stands clearly on the side of working families. We are not in favour of raising taxes, period; we'll leave that to the NDP.

My colleague from Simcoe North talked about two-tier health care and where that would come from. I'll ask the member to read his own throne speech. It says, "The federal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada must be free to consider all aspects of the system and to explore all possible solutions. It should not be limited by a narrow mandate or by restrictions on discussion." That leaves a hole large enough to drive a truck through for two-tier health care to be hooked up to that truck. We believe there should be a restriction, and that restriction should be one-tier, universal health care for all Ontarians. It's that simple. You're not willing to do that.

In the throne speech you talk about not running every school board out of Queen's Park. Now you criticize us for suggesting that local school boards have more authority.

It is clear that there is a time and place for tax cuts, but that time and place for tax cuts should not be when our health care system is in crisis, when our education system is in crisis and when Ontarians don't feel safe enough to drink water that comes out of the tap. That is not the time and place for tax cuts.

Again, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals believe in quality health care, quality education, clean water, clean

air, unlike the Mike Harris government, which believes in catering only to its wealthy friends.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Often I'm in quite good humour and even jovial; I'm not today. There will be no interruptions. I'll not warn the member for Mississauga South again.

Pursuant to standing order 37(a) the member for St Paul's has given notice of his or her dissatisfaction with the answer to his or her question given by the Attorney General concerning judicial independence and Bill 15. This matter will be debated at 6 pm. The Chair recognises the member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): No interruptions.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Mississauga South, come to order.

Mr Bisson: Mr Speaker, I'm sorry, but I think she has been quite reasonable. Margaret, you were doing a great job over there. I didn't think you were heckling, but anyway.

The Acting Speaker: I want to remind the member for Timmins-James Bay that we refer to other members by their ridings, not by their names. I wouldn't like to have to be pointing these things out all afternoon.

Mr Bisson: If I may, Mr Speaker, I don't think the member from Mississauga South was heckling. She was trying to warn one of her members not to heckle. It was the other way around, as I saw it.

Anyway, I want to come to the defence of the member from Mississauga South. Far too often she has been maligned in this House. Sometimes, Mr Speaker, we need to keep our sense of humour because otherwise we don't have anything left.

I rise today and am happy to have an opportunity to respond to the government's speech from the throne. I have to admit, sitting through that speech from the throne, it was one of the most difficult speeches I've had to sit through in a long time. I've been in this Legislature now for almost 12 years. I've had the opportunity to listen to a number of throne speeches, some of which I agreed with, some of which I didn't agree with. But this last one, I've got to say, was a horrid experience to sit through, because the government was trying to paint a picture that somehow or other everything the province of Ontario has done up to now when it comes to the public sector was somehow bad and that the only way we can make things right is to allow things to naturally evolve and naturally flow over to private sector control.

I, as a New Democrat and as a social democrat, have great difficulty accepting that argument, because it flies in the face of reality. I just want to give a couple of examples. One example is what I've been talking about most of the day today, which is Ontario Hydro. Ontario Hydro was put under public control and regulated a number of years ago for a very important reason. It was because under the old system, where you had a multitude of hydro companies out there trying to compete to provide hydro to different customers, there was a mis-

match of services, and prices were starting to go through the roof because people could sell to the highest bidder. So the government of the day decided it was smarter to put them under public control and to regulate them, because they recognized, back then that if you did that you would have the ability to be able to control the price to a certain extent and be able to provide a constant, safe supply of hydro to the customers of the province of Ontario.

As a result, our economy has boomed over the years. I'm not going to say for a second that hydro is the only thing that makes Ontario competitive, but it is one of the pieces of the puzzle in the Ontario economic pie that allows us to be competitive as compared to the American market.

This government says, "We've got to privatize everything that moves, because God knows there's nothing good in the public sector. The public sector can't do anything right," as they explained in the throne speech, "and so therefore we need to move forward with the privatization and deregulation of hydro."

I want to say, Mr Speaker, you are a consumer of hydro, as I am. How are you going to feel next year when you get your hydro bill, as people got their gas bills this year, and you find that you've had a 20% increase? Mike Harris gave you, in the one pocket, a tax cut, but you're going to be finding that out of the other pocket you'll be sending it back to some private corporation so they can put it in their pockets and run across the border, or wherever they come from, as shareholders of the new power corporation. As a consumer, you might have got a tax cut on one side, but you're going to be paying it out in user fees, or in this case in a bill to Ontario Hydro—or whatever the new company is—and it's going to cost you more money. How are you going to feel about that?

1700

How would you feel if you were a person on a lower income working for the minimum wage? Yes, there are hundreds of thousands of people in this province for whom the only job they can get is at the minimum wage. Imagine that. We haven't had an increase in the minimum wage in how long? Six or seven years? This government says it's OK for somebody to work for the minimum wage and never to get an increase, even though our party and our leader, Howard Hampton, have been pushing to get an increase in the minimum wage. But to boot, you're going to allow the new power corporation to give those very consumers a rate increase on hydro of 20%. How are they going to pay for that on the minimum wage?

It's not everybody who's fortunate enough to have a job that pays the kind of money we need to survive in today's economy. But no, the majority of jobs that have been created under the Mike Harris government have been those close to minimum wage or minimum wage jobs. That's the majority of the 800,000. We're now going to sock it to them with an increase of 20% on hydro. I say that is not a responsible thing to do on the part of a provincial government.

It doesn't end there. The industrial users of hydro in this province are going to get it socked to them as well, because if you're a big utilizer of hydro, if you're a mine, a paper mill, a sawmill, a car plant, an oil refinery, a plastic manufacturer, if you're anybody who needs to utilize hydro, what's going to happen to you? You're going to have your bill go up. What does that mean to you as a corporation in Ontario and as shareholders of that corporation? It's going to mean they will be less competitive. I thought this government thought that competition and making these corporations more competitive was the right thing to do. You know what? I agree. But that's not what you guys are doing. I talk to the people who are heads of corporations in my part of the province in northern Ontario and they're telling us they're scared to bejesus by what these hydro rate increases are going to mean to them.

