



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)**

Monday 30 April 2001

Lundi 30 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

Monday 30 April 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 avril 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WALLEYE WEEKEND

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I am pleased to stand in the House today to invite the people of Ontario to a very special event that will be taking place in my riding on the weekend of May 4 to May 7. The town of greater Napanee will host the annual Walleye Weekend 2001.

The Napanee and District Rod and Gun Club sponsors this well-known fishing derby with the assistance of the local volunteer firefighters. The annual live-release walleye and pike event is based out of Conservation Park in Napanee and the event can attract upwards of 6,000 participants.

Tournament organizers will release some 300 fish, both walleye and pike, that weigh over eight pounds, although record holders from previous years are in the 12- to 14-pound range.

Every year the people of Napanee look forward to the many visitors who flock to this tournament to try their luck in the Bay of Quinte. It is one of the many reasons Napanee is recognized as the walleye capital of the world. So to the organizers and participants of this year's walleye derby, they are wished good luck and a very pleasant stay in greater Napanee which, by the way, has been judged in the Harrowsmith magazine as one of the 10 prettiest towns in Canada. So do make some time this weekend, and if you're in the Napanee area, come by for this very popular event.

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Last Tuesday evening the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, Mr Coburn, came to my riding to visit with a number of agricultural people.

This was an important meeting for, as I have mentioned in this Legislature before, and will continue to reiterate, agriculture is the second-largest economic factor in Durham region. In fact, it's the second-largest factor in the province.

A variety of key agricultural issues were brought to the table that evening: concerns with disaster relief

insurance, financial problems farmers are facing due to subsidies received by their American and European counterparts and, most important, how farmers perceive the future of agriculture in Ontario and especially in my riding of Durham.

Among those who met with Minister Coburn were Dave Frew, Rick Geisberger, Steve Grove, Trevor Nesbitt, Hubert Schillings, Ted Watson, Kevin Werry, Joe Christl, Bert Werry, and Dale Mountjoy, who, by the way, is the president of the Durham region corn producers.

Since 1995, our province has made it very clear that it is behind our farmers all the way. We're looking forward to a made-in-Ontario solution to the problems that are affecting our agricultural producers in rural communities.

It is clear the problem lies with the federal government, which has failed to pick up the challenge. One example was the initiative to grant not just \$70 million as the relief program would have dictated, but \$90 million to help the grain and oilseed producers in this province. That \$20 million speaks volumes about this government's support for agriculture in this province today.

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I thought there was a consensus in this province against junk mail arriving in our mailboxes, but you in Oakville, as well as I in St Catharines, may have been amazed to know that the Harris government has sent out yet another piece of propaganda, my guess would be at the cost of at least hundreds of thousands of dollars, perhaps as much as a million dollars, in self-serving, blatantly partisan government advertising. Mr Speaker, you would like to know that the Premier has his picture in here, smiling, with a message from the Premier.

Now, is this paid for by the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario? No, it's paid for by the grateful taxpayers of the province of Ontario. The figure is now \$234 million of wasteful spending on self-serving, clearly partisan government advertising. One need only drive down the highways of the province to see the Premier's name on a number of signs advertising himself or his ministers.

I would like to direct a question to the Premier this afternoon if I could—I'm unable to do so, I understand—about this issue. I have not been able to direct a question to the him about this since December, and I understand it'll be May 1 before I have an opportunity to direct a question to the Premier of this province. I'm not allowed

to say why, under the rules of the Legislature, but I'll tell you, by gosh, when he gets back I'm going to be gunning for him.

LINCOLN M. ALEXANDER
SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Last Thursday saw the official opening of a newly reconstructed school in my riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Lincoln M. Alexander Secondary School, in Malton, was officially opened by its namesake, the Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander.

Members of this House may think of Malton as just the airport, but it is much more. Malton is a thriving multi-ethnic and multi-racial community, home of people from every walk of life. The new high school builds on the strengths of the two older schools it replaces and on the strength of the close-knit community it serves. Congratulations go out to all those who played an important part in the reconstruction and opening of this school: principal Maurice Hudson and the wonderful teachers and staff members, the hard-working local trustees, superintendent and board employees. But perhaps most importantly, congratulations go to all of the parents and students who are the heart and soul of education. My constituents are very proud to see this newly reconstructed school open, and also proud of the great Ontarian who gave it its name.

Lincoln M. Alexander's accomplishments are too many to list in a short time, but I can tell you that he lit up the crowd at the opening. Staff, students and parents there embraced him to their hearts. The former Lieutenant Governor is well known to this House through his years of public service to Ontario.

GOLF TOURNAMENTS

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): As a member representing a large northern Ontario riding, I wish to express my outrage at the Premier's pilfering of money from the northern Ontario heritage fund for the benefit of his friends. Your Premier's a crook and he's dirty, and you're the most corrupt government Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Stop the clock. We're not going to start with language like that. I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Mr Ramsay: As revealed in the Saturday and Sunday Toronto Star—

The Speaker: Order. I've stopped the clock to give you time again, but you have to withdraw. You can't use the word "crook" in here.

Mr Ramsay: I withdraw that, Mr Speaker.

As revealed in the Saturday and Sunday Toronto Star articles by feature writer Bill Schiller, Mike Harris's friends have contrived a way of siphoning off up to \$400,000 to put on golf tournaments in northern Ontario. The Premier's hand-picked ex-general manager of the northern Ontario heritage fund, Royal Poulin, suggested

to the Premier's friend Peter Minogue, of Adams mine fame, a way of setting up a non-profit golf company owned by another set of Harris friends, the Rainos. It was Royal Poulin's son—it's an incestuous little group we have here—who helped Peter Minogue with the details of how to set up the shell company and how to apply for the grant. Like the Adams mine deal, we're seeing another example of how Harris's friends have taken control of the public purse for their own benefit.

This is doubly galling when over the past year, northern Ontario heritage fund assistance has been reduced to a trickle as they realign their criteria. Our region is severely economically depressed. We lose hundreds of people each month to the south as economic opportunities dry up. We look to our heritage fund to bring assistance to an increasingly challenging economy. It is not a private fund for the Premier and his friends. He's like a reverse Robin Hood: he steals and gives to the rich.

1340

EDUCATION ISSUES

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to communicate to the Minister of Education very briefly in a statement today, and to some extent the Minister of Labour, because we have seen or are witnessing the most demoralized and dispirited educational system and the most dispirited teachers we have ever, ever had to deal with. I'm not quite sure the government is seeing it. Maybe they know it, maybe they don't. My suspicion is they know that their assault on the educational system has been effective inasmuch as people have lost a great deal of interest and desire to do their job well. That's at the teaching front. The workload, through Bill 74, has caused the most serious problems to the profession that I have ever seen, and unless we restore some of that time back to the teachers so they can do their job and do it effectively, we've got a problem.

On the non-teaching side, with your back-to-work legislation, I have to tell you, once again you have dispirited, disillusioned a whole non-teaching profession that has been serving our schools very well. I know that you have to work at this to be able to bring back some cheer into our school system. You need these workers; everybody needs them, teaching and non-teaching alike. You, Minister of Labour, and the Minister of Education have got to do some work to bring back some healthy system in order to get the most effective teaching out of them.

MEMBER'S COMMENTS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to review the statement made by the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane. If I heard correctly, he said, implying the Premier, "He steals from the rich." I don't think that is parliamentary language and I think it should be examined, and I would expect a full and complete apology.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I will review it. If indeed that's what he says—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, the member for Durham. If he would stop, he could listen to what I am saying. You've made your point of order. Now I'm going to tell you what we're going to do about it. Do you want to hear or not?

Mr O'Toole: Yes.

The Speaker: OK. The member can withdraw it. I will review it. What happened is at the end of that statement everybody was clapping, I missed the end of it and I believe, if I'm correct, it was at the very end. I already warned him once. He can freely stand up if indeed that's what he said and correct the record. If not, I will be looking at it when the Hansard comes out, and I'll leave it up to the member whether he wants to withdraw it or not. He's going to let me look at it and I will review it.

The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mr Speaker, on a point of order—

The Speaker: Point of order. Sorry for the interruptions, the member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant.

Mr Kormos:—come the day when the Premier starts taking from the rich, I'm on side.

CANADIAN DRILLING RIG MUSEUM

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): Speaker, my riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant hosts many interesting museums. The most unique has to be the Canadian Drilling Rig Museum located at Rainham Centre. This museum has been a five-year labour of love for 25 men, many of whom have worked on rigs and in the gas industry for more than 40 years. Local resident and board president Ted Swent donated the land on which the museum sits. While most of the artifacts have been donated by locals or those who have heard about the museum, board members continually travel across Ontario searching for pieces to add to the current collection.

At the centre of the museum is an 1896 steam-powered Canadian drilling rig which was used to drill wells until 1961. In 1996, the rig was returned to the Haldimand area and has undergone a restoration worth \$30,000. Today, visitors to the museum can see the 62-foot derrick in working order.

In February, the Ontario Trillium Foundation granted the museum \$86,500 to assist with operations.

I invite all members to Haldimand to view this Canadian Drilling Rig Museum.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): In a few moments, the chief government whip will be outlining a process by which we will begin to discuss reforms to the Legislature and specifically, as I understand it, he'll be

talking about using new technology in our processes. We welcome the opportunity to discuss that.

However, if we really want to deal with meaningful reform in this Legislature and deal with the question of government accountability, we will deal with things like the Legislative Assembly Act and recognize—and I say this to the chief government whip—that historically there's always been three-party agreement on changes to the rules.

We don't want a situation like we had last year when the governing party tried to shorten question period. We're going to want to look at changes this government made to the standing orders that make it more difficult for the opposition to do its job. We want to look at changes to the standing orders that won't allow a government to use closure or time allocation three times as often as any previous government has used it. We want a situation where we'll have an opportunity to ask the Premier questions, not just on December 18. We would have liked to ask the Premier questions in January. We would have liked to ask him questions in February and March and the first three weeks in April. In fact, we would have enjoyed asking the Premier questions last Monday. We would have enjoyed the opportunity to ask them Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. Unfortunately, we didn't have the opportunity.

Real accountability is about the changes I've talked to and not about the fluff the government is addressing today.

SCENIC CITY ORDER OF GOOD CHEER

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): A great event was held this past weekend in Owen Sound. A group of dedicated individuals held their annual gourmet festival dinner, auction and entertainment cruise aboard the MS Chi-Cheemaun, otherwise known as the Big Canoe.

For the past three years, the Scenic City Order of Good Cheer has rented the Chi-Cheemaun, which is the ship that sails between Manitoulin Island and Tobermory. This event raises money for harbour projects in the community of Owen Sound and area. This year, we are funding a \$70,000 gazebo right on the shoreline of the Owen Sound bay. The Scenic City Order of Good Cheer turns these projects over to the city upon completion.

This year, as in the past two years, we had two sailings: the first on Friday night and the second on Saturday night. Each night, we welcomed 500 people on board, volunteers and patrons from communities from all over southern Ontario. As well as in the past two years, we had excellent weather with calm seas.

The evenings consist of live entertainment, gourmet dining with a full-course meal of roast duck, roast beef and whitefish, all locally grown. Everyone was entertained as they sailed around White Cloud and Griffith Islands by the Razz Matazz group and by Grey county's very own Peter Irwin, the best Elvis tribute artist in Canada. Both evenings also consist of a live and silent auction.

The Scenic City Order of Good Cheer annually participates in four events which start in the spring. These consist of the Chi-Cheemaun cruise, Harbour Heatwave, the Martel's Rock n' Roll show at the Harry Lumley Bayshore Arena and Summerfolk, which is the most popular folk festival in North America.

The Scenic City Order of Good Cheer would like to thank all the people who took part in this great event.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the committee for public petitions and complaints from the German state of Bavaria. Please join me in welcoming our special guests.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC SERVICE STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI A TRAIT
À LA FONCTION PUBLIQUE

Mr Tsubouchi moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 25, An Act to amend the Public Service Act and the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, 1993 / Projet de loi 25, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la fonction publique et la Loi de 1993 sur la négociation collective des employés de la Couronne.

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."

Interjections.

The Speaker: Notwithstanding the sheep on the one side there, as my labour minister friend calls it, "an audible from a farm animal," the ayes have it. Carried.

1350

CHARITY FUND-RAISING
ACTIVITIES ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR LES ACTIVITÉS
DE FINANCEMENT DES ORGANISMES
DE BIENFAISANCE

Mr Crozier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to amend the Safe Streets Act, 1999 and the Highway Traffic Act to recognize the fundraising activities of legitimate charities / Projet de loi 26, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la sécurité dans les rues et le Code de la route pour reconnaître les activités de financement des organismes de bienfaisance légitimes.

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

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): This is essentially to reintroduce a bill that was introduced in the last session and passed second reading. The bill amends section 3 of the Safe Streets Act, 1999, and section 177 of the Highway Traffic Act to provide that the prohibitions in those sections do not apply to fundraising activities that are conducted by registered charities and are, in addition, permitted by a municipal bylaw or by a resolution of council of the municipality. The short title of the act is Charity Fund-Raising Activities Act, 2001.

PROTECTING THE PRIVACY
OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE
PERSONNEL ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA PROTECTION DE
LA VIE PRIVÉE DU PERSONNEL
DU SYSTÈME DE JUSTICE CRIMINELLE

Mr Levac moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to protect the families of police officers and others involved in the criminal justice system / Projet de loi 27, Loi visant à protéger les familles des agents de police et d'autres personnes oeuvrant dans le système de justice criminelle.