We have sawmills across the province, paper mills, lumber mills, all kinds of manufacturing plants, secondary manufacturers, who are going to be socked with at least a 20% increase on hydro. I'm telling you—mark my words—it's going to mean job losses. Yes, the Mike Harris government is a job killer when it comes to the industrial sector of this province.

Mr Marchese: Why don't the corporations speak out, for heaven's sake?

Mr Bisson: Actually the corporations are starting to speak out. This is what is actually starting to amaze me to a certain extent, because originally when the bills were passed and discussion around deregulation was put forward, I was going to the corporate sector and saying, "Hey guys, watch yourselves. Higher rate increases are coming to a neighbourhood near you real quick." They said, "Gilles, we don't want to say anything because Mike Harris is our friend. We are supporters of Mike Harris. We would not want to say anything bad about him because he's our political ally." But do you know what? What a lot of these same people are starting to find is that when it comes to the pocket book, the pocket book doesn't have too many friends.

These guys and these women who run these organizations, these corporations, recognize they have a responsibility to the communities they operate in, a responsibility to their employees and to their shareholders. What the Tories are doing on hydro is going to hurt their bottom line. If anybody should understand that, it should be the Mike Harris government of Ontario.

But it doesn't end there. We take a look alone at what the government announced through this throne speech, which was just galling. The government stands up and starts talking about its privatization agenda. They're not satisfied to just privatize Ontario Hydro; they want to privatize anything that moves in the public sector.

They sit across the way and nod their heads. They think that's a good thing. Continue, guys. I'd like to put you in the back of my car, you know the thing that goes like that? That's what you guys do in a caucus meeting. Whatever Mike says, you nod your head. You don't use

your head. That's why God put them there. You can use them. It's as simple as that.

For example, the government is now moving to privatize the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, the ONTC. The government across the way, most members, wouldn't even know what that is. But it's like Highway 400 that you have down in Toronto. Can you imagine what would happen if the government of Ontario, Mike Harris, was to come in and say, "We've decided we're going to privatize all the 400 series highways across Ontario"? Can you imagine what would happen in that corridor between Cornwall and Windsor if we were to privatize all those highways and have to charge user fees to the utilizers of those highways? It would drive the Ontario economy into the ground, because we understand that transportation network is the cornerstone of the southwestern, southeastern and central economies of this province. We use the 400 series highways to transport goods from one plant to the other throughout southern Ontario. We understand the importance that highway series has to our economy.

Listen across the way: we in northern Ontario are a little bit further than from here to Hamilton. From here to Timmins, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Thunder Bay or anywhere in between, you're talking over 500 miles. The government of the day, some years ago, decided it was important to provide basic transportation infrastructure so that our corporations and our people are able to operate within the economy of Ontario. Now the government says, "We're going to privatize the ONTC." Boy, the brain trust must have stayed up all night thinking that one through.

We are on the verge of losing rail passenger service if this goes forward, and it means that all those people who need to use the train to move from one part of our province to the other don't have that option any more. That's a loss of convenience off the top, but they haven't stopped to think of what the next step is. The Ontario Northland runs the rail freight service, which is basically the industrial users. That's Columbia Forest Products, Tembec, the mill in Smooth Rock Falls, Abitibi-Price, the people in Kirkland Lake, the redwood plant, Grant waferboard, and all those plants, anywhere from North Bay up to Hearst—I would argue actually up to Moosonee and Moose Factory—are utilizing the rail freight service to move their goods out of their plants in northern Ontario and bring them to the market in the south. It makes a competitive advantage.

I sit down with sawmill operators in my part of the province—I'm glad the Minister of Natural Resources is here because he would know this to be true. There are plants out there that would like to have the ability to ship their goods by rail because it's cheaper, but because their plants are situated in places that don't have rail, it makes them much less competitive. In today's sawmill market and in today's dimensional wood market, it's really making it difficult for them to keep their doors open.

If you privatize the ONTC, what you end up with is a loss of direct subsidy from the province of Ontario of

about \$5 million, a loss of subsidy from the federal government of \$2.5 million, and then the loss of cross-subsidization from the profitable sections of the ONTC of some \$10 million. It means the rail freight services will no longer be able to rely on the cross-subsidization from the corporation and both levels of government to the tune of almost \$18 million. That means guess what? That cost is going to have to be passed on to the industrial users of the rail freight services.

What does that mean to Tembec, what does that mean to Abitibi-Price, what does that mean to Columbia Forest Products a couple of years down the road as this privatization initiative ends? They end up with the rail freight service completely privatized as a stand-alone organization, no longer a cross-subsidization from the rail passenger service that helps to pay to maintain the rail bed, no longer the cross-subsidization from the other components of the ONTC that make money and help to pay the freight services, no longer the subsidies from the federal and provincial governments. It means that the new private corporation, or the government, if they hang on to it, which I doubt, is going to have to pass the entire cost of running the ONR rail freight service on to the backs of the industrial users of northeastern Ontario. Yes, you've guessed it, backbenchers of the Tory government, it means an increase in rail freight service rates.

Here's the picture. In just two moves of your throne speech, we have increases on hydro of 20% this year with more coming to a neighbourhood near you as soon as it's privatized and the deregulation is finished by the spring of 2002. Then on top of that, you're going to have an increase in rail freight service rates for the industrial users on the ONR.

It doesn't take too much genius to figure out what that means to those people in northeastern Ontario. It means that those corporations that are relying on Ontario Hydro and on the ONR to be part of what makes them competitive are going to be in a difficult story. What does that mean to the people of Mattice? I look at my friend Annette, who's here as a page; I know her father and her uncle. They work at Columbia Forest Products; they work at the sawmill. They're the people who make our communities of Hearst, Mattice and all those other communities. You're putting those people's jobs in jeopardy. I'm not going to stand here as a member of this Legislature and just idly sit by and watch you guys do what you're doing, because you're dead wrong, and you have to understand that.

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So I say to you, do we want to find ways of being able to make those public corporations more accountable? Yes. Do we want to find a way of making those corporations operate in a more fiscally responsible way? The answer is yes. I think they do already, but we can always do a better job. But certainly you can do that under the auspices of a solidly run crown corporation; there's no reason why you can't.