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

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): The short name is Protecting the Privacy of Criminal Justice Personnel Act, 2001. The bill would create a board to examine issues regarding the collection, dissemination and safeguarding of personal information about personnel involved in the criminal justice system. The board would be composed of representatives chosen by the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Minister of Correctional Services, the Privacy Commissioner and the Chief Justice of Ontario and various police associations. The board would be required to make recommendations to the Legislative Assembly each year and meet no fewer than four times, along with keeping up with modern technologies to advise all ministries.

HUMAN RIGHTS CODE
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LE CODE
DES DROITS DE LA PERSONNE

Mr Ramsay moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 28, An Act to amend the Human Rights Code / Projet de loi 28, Loi modifiant le Code des droits de la personne.

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

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): The purpose of the bill is to provide that persons in Ontario have a right to equal treatment with respect to services, goods and facilities without discrimination because of

place of residence within the province. The current code does not provide for protection regarding place of residence.

OAK RIDGES MORaine
GREEN PLANNING ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT
ÉCOLOGIQUE
DE LA MORaine D'OAK RIDGES

Ms Churley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to freeze development on the Oak Ridges Moraine and to amend the Planning Act to increase and strengthen the protection of natural areas across Ontario / Projet de loi 29, Loi imposant un moratoire sur les aménagements dans la moraine d'Oak Ridges et modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire de manière à accroître et à renforcer la protection des sites naturels partout en Ontario.

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

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): This bill was introduced in the last session, drafted by me and brought forward by my colleague Shelley Martel, the member for Nickel Belt. We are reintroducing this bill. It is the same bill that died on the order paper when the House was prorogued.

It's a bill that would bring back part of the planning system instituted under the NDP. The system would require municipalities, the province and the Ontario Municipal Board to make decisions in a manner consistent with provincial policy statements, not just "have regard for," which is what the government did.

The system was developed after extensive public consultations by a three-member commission headed by John Sewell back then.

This bill specifically brings in measures to protect the Oak Ridges moraine, to freeze development until an agreement is reached by all that we can all live with. Furthermore, the bill goes further than that and also brings back components of the green planning act which the NDP brought in and which this government completely gutted.

Once again, I'm hoping for support from all members. As you know, it passed second reading last time and was actually sent to committee but was never brought forward. So we have an opportunity to do that now.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion regarding the ordering of private members' public business.

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

Hon Mrs Ecker: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made for the ballot lists for private members' public business: Ms Dombrowsky and Mr Smitherman exchange places in order of precedence, such that Ms Dombrowsky assumes ballot item number 18 and Mr Smitherman assumes ballot item number 4.

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

Hon Mrs Ecker: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker: Agreed? I heard some noes.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Basically this is just waiving the notice requirement for the ballot items next week. As you know, there is a specific requirement there, so this just waives it so those two private members may put their legislation forward next week.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(g), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 5 and 6.

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

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My colleague from Toronto-Danforth has just introduced a very important bill to try to stop sprawl on the Oak Ridges moraine and to protect it. That bill went through second reading. We already read it last time. It went through second reading. You weren't here to read it. I move, therefore, that we unanimously approve second reading of the bill and let it proceed, because even the Minister of the Environment today acknowledged that she supports protecting the moraine, and there is an urgency to do it.

The Speaker: Consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

1400

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): We are meeting the challenges of the 21st century. When we took office, we made a firm commitment to manage government resources in a more businesslike way and to be more accountable, and I can say with pride that we're meeting that commitment. Every year this government tables business plans for each ministry, reporting back on how we manage tax dollars. All business plans are available through the Internet. No other government has done as much in this regard, and we plan to do even better.

But what are we doing about the broader public sector, which consumes nearly 38% of our province's gross

domestic product? Taxpayers have the right to know if their hard-earned dollars are being spent wisely by municipalities, hospitals, colleges and universities, school boards and agencies. This drive for transparency is the cornerstone of our throne speech.

Reforms are needed to ensure that public sector institutions are accountable to the people of Ontario. That's why we plan to empower the Provincial Auditor to require that institutions funded by the Ontario taxpayers use their money wisely. That's why universities and colleges are now required to provide students with accurate information on student loan default rates, graduation rates and employer satisfaction rates for certain programs. This kind of information, available on our Web site, can help a student decide which institution to attend and which program to choose. It means increased accountability.

We now link funding to performance, ensuring that colleges and universities are accountable to students and taxpayers: 2% of college operating grants and 1% of university operating grants were tied to performance in 2000-01. In June our government's Task Force on Effective Schools will make recommendations on how best to organize schools to support continual improvement.

I am pleased to announce today that the performance and accountability measures of this government and of school boards, colleges, universities and hospitals will be gathered and posted on the government Web site. School boards will be required to report annually on how they use their funding. These results will be published.

Our government is ensuring greater accountability to taxpayers. We want these same high standards of accountability to apply to Ontario municipalities as well. The province leads the way in developing alternative ways to deliver services while easing the burden on taxpayers, and we have taken significant steps to promote local accountability as well. Ontario's municipalities are already moving in this direction by measuring performance in high-cost service areas.

Our government will continue to support municipalities in these efforts. That is why I am announcing today that the government will create greater accountability and transparency for taxpayers at the municipal level by encouraging local governments to look for new and innovative ways to deliver services.

The actions that my colleagues and I have outlined today will guarantee a better, more efficient and open government, a government that protects jobs and keeps families safe, secure and healthy, a government that strengthens Ontario.

We are meeting the challenges of the 21st century.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I rise in the House today to expand on the theme of accountability as it applies to Ontario's health system.

As you heard in the speech from the throne on April 19, accountability is one of three priorities on which our

government will focus to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Hand in hand with growth and fiscal responsibility, accountability is an essential requirement, and it's required not just of Ontario's government but of all governments and indeed all institutions funded by taxpayers. We must never lose sight of the fact that government is the servant of the people, not its master. Citizens are more than just "customers" or "clients." The entire public sector belongs to them.

And accountability means setting expectations against which we can all be measured. That will be manifested in transparency and openness with the public. Citizens are entitled to transparency in the operation of public institutions, including openness about how they spend, and reporting of their performance and results.

Nowhere is this more important than in the province's health system.

No member of this House would disagree when I say that a strong health system is vital to all Ontarians, and to ensure that our health system is as effective, efficient and responsive as it can be requires clear accountability.

Health care spending has increased at a dramatic pace: 27% in five years, 19% in the past two years alone. However, double-digit increases in health spending are no longer sustainable. At the current rate of increase, within five years health spending would consume 60% of the Ontario government's operating budget, up from 44 cents on every dollar today and 38% since our government was first elected.

Spending pressures of such magnitude raise serious questions about the long-term sustainability of Ontario's health system, questions about the very real possibility that demand might outstrip resources. These pressures challenge us to think differently about how about how we organize health care, about how we deliver these vital services and to which services we should allocate health dollars.

This government is willing to look for new ideas and to think outside the box to help address the question of sustainability. We know that our health care system is not sustainable as it is. We want an open and honest dialogue about the future of our health care.

But let's be clear about what this debate is all about. A discussion about ensuring that we have a health care system for now and in the future means talking about our health care services and how they can be delivered differently. We should not be afraid to ask ourselves how we can provide services better. In fact, we should demand it of ourselves, and that is what this government is doing.

We invite all of the opposition to join us in this debate and we look forward to exploring all of the options in the interest of preserving our publicly funded universal health system.

As we move through this debate, we must ensure that we entrench accountability for health dollars in every facet of our health system. That's why we are moving forward with additional initiatives to ensure accountability within our health system right now.

We believe that when the time comes for a person to have access to the health system, it should be there for that person. We believe that your right to a top-quality health care system deserves to be guaranteed; you should know exactly what you're entitled to when you show up at a hospital or call on community-based care.

A patients' charter to let patients know what they have a right to expect from their health care system is necessary. This government will move quickly to deliver on this patients' charter.

We also believe that patients deserve access to complete information on their health. We have heard from Ontarians that they want more information on the services they receive from the health care system and that they want to make sure they are receiving the services that are being billed to the health care system on their behalf.

Our government has taken steps to make sure that health care fraud is eliminated in our health care system. For instance, Ontario is the only province to contract police officers dedicated specifically to health fraud investigations. As well, we've established a dedicated fraud programs units with a proactive approach to preventing fraud.

I am pleased to announce that our government is moving ahead with yet another initiative to wipe out fraud from our system. Itemized statements will let patients confirm that services billed to OHIP are actually and were actually delivered. We will work with our health care professionals to implement this initiative, which will give patients information on the actual cost of the services they receive.

Running deficits is neither sustainable nor acceptable. The government, municipalities and school boards are now prohibited from running deficits.

Expanding on that, the budget will introduce a measure that would require the entire public sector, including hospitals, to act in a fiscally responsible manner. While economies of scale and common accountability standards promote excellence and efficiency, so do innovation, competition, flexibility and choice. All must coexist in the system.

1410

We have started along the path with hospital report cards. In partnership with the research community and the Ontario Hospital Association, we are building the most advanced public reporting on hospital performance in the dominion of Canada. We want to know if they are operating efficiently, how their service levels stack up against other hospitals and where there is room for improvement. We also want hospitals to benefit from the successes they have achieved and to be able to share their achievements with the rest of the hospital sector.

However, the public deserves to know this information as well, not just government. That's why the government will publish the results of hospital report cards. Teams of experts from the field and top-performing hospitals will work with the lowest-scoring hospitals to help improve efficiency and service. Ultimately, overall funding will then be linked to how well hospitals perform.

At the end of the day, we all benefit, as government, as providers, as patients and as taxpayers, when we know that health dollars are being spent wisely and appropriately. The public holds us accountable for ensuring the provision of health services, now and in the future. And with the announcements I have made today we are continuing to increase accountability to the health care system. As a government, our challenge is to ensure accountability to Ontario's taxpayers and to demonstrate that accountability by performance shows exactly how, and how well, their tax dollars are being spent.

We must all recognize, however, that health care resources will never meet unmitigated demand. Yet through careful and strategic planning for the future direction of Ontario's health system, we can bring stability to the system in the face of competing pressures. Intrinsic to this is a system for which all of us are accountable for money spent, for services offered, for services used and for outcomes.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Statements by ministries? Chief government whip.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I am pleased to join my colleagues to further outline our government's agenda—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. If the member could take his seat. Stop the clock. Point of order, member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Speaker: While I regret perhaps being responsible for this member being denied the chance to announce his leadership campaign for the federal Alliance Party, it's my submission, sir, that as a mere Minister without Portfolio and with no duties attached to that ministry without portfolio, he is not entitled to participate in ministerial statements.

The Speaker: Yes, we will look. I may ask the member to stand up again. If the Deputy Premier could let the House know if this minister does have a specific responsibility. He might not have heard that, so I'd ask the House leader for the third party to please—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I would ask the member for Niagara Centre to do his point of order and the Deputy Premier will be asked to respond to it.

Mr Kormos: With respect, Speaker, it's my submission that a minister without portfolio who has no specific duties attached to that ministry is not entitled to participate in ministerial statements in this House.

The Speaker: I'm going to ask the Deputy Premier if he could outline what responsibility the minister with special responsibility has, and then if you could reply to us what special responsibility he has.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Far be it from me to tell the official opposition, but the longer you get to do it, the more time they get to run around and figure out the answer. So you may want to make it quick.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Mr Speaker, I understand the point of order the member stands on. I would request that by unanimous consent the whip be allowed to stand and make comments with respect to this issue.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid he does not have unanimous consent.

The chief government whip.

Hon Mr Klees: On a point of order, Speaker: I would ask that the Chair of Management Board make this statement on my behalf.

The Speaker: He can make any statement if it relates to his portfolio, as long as he has the statement, which he probably does.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Speaker: Again, with respect, and understanding what's attempting to be achieved, House leaders and their caucuses were advised of three ministerial statements today: one by the Chair of Management Board, one by the Ministry of Health, one by a Mr Klees.

The Chair of Management Board has made his ministerial statement, the Minister of Health has made his ministerial statement. We've received copies of this, of course. I trust that the Chair of Management Board would have made the ministerial statement attributed to him in terms of the copies delivered to opposition parties. It's my submission that this ministerial statement can't be cured by merely passing it off. It was identified as Mr Klees's statement; Mr Klees isn't entitled to make a ministerial statement and the copy is identified thus.

The Speaker: I'm afraid he can and it's going to be the Deputy Premier. They can do that, and I assume that everybody has their copies. Now, the Deputy Premier for the statement.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I am pleased to join my colleagues to further outline our government's agenda of growth, accountability and fiscal responsibility.

Our government has considered it a priority to consult and to listen to the people of Ontario, and equally important, we have consistently delivered on our promises. Increasingly, we are developing new ways of consulting with and engaging the public in dialogue on issues of importance to them and to better understand their views on proposed government policy.

That is why I am pleased to inform the House today that consistent with the belief that government exists to serve people, and not the other way around, the government will expand its use of the Internet to help bring citizens closer to their government. The goal is to ensure citizens' access to a wide range of tools and information that will enable them to participate more fully in the democratic process.

As the first step toward e-democracy, the government will consult and review opportunities for the use of technology to build accountability and transparency in government. The possibility of increasing citizen participation in the democratic process is available to us. New changes to technology ensure this. Improved audio

and video capabilities offer effective tools to help guide citizens on-line.

Increasing use of voice recognition software has the potential to allow the disabled access to the democratic process in a significant way. The privacy and security of information exchanged between the government and the public is, of course, paramount.

We will consult with providers to determine the best means of ensuring the protection of our citizens as we investigate new ways of incorporating technology into service delivery, policy development and the legislative process.

Constantly evolving software and hardware capabilities are opening new channels through which e-democracy may be explored. On-line remote voting for elected officials, Internet consultation and feedback opportunities allowing for significant voter input and direct access to legislation and related statutes are just a few of the possibilities that can be explored.

It is important to note that these electronic capabilities are becoming increasingly affordable for all Ontario families, and access through public libraries, school boards and government locations help ensure that digital democracy can be available to all.