One of the other things in the throne speech, as we're talking about the privatization agenda, is that the gov-

ernment is saying it also wants to look at possibly privatizing everything from LCBO or any other corporations that are out there. I say to the government, it's the wrong way to go. It's part of where we get our revenue to be able to pay for services such as health care, education and other services that are important to people. So I say to the government, you're wrong. You're wrong to try to privatize those things that basically make Ontario a competitive jurisdiction to do business in. I would at least think that a Conservative government in today's age would be able to figure that one out by themselves, without having to go through the process that has failed in provinces such as Alberta and in states such as California. So I say again to the government, you're certainly not going in the right direction.

L'autre point que je veux faire qui est très important, qui a été mentionné dans le discours du trône et encore ce qu'on voit avec les annonces qui ont été faites juste dernièrement par le gouvernement provincial, aujourd'hui avec la ministre et avant le premier ministre, c'est l'attaque qu'on voit jour après jour dans le gouvernement conservateur et les députés, les membres du cabinet et le premier ministre contre notre système d'éducation et, oui, contre les éducateurs.

Moi, je commence d'être écœuré au coton à voir la manière dont vous traitez le monde qui sont dans le domaine de l'éducation. Déjà, cet ouvrage est assez difficile. Ce n'est pas facile d'être toujours en bonne forme pour aller dans la classe chaque jour. On n'a pas besoin d'avoir un gouvernement qui se plante là, qui est toujours en train de taper sur la tête des enseignants et des enseignantes, et essaie de dire que ce qu'ils ont fait n'est pas important pour le monde de notre province.

On sait tous qu'une des affaires qui est l'acquis de la compétitivité de notre économie de l'Ontario, c'est de s'assurer qu'on a un système d'éducation qui fait du bon sens, un système d'éducation qui est basé sur certains principes, un système d'éducation qui donne à chaque personne, chaque jeune, chaque fille et chaque garçon dans notre système une opportunité d'être capable d'avancer et d'aller rechercher l'enseignement dont ils ont besoin pour être capables de prendre leur place dans l'économie.

Mais on voit premièrement au système primaire et secondaire le gouvernement, à chaque chance qu'il a eue, attaquer les enseignants de notre système; à chaque chance qu'ils ont eue d'ôter l'argent du système d'éducation, créer une crise et dire que quelqu'un d'autre l'a créée, et ça n'aide pas nos jeunes.

On voit justement que l'année passée, il y a eu 50 % de moins de personnes qui se sont inscrites pour entrer dans la profession d'enseignant et d'enseignante, une diminution de 50 %. On sait pourquoi les jeunes qui sortent du collège, de l'université aujourd'hui qui ont la chance d'aller en éducation disent, « Écoute, pourquoi devenir enseignant ou enseignante quand on a un gouvernement qui va nous taper sur la tête à toutes les deux minutes ? » Ils disent que ça ne fait pas de bon sens.

Mais ça ne finit pas là. Il n'y a pas seulement des attaques aux systèmes secondaire et primaire qu'on voit.

On voit ce qui est arrivé dans les universités et collèges de notre province : le gouvernement, depuis qu'il est venu en place, a augmenté les frais de cotisation de tous les programmes aux collèges et universités. Ils ont déréglementé certains programmes au niveau universitaire. Là, ce qu'on voit, c'est les frais d'inscription qui augmentent au point où beaucoup de jeunes ne peuvent pas choisir d'aller à l'école, passé le secondaire, à l'université ou au collège.

Ce que je veut dire sur le point économique, c'est un très gros problème. Pourquoi ? Parce que ça veut dire, toutes ces personnes-là de 18 ans à 22 ans qui commencent à rentrer dans notre économie, qui pourraient donner quelque chose à notre province, qui pourraient fournir à notre économie les acquis nécessaires de développer une économie qui marche ne peuvent pas contribuer. Pourquoi ? Parce qu'ils ne peuvent pas payer le fric pour entrer aux collèges ou à travers les portes de nos universités.

Je dis que c'est un gros problème. C'est un plus gros problème pour ceux qui demeurent plus loin du centre de l'Ontario, qu'on appelle la grosse ville de Toronto. Imaginez-vous, monsieur, si vous demeurez à Nakina, vous demeurez à Long Lac, vous demeurez dans ces communautés qui sont éloignées, qui n'ont pas de collège ni d'université chez eux dans leur municipalité. Cela veut dire, aller à l'université, aller à un collège, ça devient plus difficile. Ces jeunes-là disent, « Je n'ai pas de choix : il faut que j'existe sans éducation. » Ça veut dire que ces jeunes-là sont ôtés du système, sont des citoyens qui ne pourront pas avoir la chance d'être capables de contribuer à notre économie d'une manière positive dans les années à venir.

So I say to the government across the way, your throne speech was nothing to really applaud. Your throne speech, as far as I'm concerned, was basically an all-right attack on those things that make our country strong, that make our province strong. We have developed in this nation and in this province an approach to how we treat ourselves and how we operate as governments toward our people over the last 130 years. What you're trying to do by way of your actions over the last six years and specifically out of your throne speech is to attack those things that are what have built this province and have built this nation. To you I say, I look forward to the day that you're voted out of office and we can come back to some real common sense in this province.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Dunlop: It's always nice to make comments on the member for Timmins-James Bay. I appreciate hearing your comments. I know how passionately you speak about the north.

I don't know a lot about your transportation system in the north—that's my ignorance more than anything else—because it's so huge. I've been up on a couple of committee hearings into the north. I know that you personally use a plane at times to fly around because your riding is bigger than most countries in Europe. I do appreciate the value of any transportation system that you have, as well.

But what I would like to make a few comments on is the growing economy and the comments that Mr Clark might have referred to earlier, our transportation system throughout the province of Ontario. I think as a government we recognize the value of our transportation networks throughout the province. We are the one province in the country that receives no funding whatsoever from the federal government. I think every other province, with the exception maybe of Alberta, receives some kind of funding assistance.

I was pleased last year, in our 2000 budget, when Ernie Eves announced total expenditures of almost \$1 billion in the Ministry of Transportation budget. We laid down a lot of asphalt throughout the province. There has been a lot of reconstruction and redevelopment of different highways across the province, and I'm very pleased with that.