Utilizing these new and innovative methods of communication, we as elected representatives can better understand the wishes of our employers, who are the people of Ontario. As Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor read in the throne speech, the 21st century demands that Ontario's democratic process be modern and responsive.

We will propose that the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly explore reforms that will expand the use of technology as a tool of the democratic process. We are committed to making Ontario a world leader in this area. The digital age has arrived. We intend to embrace the new era and the possibilities it offers to make government more accessible, accountable and efficient.

1420

Governments that fail to improve service and accountability are not being faithful to the mandates they have received from the voters and will fail their expectations. This government has made a practice of keeping its word, of taking on the challenge of fixing government, and it is in that context that I am pleased to inform the citizens of Ontario and the House that the government will review how its policies and procedures could be changed to save taxpayers money and to improve service.

We have transformed from a government that offers public services through long lineups and counters to one where the public can reserve a campsite, order a birth certificate or register their business online. We continue to search for other ways to improve service delivery.

Numerous inquiries and comments from constituents and stakeholders, frustrated with government policy or service delivery, stand as proof that there is yet more to be done in this area.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I cannot believe that any Minister of Health under a Mike

Harris government would have the gall to stand up in this place and talk about accountability in health care.

This is exactly the same government that has just allowed a private clinic to be set up with no public tender, in fact, without any public discussion because they were afraid there might be a public backlash to their intention to go ahead and set up a for-profit clinic to provide publicly funded care. The Minister of Health last week responded to a question about accountability on this particular contract by saying, "Well, after all, it was a private sector contract and we have no control over it at all," even though it is being fully funded with public taxpayer funds.

This government is so bent on pursuing its ideological agenda to let its private sector, for-profit friends make a profit from health care, they don't even want to ask the questions of whether there is any accountability in the private sector. They are pursuing this agenda despite all of the evidence, every bit of evidence that has been produced from other jurisdictions when it comes to private sector delivery of health care, or from the private sector initiatives this government has undertaken in other areas where the Provincial Auditor himself has said these initiatives aren't saving money; in fact, they are costing money. The government doesn't want to concern itself with accountability when it comes to its privatization agenda, nor does it want to talk about its own accountability.

Today's focus for talking about broader public sector accountability is really on the hospital sector. This government is very good about wanting to hold others accountable in order to avoid any accountability or any sense of responsibility that it might take unto itself. So today it says, "We're going to release the hospital report card." This is one thing I will agree with: this will be good news. Let the public see how public hospitals in Ontario are in fact performing despite all the restrictions and restraints that have been placed on them by the Mike Harris government. Let the public know what those report cards are starting to show. They're starting to show that because of this government's cutbacks, people who have been discharged into the community quicker and sicker because of hospital cutbacks are coming back into those same hospitals sicker than before and costing the hospital system more money than if there had been a decent amount of money provided to those hospitals to provide services in the first place.

Where was the accountability of this government when one of its first actions was to take \$800 million out of hospital budgets without looking at any of the consequences for patients, without concerning itself at all about the level of care that might be needed?

This government wants to talk now about tying hospital funding to performance. I ask, what does that mean when you step past the rhetoric of this Mike Harris government? Does this mean that those hospitals that send patients out sooner, quicker, are going to get more money because they send patients out quicker? Does it mean that the hospital that shuts down more of its

hospital beds, puts more of its emergency rooms on critical care bypass so that people can't get care in the nearest hospital, is going to look efficient, is going to get more money?

The government's not accountable in this matter either. When we tried to ask about what's happening with emergency rooms being full, being overcrowded, the government's response was to say, "We simply won't release those figures any more." So much for public accountability when it comes to the performance of hospitals.

The government wants to look at efficient funding for hospitals, equitable funding for hospitals. It might go back to the funding formula that it has been sitting on for at least two years, and maybe more now, where hospitals have said, "If we're going to have this new funding formula in place, fair and equitable funding for hospitals, you've got to provide us with some new method of funding." He's had that formula for at least two years and has not been prepared to put the resources into it. In fact, what has the government done with hospital funding? They've provided one-year funding. Often by October the hospitals find out what they're going to get to be able to run their services the next year, and then this minister has the gall to come into this House and talk about the importance of strategic planning. I ask him, how can hospitals do any strategic planning unless there is some long-term funding, the kind of long-term funding that we've been calling for and the hospitals have been calling for for years?

I could go on, if I had more time, to ask where the accountability is in a government that's going to look at hospital funding but hasn't been prepared to put the resources into home care funding. Their idea of accountability was to ration services for people who need care at home, not based on need but just based on the government's arbitrary decision about how much care they were prepared to provide, never relating it back to the fact that they just cut money from hospitals and hospitals were putting more patients into the community.

I could go on and talk about simply making it possible for private, for-profit providers to make bigger profits providing those long-term-care beds we've never seen, but maybe I can best conclude by saying I believe this is a government that has been far more concerned about public relations than it has about its own accountability. The public accountability starts with government, and we have none here at all.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Another day where the government repeats speeches about accountability. What we'd like to know and I think the people across Ontario would like to know is this. We have nurses who are underpaid and who are working under greater stress than ever. We have hospitals that are forced into deficit. We have schools that are so underfunded that they cannot provide the special education programs that children need, or their extracurricular activities or the necessary support staff. But at the same time we find out that this government is funnelling

hundreds of thousands of dollars to the Premier's golfing buddies, and guess what for: to run golfing tournaments that nobody wants to go to. That's what we want accountability on. How is it that this government has money to funnel to the Premier's golfing buddies when the things that ordinary people need are being ignored? That's where we want some accountability.

The Chair of Management Board talks about how they're going to give the auditor more powers. The auditor already pointed out in his last report that this is a government, in its dealings with our hydroelectricity system, that is going to sell off the money-making assets at bargain basement prices to its corporate friends while sticking the taxpayers of Ontario with the debt. How about some accountability there? Then, as we learn every day, the taxpayers of the province are going to get hit again on this deal because they're going to pay higher prices for electricity. That's where we'd like some accountability.

We understand that you can make a lot of money buying up the assets of Ontario Power Generation cheap and then selling the power into the United States at American prices that are much higher than our own. But where's the accountability for the citizens and the taxpayers and the hydro ratepayers of Ontario?

The Minister of Health boasts about this, he boasts about accountability, but we know that this government has set up a private, for-profit cancer treatment clinic at Sunnybrook hospital, and they won't give us a copy of the contract; they won't give any information about how there's not enough money for cancer treatment elsewhere in the province but they've got money for a private, for-profit clinic. That's the kind of accountability we want, not this shallow reannouncement that we hear every day.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): The Minister of Health's continued rhetoric of accountability is impossible to believe, given that this same minister has continuously refused the New Democratic Party's demands to produce the copy of the contract between Cancer Care Ontario and the private, for-profit clinic running the after-hours services at Sunnybrook. He also refuses to produce the copy of the funding agreement between the Ministry of Health and Cancer Care Ontario with respect to that, and yet he says that citizens are entitled to transparency in the operation of public institutions, including openness on how they spend. Where is the transparency? Where is the openness?