I think you bring out some good points with your comments on the value to industry of not only the transportation system but the hydro system as well. I know the value personally of knowing that the biggest purchasers of our wood in Simcoe county are companies like Tembec; they take our lumber and process it up north. I appreciate hearing your comments. I'm out of time already.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I had a chance to listen both in the House and on television to some of the comments by the member for Timmins-James Bay with respect to this government's throne speech. I've had a good opportunity this week to first-hand capture just a little more of the essence of the Harris government's communications machine as the Premier has been travelling about Ontario on the nearly dead tour. The Mike Harris nearly dead tour has made stops so far this week, setting a blistering pace across the breadth of this province.

I think the member has done a very excellent job of critiquing some of the problems between the language of the government and its delivery mechanism. "Accountability" is a word that they used eight to 11 times during the course of the throne speech, yet attempts to hold the government accountable are of course quite challenging.

We saw a government talk about the language of Smart Growth, but when asked to come up with some specific recommendations about what it might do, it fell rather short. We've seen a vacuum created by a government that even after a very lengthy layoff many people would comment upon as ineffective. The government hasn't been able to get its act together. I think the Premier's tour this week has done a lot of damage. It has, on one hand, demonstrated his unwillingness to be held accountable and, on the other, it has done a poor job of providing good messaging.

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When I was with him in London, he tried to meet with people in the hospital in an attempt to show the good things that had gone on. But against the efforts of his handlers, a constituent with very serious concerns about the way the health care system had addressed the health

needs of his child got hold of the Premier, and it was all he could do, before he jumped back into his chauffeured vehicle, to brush that constituent off.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Marchese: I just want to congratulate my friend from Timmins-James Bay for the general remarks he made about the economy and the direction these folks are moving in, and the perspicacity and passion with which he speaks about northern issues, which very few on the other side could do, and I would add a couple of things.

What comes clearly from the throne speech is four major things. One, the way the Tories would deal with this slowing down of the economy is, first of all, to fire more civil servants, meaning more of them would be on the street, unemployment would be higher, they would collect unemployment insurance. At some point some of these folks—who knows?—might collect welfare. The second way they would deal with the slowing down of the economy is that they're going to cut and tighten ministries further in terms of making sure that, because there's no money, they argue, "We've got to cut more." The third thing, of course, is that they're so committed to the income tax cuts that they see that as a renewal of the economy as if that was a solution. Over the last four or five years Mike Harris was saying, remember, that he created a recession-proof economy. It's slowing down and, contrary to the fact that that isn't working, he's saying, "We're going to continue with the income tax cuts, to both the corporate and individual sectors." You've got to wonder about these people. The fourth point is, we're going to privatize some more, à la 407. You'll recall the 407, privatized for 99 years, complete control of this highway by the private sector, given to them courtesy of les Conservateurs for 99 years to raise rates as much as they want. In the last couple of years rates have gone up 50%. We can expect the same when they privatize Hydro, water, LCBO, if that's their intention, and God knows what more will come.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): All I can say to the two members opposite from the third party is, "You've got to be kidding." You're like Bob Rae. The other day on TV I saw Bob Rae, after five years, of course the biggest socialist this province has ever seen. The other day there's Bob Rae, the lawyer for all the lumber companies and the pulp and paper companies, down in the United States talking to groups in Washington about how wonderful free trade is and how important free trade is to the people of Canada, to the people of the United States and to economies throughout the world. Unbelievable. What a turn of events.

Now I hear the members opposite saying the same thing. All of a sudden they think businesses need to have lower costs. Unbelievable. Every time we've reduced costs to businesses, every time we've reduced the employer health tax, every time we reform WCB and reduce premiums by—the Minister of Labour is here—it's got to be 20% on average across the province, you screamed that it was the wrong thing to do, you screamed that they were our corporate buddies, what were we doing?

Now you stand up here and do a whole speech about how important it is to keep costs to businesses down. It was you—for the first three years you were in office, a 35% increase in the hydro rates. That's what you did. Finally you woke up and froze rates. So for eight years, because they did it for the last two and we've done it for five, we've frozen hydro rates in Ontario. So are rates going up 8% this year? They are. For the first time in eight years, rates have gone up. Do we like it? No.

Now that these guys have all of a sudden had this great big change in the way they view the world and now that they seem to understand that businesses have to have a competitive environment in order to succeed, in order to have jobs, so our pages' parents can have jobs, now that they've seen it, I can't wait until we bring in the legislation to reduce corporate taxes. I'm going to watch you guys. I'm going to see you stand up, and I know now you're going to vote for that legislation because you know that businesses need to be competitive in Ontario. Congratulations.

Mr Bisson: I was moved by those comments. First of all, I want to thank all those members who responded to my response to the speech from the throne. I would just say to the members across the way: listen, yes, if your government brings forward legislation that says we're going to lower corporate income tax, of course I'm going to say that's not what we should be doing. I believe that citizens of this province, corporations as well as individuals, have a responsibility to make sure to pay their fair share so that we're able to have the systems in place that make this province what it should be. Nobody across the way on the Conservative benches, I would think, would argue we don't need a system of health care, we don't need a system of education, we don't need public roads and all those other things that make this province what it is today and, yes, make it competitive. You can't get that stuff for free; somebody has to pay for it.

But where we have an ability to control costs, which is something that we've done fairly well in this province, that is, to provide a good system of public transportation when it comes to our system of highways and rail services so that we can get our goods to market, we have done so.

My argument is that what you're doing is taking away those things that we have built that have been the underpinning of what makes our economy successful. For those corporations, those industrial users along the ONR line from Moose Factory down to North Bay and south, it's going to be difficult for them to be able to operate and stay in business if their freight rates go up. It's as simple as that. We have found a way to keep them down and we have done that by way of the ONTC, both by way of subsidies from the federal and provincial governments and by cross-subsidization of other parts of that corporation.

On the question of Hydro, yes, again, if we're able to provide safe, affordable Hydro to industrial users and consumers across this province, why wouldn't we do so? We have seen in Alberta, we have seen everywhere else

where you've privatized and deregulated, it hasn't worked; it has led to higher prices. So let's not take away those things that make the Ontario economy competitive. That is the argument, and I hope you finally get it one of these days.