1430

He talks about bringing in measures that will prohibit hospitals from running deficits. I remind the minister that in the late 1980s, the policy implemented in the Ontario government was to prohibit deficits in hospitals. That was continued throughout the entire New Democratic government period of 1990 to 1995. In 1996, when you indiscriminately slashed hospital budgets, you changed the policy to allow them to run deficits. Now you're saying they are not being accountable.

Minister, how are you going to enforce that? You refer to school boards where you've passed a law that makes it

an offence for school board trustees, paid trustees, to plan for a deficit budget. Are you going to criminalize the volunteers on hospital boards? They are asking that question out there. Are you going to bring in director liability? We want to know what your mechanisms are.

Lastly on accountability, you talk about an honest dialogue in terms of health care reform, and you frame it in terms of the need to debate who will deliver the services. What about debating a strategy of government being committed to determinants of health, of what it means when there's a growing poverty gap, when we have more homelessness, when we have bad air and bad water, when we have inequalities in education? How does that promote a sustainable health care system? What about a debate on shifting from illness treatment to illness prevention? What about home care based on need, not based on arbitrary limits of rationing? Primary care that doesn't have medical doctors as the gatekeepers? Those are the things we want to debate. Our question is, will your debate be honest enough for those things to be on the table?

INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On Tuesday, April 24, 2001, the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane rose on a question of privilege to indicate that his rights and privileges as a member had been abused by the actions of the assembly's former Integrity Commissioner and that there had been interference with an officer of the assembly within the meaning of paragraph 4 of section 46(1) of the Legislative Assembly Act.

In particular, the member indicated that pursuant to the Members' Integrity Act, he had lodged complaints with the former commissioner about an alleged conflict of interest involving the Premier, that the former commissioner had investigated and dismissed the complaints, that the former commissioner's responses to his complaints were "unusual and to some extent curious," and that a press report had subsequently quoted the former commissioner as saying that he had relied on a friend who was not a member of staff to assist in writing the report clearing the Premier of any wrongdoing.

The member was of the view that there had been an interference while the former commissioner was considering his complaint, that the Speaker should investigate and rule on what transpired, and that he had a right to have the Integrity Commissioner—not an outsider—decide his complaint.

The member for Niagara Centre (Mr Kormos), the government House leader (Mrs Ecker), and the member for Windsor-St Clair (Mr Duncan) also made submissions.

I have had the opportunity to review our precedents and the usual parliamentary authorities on this matter. Let me preface my substantive response to the issue by saying that some members would have the Speaker "investigate" the allegations. However, the role of the Speaker is not so much to investigate as it is to rule on

questions of privilege raised by the members drawing salient facts to the attention of the House.

Turning to the substance of the concerns raised by the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, let me say two things.

First, an allegation that there may have been interference with an officer of the assembly may well raise privilege issues in a proper case. Erskine May states, at page 125 of the 22nd edition, that the House will treat as contempt "acts directly tending to obstruct their officers in the execution of their duty...." But for there to be a prima facie case, the facts drawn to the attention of the Speaker must tend to support the claims being made. Some serious allegations have been made in the case at hand, but it does not appear from various members' submissions that the former commissioner was interfered with in his duties; on the contrary, it appears that he actually solicited the assistance.

This case should be contrasted with the case that was the subject of my May 18, 2000, ruling, where a prima facie case of contempt was made out in circumstances where the Information and Privacy Commissioner, in a special report to the House, indicated that a government ministry had frustrated an investigation into the release of personal financial information by the Province of Ontario Savings Office.

My second point is that addressing the issues raised in the question of privilege entails interpreting the Members' Integrity Act. However, members will know from my previous rulings on this subject that Speakers should generally avoid interpreting or giving legal advice on legislation.

For these reasons, I find a prima facie case of privilege has not been made out.

In closing, I'd like to thank the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane for raising this matter.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PRIVATE HOSPITALS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): The question is for the Minister of Health. The Premier appeared on TV this weekend and dropped a bombshell on Ontario's working families. He said he is considering allowing private hospitals to make a debut on the Ontario scene. We searched through your campaign platform and found no mention whatsoever of private hospitals going into Ontario. On the contrary, here's a promise you and the Premier made at the time of the last campaign: "Our government is fully committed to the five principles of the Canada Health Act, including universal access to a publicly funded health care system."

My question to you today, Minister, on behalf of Ontario's working families, is, when did you decide to break this promise? Was it prior to the election actually

occurring, or is this something you and the Premier recently decided?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): There has been no breaking of any promise, certainly not with respect to health care. I hope the honourable member agrees with us on this side of the House that everyone in this province, regardless of where you live or how much you make, should get the health care, the medically necessary services, you need, when you need it and from the publicly funded, universally accessible health care system.

How you get those services within that context—I believe we have a responsibility as a duly elected government to look at all the possibilities, not with an eye to any particular ideology or any particular frame of mind, but simply from the frame of mind that we have to have pragmatically the best delivery of the best services. In many cases, that is the public sector. In many cases, that's the private sector even now. We've had private sector delivery of publicly funded health care since we've had publicly funded health care.

Mr McGuinty: I want to draw your attention to a release put out by your predecessor on March 3, 1999, and it reads as follows:

"Attention news/health editors:

"Harris government protects public health care—private hospitals to close.

"Health Minister Elizabeth Witmer announced today that the government is closing two private hospitals ... as part of its ongoing efforts to protect Ontario's public health care system....

"Protecting access to our public health care system has been an important ongoing priority for our government," said Witmer. "By taking this action, we are ensuring that patients have equal access to high-quality publicly funded health services."

Minister, how can you tell us before the election that private hospitals threatened health care for our working families, but that today suddenly they can actually be working families' best friend?

Hon Mr Clement: The real issue before this House and before the Ontario public is, how do we ensure that we have a sustainable, publicly delivered health care system, not only for future generations but indeed for present generations? The honourable member must be aware by now that in the last two years alone public funding for health care has increased by 19%, 27% over the last five years of the Mike Harris government. This is the challenge. Right now, the tools in place will almost ensure that the current system will not be sustainable in the long run. It will not be there for present and future generations. We have an obligation within the context of public funds, within the context of universal accessibility, within the context of no member of our society being denied access to medically necessary services on the basis of money—within all that context—to make sure we deliver it in the best way, the cheapest way, the most effective way, the safest way.

That is our goal. If he is not part of that goal, that is his business. But that is the goal of the Ontario public as well.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, that's a lovely and elaborate dance, but I wonder if you and the Premier might do-si-do back to the question.

I specifically brought to your attention the fact that just a little over two years ago you made a specific commitment to shut down private hospitals because you said they were not in the interests of universally accessible and publicly funded health care for our families. Why is it that your predecessor said private hospitals were a bad thing, but now you and the Premier are telling us that they are in fact a good thing? Can you please now tell us exactly why you came to this flip-flop so that Ontarians better understand where you're going on this matter?