Mr Hastings: I'm most happy to join in this debate because I rejoice with my Grit friends across the floor. Today, ladies and gentlemen, Speaker, is the first time in the history of this Legislature since I got elected in 1995 that the Grits voted—it's on the record—for a tax reduction. Can you think of anything more revolutionary from a group of stand-pat, preservationist, status quo huggers?

It just boggles my mind to think that they actually voted for this private member's bill dealing with registered education savings plans. A tax credit, in effect, is a tax reduction. Generally speaking, the folks across the way have had the mantra of, "We can't afford a tax reduction in anything," because they have the rhetoric of, usually, it's risky, it's a risky proposition to give people back some of the money they earned, their money. But today we rejoice with them. They recognize reality at last. If that's one part of the leader of the official opposition's new plan, then I give them a little congratulations.

But I must say, I have gone through the remarks of the leader of the official opposition. We have heard today and since the Legislature resumed that they have a plan for just about everything. But when you start looking at the elements of the plan, whether it's a plan to reform education or a plan to deal with health care priorities, it usually comes up wanting. Why do I say that? If we look at what is the plan and what is their action, there's a big zigzag.

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The real example, the real test in terms of their idea of bringing peace to the schools—because there's a supposition that there are problems in our school system that can be attributed to a whole set of factors and actors—is the Hamilton school strike of last spring as a prime example of what the reality is and what the rhetoric is. What happened in that instance? What we had is a commitment from the House leader of the Grit party that they would vote to have the folks who were on strike in the Hamilton school situation back to work. But when it came to the actual vote that day last March, what happened? They didn't live up to their commitment. But that's nothing new nor surprising when you look at the realities of their plans for whatever and what the action is.

It's not a matter of having a plan—people can have plans, and that's admirable—but what is key is implementing a plan, is implementing ideas, and that's what the Mike Harris government has done for the last six years.

Just this week in the Legislature we heard from the member for Elgin. He is a big primary champion of agriculture. He says that we have no interest, have no concern about agriculture and helping out the producers. In point of fact, I want to put on the record today, as part of the throne speech debate, a letter from the Ontario

Corn Producer's Association dated April 19, 2001, to the Premier and to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Brian Coburn.

I want to quote directly from that letter, because it contrasts completely the reality to the remarks made by the member for Elgin in the past few days:

"Dear Mr Harris and Mr Coburn:

"On behalf of the 21,000 members of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, I wish to express our sincere appreciation for the \$90 million in special assistance provided to Ontario grain and oilseed farmers in early April. The cheques were distributed within days of your announcement on March 28, and the delivery mechanism was consistent with advice which was provided by Ontario farm groups"—through our good organization, Agricornp. "The special assistance will be of major benefit in helping crop producers plant crops this spring despite the depressed crop prices which have been caused by huge direct subsidy payments in the United States. These subsidies have tripled since 1997, according to the US department of agriculture."

I further want to elaborate on this letter to show where this government is going in its concern and having agriculture as a priority, that we act on the concerns of farmers and a lot of other people:

"Major changes have occurred in corn farming in Ontario over the past decade. Ontario farmers continue to be world leaders in the rate of adoption of new technology and in supporting research and new market development initiatives. Value-added processing has been encouraged so that most Ontario corn exports are now in the form of processed food and industrial products versus unprocessed grain corn as was the case a few years ago. New products such as automotive fuels and 'bio-plastics' are being introduced and are expected to represent rapid-growth markets in the decade ahead. Value adding means more employment for Ontario citizens and added economic activity for the entire province."

Now contrast that response to the corn producers and to other oilseed farmers in that sector. What happened? They had been asking for support for a long time. What did we do? We delivered on our part of the commitment. But as the member for Elgin so adequately explained the other day, or inadequately, failed to explain, where is the federal counter-response to the problems of our farmers as we go into this new year?

We're still waiting for financial help from the federal Minister of Agriculture. In fact, they can't even deal with the issue of the fungus problem for Prince Edward Island potato producers, which we rely on in this Ontario economy. So let's let the record be corrected that we are interested in agriculture and we've acted in many instances—you can go back to the hog producers many years ago. This government has an empathetic, compassionate record dealing with farmers. The challenge is, how are we ever going to get out of the arrangement we're in in terms of how the Europeans and the Americans are oversubsidizing their producers? That's

the key for the long-term sustainability of the farm sector.

You may find it quite surprising that an urban member would be interested in agriculture. But in point of fact, where do you get your food from? You have to eat. You have to have farmers who are productive and healthy and happy. If you don't, you are importing more food. That's just one example of action, not planning, as the Grits so favour to talk about.

The next item I want to turn to is in relation to the whole electricity restructuring issue and the issue of competitiveness in the Canadian economy. In the last few days, we have heard from members opposite, especially from the NDP, that the idea of commercialization or privatization of a major supply like electricity is not in the public interest. But as the minister said recently, having an Ontario Hydro monopoly was good for the time it came about in 1903, the early part of the 20th century. Today we're no longer in that situation. We are in a competitive situation regarding the supply of electricity, not only in North America but throughout the world.

While the member for Timmins-James Bay raises the spectre of increased pricing, what he is missing in this whole debate over deregulation or privatization or commercialization is not that issue at all. The issue really is: is there going to be an adequate supply of power in the coming years? Will we have an adequate supply of power that will drive prices down? That's the fundamental question.

What you don't hear from members opposite is that there are places in the world—if they'd only look and check, there are Web sites, there's all kinds of information available. California and Alberta are not the problems we face. It's not the same at all. We need to look, and they need to look, at experiences in places such as the United Kingdom, Pennsylvania and most of the states in the great commonwealth of Australia. They need to do a mind-stretching exercise. That's the key to solving this problem: will there be adequate supply? When you look at what is going to come on-line in the next two to three years, in the stream right now: major new producers. It's competition that drives prices down.