1440

Hon Mr Clement: I am disappointed that the honourable member, as the leader of his own party, is seeking to play politics with a very serious issue. I guess it's his right to do that. Every leader throughout this country who is worth the term knows the truth, that the current system is unsustainable, that the status quo is not acceptable. The leaders in Nova Scotia know that; the leaders in Saskatchewan have said that; Health Minister Allan Rock has said that; the former Premier of Saskatchewan, Roy Romanow, has said that. He can bury his head in the sand, he has that right, but that is not leadership.

As to the position of former governments on this issue, I need only quote a former Liberal Ontario Health Minister, Elinor Caplan, who said, "We are seeing them (the NDP) force the private sector out of the delivery of health services, all in the guise of health reform, and ... what is important in my experience as a former Minister of Health is not so much who delivers the service but the result" of the service. We on this side agree.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My question is for the same minister. Minister, you and the Premier have become so fond of private hospitals, I can only assume you know something about them that Ontarians don't. So I will ask the minister now to share with us any evidence, any studies showing that private hospitals not only deliver a profit to their owners and operators but also deliver equal or maybe even better-quality care to Ontario's working families. Would the minister kindly share those studies and those data with us here and now?

Hon Mr Clement: I'd be happy to share with this House exactly what the Premier did say. Perhaps that would enlighten the discussion for this afternoon.

If we're going to have a universal system, if we're going to guarantee health care to every citizen of Ontario, we should not be afraid to say, "Can the private sector run this hospital better? Can they provide the service better? If they can, why should we fear that?" We should welcome that.

I am fully in agreement with my Premier. There are cases in the health care system where the public sector delivers the health care better, cheaper, safer, more qualitatively than the private sector. There are instances in our health care system now, as we speak, where the private sector delivers that health care for publicly funded, universally accessible use better, cheaper, safer, faster.

We should not be afraid to ask the questions. If you are afraid to ask the questions, I say to the honourable member, you are not part of the solution; you are part of the problem.

Mr McGuinty: It's not the questions; it's the answers that Ontarians are afraid of. We're looking to you for answers. I've put a number of questions to you and you've refused to come up with the answers. If you have no studies, Minister, is it not being irresponsible to float this idea of private hospitals?

There is quite a bit of evidence when it comes to privately owned and operated hospitals, and you should be aware of that. Take a look at the New England Journal of Medicine. It reported in 1999 that care for seniors in the US cost 16% more in private hospitals than in public hospitals. In Australia, studies now show that privately owned hospitals resulted in longer waiting lists and increased costs. In Alberta, we now know that private cataract operations mean longer waits and greater costs.

In the absence of your evidence and in the face of mine, we've got to ask ourselves here, is this really about improving health care for our working families or is it really about ideology and helping out your friends in the private sector?

Hon Mr Clement: I encourage the honourable member to talk to some real doctors rather than spin doctors 24 hours a day. That would be the start of a solution on this issue.

There is no question that this is part of a comprehensive debate that has to occur in our province and in our country. Indeed, we took our lead from the honourable Minister of Health, Allan Rock, who has said that the current system is not sustainable. We take our lead from the new head of the Romanow commission, the Honourable Roy Romanow, Premier of Saskatchewan, who says the current system is not sustainable. So the Premier did say we have to turn over every rock, we have to look at every possible solution in a very pragmatic way, not being blinded by ideology, not being blinded by the status quo and the protection of those special interests, but to do the right thing on behalf of the people of Ontario, which is to guarantee better, safer, more accessible health care and health care that is there when they need it. That is our mission on this side of the House.

Mr McGuinty: It just seemed to me, Minister, if you liked this notion of private hospitals, that you have some evidence that would support that they in fact deliver at least the same quality, and ideally even better, care and that they also, at the same time, cost less.

Let's be straight with working families about what you are talking about here. You want to take the same amount

of money that you would give to public hospitals and give it to a private hospital without any reduction in the quality of care, but in the case of the private hospital they're going to have to generate a profit, they will be subject to property taxes and they can't issue charitable receipts, so that's going to make it very difficult when it comes to fundraising. I don't know of many volunteers who sign up to work for a business. You don't get many volunteers over at Wal-Mart these days.

Given all that and given the fact that you could produce no evidence, no studies, today that would show that private hospitals will improve health care, is it not irresponsible for you to advance the cause of private hospitals when you have no evidence and no factual basis for putting this forward?

Hon Mr Clement: With the greatest of respect to the honourable member, I wouldn't accuse this side of the House of irresponsibility. Another definition of irresponsibility would be to deny that there is a problem in the health care system, to deny that there is a sustainability gap and to stick your head in the sand and say, "Everything should march merrily along in the same old way," ensuring that we have future problems for future generations. We are not prepared to do that on this side of the House.

The honourable member knows we have nursing homes run by the private sector now, we have laboratories run by the private sector, doctors in their private practice are part of the private sector and home care is part of the private sector. We have private sector health care delivery of publicly funded, universally accessible programs even as we speak.

What is wrong with asking: can we do it better, can we deliver better services for the people of Ontario, safer, quicker, when they need it? On this side of the House we are not afraid to ask these questions. On that side of the House they bury their heads in the sand.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. We know that homeowners across the province are being hit with higher property taxes and we know that municipalities are desperate for property tax revenue because of the costs that you've downloaded on them.

But at the same time that homeowners are paying higher property taxes, we are told that your government is being lobbied to give big property tax breaks to private golf courses in the greater Toronto area, who also happen to be big financial contributors to the Conservative Party.

I think this is absurd, but I've already seen your government's largesse for the Premier's golfing buddies. What I want you to confirm today, Deputy Premier, is that your government will not change the property tax assessment system in any way to benefit private golf course owners at the expense of homeowners.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the member opposite: as he may be aware,

my predecessor as Minister of Finance, the Honourable Ernie Eves, appointed the member for Elgin-Middlesex, Mr Beaubien, to look into the Ontario Property Assessment Corp and to report on that. That report has been prepared by the honourable member and will be released today, I believe.

That's an important report in terms of the functioning of that municipally run property assessment corporation. As you know, that is controlled by the municipalities. Their councillors comprise the board, with the exception of, I think, two appointees by the province.

They are an important board in Ontario. There is a reasonable prospect for some reform in that area and in that regard I invite you to read Mr Beaubien's report.

Mr Hampton: What we've just heard, though the Deputy Premier tried to talk around it, is that this government is indeed in the middle of a strategy to give private golf course owners a tax break when the homeowners of the province are taking it in the neck.

Deputy Premier, just to confirm, this document I have is from a very well connected Conservative lobbyist. It spells out the strategy being used to lobby the Premier's office, your office and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation to obtain property tax decreases for millionaire golf club owners like Club Link and Kaneff.

1450

The document also details Mr Beaubien's report and how that's going to figure into it. This review of the Ontario property assessment system is going to be timely so that you can give these tax breaks.