You never hear from our friends opposite hand-wringing over the privatization or commercialization of Air Canada or, of all crown corporations, Canadian National. If you look today at what Canadian National is, compared to 15 years ago, you would hardly recognize it. Do we hear hand-wringing from those folks over how the cost of transporting goods has increased? It hasn't. It's gone in the other direction when you look at Canadian National. Why did the federal government denationalize CN? Because they had to get out of the whole arrangement. When you look at the rail transportation industry in this country and North America today, CN is a major supplier of moving goods and services nationally and north-south. In fact, they were blocked from buying a major US railroad.

How come that's the reality in that area, if electricity is that much different? Why don't we hear from these

folks about the deregulation of the telecommunications industry? You never hear “boo,” but guess what, folks? The price of phone service is down. Why? Because there’s competition, there are different players. You’ve got Sprint, you’ve got AT&T. Sure, Bell’s still there providing the wires.

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So it’s absolutely essential that we move, not on a privatization agenda—it’s moving on a reality agenda. Do you want to be connected to the real world, where you have global commerce, where probably four of every five jobs in this province are related, either directly or nearly directly, to trade?

We trade with the Americans. We trade with the rest of the world. Why do you think these folks were meeting in Quebec City? Because they want, over time, to solve the problems of poverty. They won’t be solved by putting up walls and more tariffs. They’ll be torn down and we’ll have more jobs and reduce poverty.

Canada and this province have enormous potential in exporting goods and services to Mexico, as an example. If you look at what is happening in the real world, a lot of Ontario citizens winter in different parts of Mexico today. We get all the newcomers coming to this country, whereby we can take significant advantage of their culture and diverse experience in business to set up new businesses.

It’s been mentioned across the way by the Grits that they’re trying to portray themselves as this new management team with a plan: “We have a plan for health care reform. We have a plan for education.” What they don’t want to talk about when they talk about these plans for working families—which we’ve already implemented, by the way; they’re always catching up. We have implemented plans aplenty in reduced taxes, in reduced red tape, to create more jobs in small businesses. The member for Brampton Centre was talking the other day about the business impact test.

How do you think all these 825,000 jobs came about? It wasn’t because we stayed on the same track, that you had to go through all the paperwork and go from one place to another when you were starting a new business. No, we put in a place where you could go and do it all at once—WSIB stuff, get your incorporation papers. I suspect some of the folks across the way would prefer that we’d stay in the old mode, especially the NDP with their rant on the privatization: “Keep the old monopoly on electricity.”

The folks across the way talk about a plan to bring about better health care. Their favourite slogan—I had to face it in the election, and we see it across there every day. The secret slogan is two-tier health care. If you even mention the phrase, you’re labelled for life as if there’s a huge risk and it’s politically incorrect. You can’t talk about the challenges and the problems we have in health care.

Of course, the member for St Paul’s said, “We’re against two-tier health care.” I watched part of that show before I moved on to something more interesting. But in

point of fact, they were in favour of two-tier health care. If you go back to the Peterson regime, there were services that were paid for by ordinary Ontario citizens. Even the NDP in British Columbia had delisted services.

They want to create the illusion, the impression that everything is free, that you should pay for nothing and that the citizen is just sort of an empty receptacle. He or she gets services from the state and can go and get more and more and there’s no end, you never come to a crunch point.

I was talking to a young gentleman out here today from the Ontario student federation about our bill. We had a little discussion about the critical choices that the next generations—it’s right here today actually—are going to be facing. If you want to finance health care up to 100 cents on the dollar, and you haven’t any money left for education, which we require, where are you going to get that money? We know where those folks will get it. We’ll go to the old plan—code word “plan,” but the real words are “tax addiction,” “spending addiction.” That’s the real part of their plan. That’s the fundamental here.

Interjections.

Mr Hastings: You’ve got it, a tax addiction they’ve had for years and years.

We’ve gone from 37 cents per capita up to 44 cents roughly in the last six years.

With that rate-of-trend analysis, both in education and health care spending, somebody is going to have to make some choices. I know they don’t want to hear about these choices. They just say, “Oh, we don’t want two-tier health care.” It’s like a slogan. If you keep saying that mantra, things will end, “Things will be OK. Just spend more money.” Well, we are spending a pile of money. The Minister of Finance said recently, “Where’s our improvements?” He asked this question. We’ve made substantial improvements, but do you know what? There’s always more to make, but money is not necessarily the solution to some of these complex challenges.

I have to really point out finally, folks, and going back to the administration of their own research program, I want to read into the record a motion that Mr Bradley opposed back in 1994 regarding the caucus support estimates representing the over-expenditure in the Grits’ case, the 1993-94 estimates, of \$336,018. Guess what? Mr Bradley opposed that that be dealt with. That’s the kind of plan and record they have for dealing with the issues of today.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Marchese: Just a couple of comments to the member from Etobicoke North. He talks about the spending addiction the other parties have as it relates to the health care system, yet spending in the health care system and in that ministry has skyrocketed under this government. How could they be so preoccupied about spending and how could the member argue that it’s impossible to continue with these tremendous expenditures on health, because under your—

Mr Dunlop: Long-term-care beds, hospitals.

Mr Marchese: No, but under you guys, costs have gone up incredibly. How could you let that happen? If you are arguing that that's not good, why would you in the first place increase those costs to the ministry? You're saying you don't have the money. The member from Etobicoke North says money is not a solution. But why would you increase the cost of the health care system to such an extent if you feel it's so bad? Why didn't you fix it while you were there? That is the point I'm arguing.

You can't have it both ways. You think spending is not good, but you've been spending a lot and now you're saying we've got to cut down again. I don't get it. Is your commitment to primary care so that you can have 24-hour services in the community, where the costs are cheaper and you have doctors on salary? Is that your commitment, or is your commitment to privatizing more and more of our health care system? Under you guys, the out-of-pocket costs are 35% and soon the out-of-pocket costs are going to be 50%, to the extent that you could have a two-tier system. That's the direction you are leaning in. I am asking you, John, be clear. Where are you moving to? Be clear with us.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I really want to pay some respect to the member from Etobicoke North because he certainly has, I believe, coined a very defining term for the Liberals. I think that tax addiction is more like a tax addict. Every time, you see these Dalton dollars floating out the window. Every time he speaks: the Dalton spend-o-meter. Tax addiction. I want the viewers today to imprint this in their minds clearly: "tax addiction" is a Liberal term attributed by the member for Etobicoke North, and it should be recorded in Hansard. Now it is.

1750

But one of the themes he spoke on touched my heart, actually. When I think of my riding of Durham, Minister Coburn was there just a short time ago, along with the member for Simcoe North, who spoke earlier, and the member for Peterborough. There were 400 members of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, district 4. I'm going to name the 400 of them here shortly.

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: No, out of respect I think I will, actually. It was David Frew, Rick Geisberger, Steve Grove, Trevor Nesbitt, Hubert Schillings, Ted Watson, Kevin Werry, Joe Christl, Bert Werry, Dale Mountjoy, to name but eight, the famous phrase used by Mr Conway.

I do want to say that the minister at that time was listening to the plight of the corn and oilseeds people. We're talking about \$70 million. Let's roll the clock back. The federal government first promised \$800 million, the federal Liberals, the tax addiction people. Then they rolled it back to \$500 million. Our Minister Coburn announced not just \$70 million in Ontario dollars but \$90 million. There are 21,000 farmers in this province, thanks to our minister, who now have the money to put the seeds in the soil.

Mr Bryant: The government members on the other side of the House are having a lot of fun joking over

wordplay. They were talking about, I think, evictions. I'd like to talk about the evictions that are taking place in St Paul's as a result of the disastrous housing policy instituted by this government. Nothing, of course, in this throne speech for tenants. Of course, they would be the enemy of the government through their legal tool, the tenant destruction act.

Evictions have gone up in the city of Toronto by about 60%. In the riding of St Paul's, where 68% are tenants, they're facing an impossible situation. You were talking about evictions, so I want to keep on this point. The problem is this: on the one hand, the vacancy rate is less than 1%; on the other hand, above-the-guideline increases are such that there is no rent control—

The Acting Speaker: Order. Stop the clock, please. The Minister of Labour on a point of order?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Actually, I was going to move a motion, but it's OK. I apologize for interrupting. I'm sorry about your time.

Mr Bryant: As I was saying, with the vacancy rate so low, there is no free market; the market, in fact, is closed. At the same time, above-the-guideline increases mean that rents are increasing about 10%. There is no affordable housing being built in the city of Toronto, so what does that mean? They feel, because of the rising rents, that they need to leave, or in the case of those on a fixed income—you talked about addiction; let's talk about eviction—they get evicted. Under the new laws, they get evicted with a far smaller notice period. Where do they go? If they leave, of course, they have to go into an apartment where there is no rent control. That's vacancy decontrol.

I can tell you that the people of St Paul's don't find the wordplay over "addiction" a laughing matter. They're living with the realities of eviction under this government every single day.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I just want to compliment my friend from Etobicoke North on the comments that he made today with respect to the throne speech.

I do appreciate the fact that the member from the NDP doesn't understand the parts and intricacies of his debate. But I thought it was a fair and reasonable dissertation with respect to the policies of this government and the differences between us and both opposition parties.

I might say it's interesting, as we move along through the six or seven years that we've been in power, to find that the opposition parties endorse programs and platforms that we put forward in 1995 and they slowly came around to our way of thinking, in smaller increments. We used to talk about a 30% tax cut and they talked about a 10% tax cut. We talked about reducing the public service by 20% and they talked about reducing the public service by 5% or 10%. It was just a matter of increments. They were simply that much further behind the public mood, and we captured that mood. I think the member for Etobicoke North explained it well.

I say to the member for the NDP who was speaking earlier, it's not surprising you can't understand the approach we're taking. In my mind, the approach that was taken in Quebec City and the approach you took in

Quebec City in your attendance there and the kinds of issues that you were trying to deal with were truly ridiculous. The processes are, in any free trade negotiation, that the parties negotiate free trade and then it's up to those Parliaments to endorse or not to endorse free trade. That's where the debate takes place. To hold yourself out as some kind of protector of the Canadian institution when you're standing in the place being tear-gassed, arguing and screaming and claiming you're not having your rights is not fair.

The process is simple. You negotiate a free trade agreement. You take it to Congress, you take it to Parliaments and then the Parliaments vote on those particular issues. That's how it has always worked. I hope to expand our free trade, because I remember when you guys were opposed, but apparently—

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Etobicoke North has two minutes to respond.

Mr Hastings: I'd like to congratulate the member for Durham and the member for Etobicoke Centre—the member for Trinity-Spadina spoke this morning of course—and the member for St Paul's for their comments.

What I was trying to drive at in this particular presentation is that there is a fundamental contrast between us as a party in government and the folks across the way. They're trying to draw some lines in the sand, but when you really look at what's behind the plan—that's a favourite word that seems to have come up—there's some—and you have to be fair to them, they're trying. The Leader of the Opposition has the odd idea. There's no coherent, consistent approach to things.

When you look at what we're doing, we're not only following a plan, we're acting on a plan, and we get things done, for example, Minister Coburn's stuff, Minister Young's stuff. If it weren't for the Attorney General in this province, where would this government be in helping newcomers to get legal aid and to get the feds to pay their portion of the legal aid that they should have been paying for the last number of years? We always have to be demanding it. What do we hear from the folks across the way? I'll raise the issue again. They're for better skills and helping young people. Why don't they help us get the nearly, I estimate, \$670 million from Minister Stewart at HRDC as our real contribution out of the UI fund to help skilled people become better skilled in this country for upgrading and retraining in this province as shown in the throne speech? We're the ones taking action. We're not talking about a plan.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

JUDICIAL APPOINTMENTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order 37, the motion that this House is now

adjourned is deemed to have been made. The member from St Paul's has given notice that he is dissatisfied with the answer to the question today given by the Attorney General. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Just as a clarification, do I have five minutes or is it five minutes in total?

Interjection: Five minutes each.

Mr Bryant: I've got five minutes?

The Acting Speaker: The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or the parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr Bryant: I say to the minister, I can't promise to do this for every question or late show, but I'm going to try to keep the rhetoric down on this question because it is an issue that falls in that non-political part of your responsibilities as the Attorney General under the Ministry of the Attorney General Act and under our Constitution.

The issue is just this: we all know in Ontario that judicial independence and judicial accountability has become an issue. It became an issue because the Attorney General of Ontario supported a private member's bill sponsored by the member for Scarborough Centre, which passed on second reading, called the Judicial Accountability Act. I'm going to read into the record the comments from people who have said it is shocking that the Attorney General of Ontario would support a bill that would jeopardize judicial independence. If I have time, I'll make the case as to why it did.

1800

As a result of that, it becomes particularly important that the Attorney General of the day make his position known as to whether or not the Attorney General ministry is going to continue to support judicial accountability legislation or, on the other hand, are they going to follow a different practice, adopted by a previous minister, in which he explicitly would oppose judicial accountability legislation? Let me say at the outset that I know very well that private members' business is different than public business. But I also know that when issues become political, it becomes important for ministers to take a stand on particular bills. For example, my phony gun bill, my private member's bill, was rejected initially by the Attorney General of Ontario, only to eventually be adopted and accepted by the Premier. That's a political issue involving a private member's bill. The government of the day supported Ms Mushinski's bill on judicial accountability. So the question is, will you support Mr Wood's bill on judicial accountability?

Attorney General Flaherty said on April 20 of the member for Scarborough Centre's bill that "I think it addresses a need which people have to get some kind of an accurate rating on what sentences are done." These are his words. The Ottawa Citizen then replies in an editorial and says, "That Ontario Attorney General Jim Flaherty reacted positively to this is shocking. No government

should single out certain judges for public pressure tactics.”

That's one view, and that was the view of Minister Young's predecessor. What's another view? Well, Minister Harnick said in a published report—June 21, 2000, in the *Globe and Mail*—“I was proud to say I made it clear quickly what my position was' when he quashed similar legislation years ago.” What legislation was he talking about? Bill 130, introduced by the MPP for Oshawa, Mr Ouellette, and here's what the government of the day said during debate on that bill. The parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General said of Bill 130, “The difficulty with the bill—and here's the major problem—is that it interferes with the independence of the judiciary.” He went on to say, “That's the difficulty with the bill. The Attorney General is strongly opposed”—the government said May 29, 1997. “As his parliamentary assistant, I am strongly opposed to Bill 130 with respect to the amendments to the Courts of Justice Act.”

OK. So I say to the minister, are you in favour of this private member's bill or are you against it? It becomes particularly important when in December—

Mr Bob Wood (London West): Tell us where you stand on it.

Mr Bryant: I do not support the private member's bill.

In December of this year, on December 18, the minister—then, I understand, not the minister—voted on first reading in favour of Mr Wood's bill. Again, I know that first reading is pro forma, but we all know that the last word from you, Minister, thus far has been that you support this bill. You can't tell me politically for a second, with a straight face, that supporting a bill on first reading is always pro forma. Yesterday would be a case in point.

Minister, you can't have it both ways. In other circumstances, fine, you could say, “I'm in favour of judicial independence,” but not be critical of a private member's bill, but in this case it is necessary, because the issue is before the province and in fact falls directly within your responsibility under the Attorney General Act, under section 5, as a superintendent of the administration of justice. Will you stand up and tell us what your position is on the bill? Do you support the bill like Mr Flaherty would have, or, like Mr Harnick, would you oppose the bill? Just yes or no. Do you support the bill or don't you?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I appreciate having an opportunity to respond to what I say, as respectfully as possible, are to me rather curious comments from the member for St Paul's. In fact, the very fact that we are here discussing this issue this day again, after it had been thoroughly discussed this afternoon, to me is somewhat surprising.

I take issue with the member's statements. I take issue with the premise of his statements. As I stated only a few hours ago in this very assembly and I will say again—I

will say it as emphatically as possible—I believe in judicial independence. I will fight wholeheartedly for judicial independence.

Let's be clear: this debate isn't about judicial independence. What this debate is about is the privilege that members of this assembly, members of Parliament, have to raise issues that are important to them, to raise issues that are important to their constituents and to encourage reasonable and thoughtful debate on these issues.

Now, it's particularly curious that we're here this evening talking about this issue, because members of the other side of the House, including the member for St Paul's—on every occasion he can find he comes forward and complains at great length about the lack of respect that exists within this assembly, that exists for parliamentary traditions and that exists for members. In fact, the member rose this very day and this very morning stood up in this hall and said things that would suggest very clearly that democracy is dead—dead democracy unless we change things.

The member for St Paul's was involved in a debate and I'm going to quote what he said this morning, “Everybody loses confidence in government and our Legislature if we feel that we can't get the answers, if they're somehow hidden,” and I wholeheartedly agree. I agree completely, but I would ask the member how people watching today are supposed to retain confidence in their government, in this Legislature, in the individuals who work here each and every day representing the people of this province, if we are prevented from raising questions and concerns that are being discussed in our very ridings.

The member for St Paul's obviously thought that the matter debated this morning was one of importance or he wouldn't have been here and he wouldn't have stood and spoken to it, but who is he to judge for this House, as it seems he wishes to do, what issue should and should not be debated in this Assembly? I would say that he has no right to be the judge and jury on that debate.

The question before us this afternoon is not whether the substance of a particular bill that will follow its course through the legislative process—it's not whether it's a good or bad bill at first reading, and by the way, let there be no mistake, there were members of the Liberal Party yesterday morning who during the voice vote voted for Mr Wood's bill. There should be no doubt about that. And the answer has to be, yes, we have to respect the fact that private members of this assembly have the right to raise issues for discussion, debate and ultimate vote.

If we as parliamentarians are not here to debate the issues of the day, then I would ask the member for St Paul's, what are we doing here? Barring reasonable questions from being raised in this chamber is the very recipe for the dead democracy the member opposite spoke of this morning, and if the member for St Paul's wishes to stifle debate, then our House will truly become a very barren and desolate chamber.

Let me say in conclusion very clearly that it will be the member for St Paul's, the Liberal member opposite—

the same one who rose this morning to complain about the lack of democracy, the lack of the right of individual parliamentarians to stand on their feet and discuss issues without being confined or constrained in this way or that way—it will be the same member who will be the pallbearer for the death of democracy.

The Acting Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem that the motion that this House do adjourn is carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1809.

ERRATUM

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