Minister, don't you see something wrong with this? Don't you see something wrong with giving the Premier's golfing buddies even more tax largesse while you go after the homeowners across this province to pay higher property taxes?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The member opposite of course is making an assumption with respect to the contents of the budget to be delivered here on May 9. He'll have to wait until May 9 to see what changes are in the budget for the current fiscal year 2001-02.

I can say that I've heard suggestions from in excess of 300 different people now about what they'd like to see in the budget, what they'd like to see done on the spending side and on the revenue side and in tax credits in Ontario. I'll be pleased to deliver the budget with the appropriate, responsible choices having been made on May 9.

Mr Hampton: I'm going to send you a copy of this document. You should read it. It's from Hugh MacKenzie, who is well connected to your government as a lobbyist. But what's even more disturbing about this is that in talking about the lobbying campaign, it suggests that your predecessor the former finance minister, former Deputy Premier Ernie Eves, should be the person to make sure this happens.

Based on this document from your Conservative lobbyist friends, will you join me in asking for an investigation by the Integrity Commissioner? Under your own rules, Mr Eves is forbidden from taking part in any kind of lobbying, any kind of decision like this for at

least a year. Please assure us that this isn't happening, but also assure us that you'll support an investigation by the Integrity Commissioner to make sure that Mr Eves isn't involved in this in contravention of the law.

Hon Mr Flaherty: What has been handed to me is a letter to someone at a consulting firm dated March 1, 2001. It doesn't seem to be addressed to anyone in government and certainly not to me.

The budget formulation process is, of course, confidential. We preserve the confidence of those who come forward to us with various ideas and suggestions. It's the government's responsibility, through the Minister of Finance, to consider what all parties have to say to us about various proposals they may have about tax reform in the province of Ontario. I would think the leader of the third party would want the Minister of Finance of the day to listen to all people from across the province with respect to whatever their suggestions are—listen, take them into consideration, make responsible choices and deliver the budget in this place on May 9.

PRIVATE CANCER CLINIC

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is for the Minister of Health. Now that you and the Premier have launched an all-out drive for private delivery of health care, it's more important than ever that we get the facts on your new private cancer clinic out in the open.

Minister, it's our understanding, and I'd like you to confirm or deny, that the private, for-profit company is reimbursed \$3,000 for every course of radiation treatment administered. This is the same amount that is paid for a course of radiation treatment offered in the publicly run system. However, the private, for-profit company is neither staffed nor equipped to deal with a full range of complex radiation treatments. Those complex cases will be referred back to Cancer Care Ontario. So their average costs therefore are significantly lower, thus they can make a profit, but the taxpayer is paying more for less. How, then, do you justify not only the use of the private, for-profit company but one that costs considerably more than the public system, considering the level of care that will actually be available to patients?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd be happy to put some of the facts on the table as the honourable member has indicated. Cancer Care Ontario has contracted with Canadian Radiation Oncology Services for 1,000 cases at \$3,500 per case, plus \$500,000 for overhead costs. Right now, the ministry pays CCO \$3,000 for each case treated at normal hours, but here's the difference. If we fly those people to Buffalo, if we transport them to Detroit, it costs the taxpayer \$17,000 per case to send a patient to the United States of America. So I would encourage the honourable member to compare apples to apples: \$17 million was the total cost to shuffle off to Buffalo; \$4 million is the total cost of this contract—better cancer care services; better for the taxpayer of Ontario as well.

Ms Lankin: Minister, we've absolutely agreed that it is better to treat patients here. But what we've told you is that it is cheaper and more effective and that there is a broader range of quality care in the publicly funded, publicly administered Cancer Care Ontario system. Your comments just proved that. You said earlier on this afternoon that sometimes the public sector delivers better, cheaper care. Well, this is an example, and it's a real-life example, of how your government is now paying more for less and profit is being made at the expense of range and complexity of care for the patient. On top of that, you've also agreed to a high-volume bonus of an extra 15% if the private company meets and exceeds your patient quotas.

Let me summarize that for you. You're paying more for less; you're not only rewarding but you're building in incentive for revolving-door medicine. Is this the Tory vision of cost-effective, quality health care?

Hon Mr Clement: In fact, we're paying less than the alternative; we're giving it closer to home right here in Ontario, rather than in a foreign jurisdiction, so they can be closer to their families and the support services they need in their community. I'll stand in the House every day to defend that.

Perhaps, to settle the issue, the patients themselves should have the last word. We received, on a no-names basis, some letters that were unsolicited to Cancer Care Ontario and to the government after these patients received care. They said things like, "We're so impressed with the excellent quality care and services which you and your staff provided that we felt compelled to share our experience with others." Another says, "We offer our sincere congratulations and thanks to the entire staff. In particular, we congratulate Dr McGowan for coordinating and running the clinic, which is providing timely treatment for many cancer patients." I couldn't have said it better myself.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. Premier Harris has been using some rather extreme language about health spending. He's almost scaremongering, in our opinion, in an attempt to force a two-tier health plan.

Most jurisdictions use health spending as a per cent of gross domestic product to measure health spending. In Ontario, when Premier Harris became Premier, health spending as a per cent of gross domestic product was 5.7%. Today it is down to 5.3%. That is the measurement that most jurisdictions use to measure a government's commitment to health care.

My question is this: can you tell us why Premier Harris would be saying we are heading toward bankruptcy when health spending as a per cent of gross domestic product is lower today than it was 10 years ago, substantially lower than when you became the government?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Of course, is that because of the tax reduc-

tions, reduction in red tape, downsizing of government? With the finding of efficiencies, we've managed to grow the gross domestic product of the province dramatically in the past six years. That's what makes the difference in terms of the size of the gross domestic product in Ontario. Base operating spending will be \$22.5 billion in 2000-01. Per capita spending on health in 1994-95 was \$1,625. In the third quarter of the fiscal year 2000-01, per capita spending on health was \$1,928.

Mr Phillips: The fact is that this government's commitment to health care has declined as a per cent of gross domestic product. The Premier said that health spending will go up 5% a year. The government's health spending has gone up 4% a year. On average since you became the government, spending has gone up 4%.

The reason for this is to say that Premier Harris is trying to frighten Ontario into saying, "We've got to move to two-tiered health." I would say to the people of Ontario, we now spend less per capita in Ontario than the rest of the provinces spend on health care—less. We spend dramatically less on health care as a percentage of our gross domestic product than we did five years ago or 10 years ago. Health spending has gone up 4% a year when Premier Harris said the cost went up 5%.

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I repeat my question: where is this bankruptcy coming from if we now are spending less on health care as a percentage of our gross domestic product than we did when you became the government? Where is this bankruptcy coming from?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): We are currently spending in the province of Ontario \$2.5 million per hour, \$42,800 per minute and \$1,928 for every man, woman and child in the province.

The Ontario Hospital Association, the Fyke commission in Saskatchewan, the government of Nova Scotia, almost every government in this country has recognized that we have a spending crisis in health care and that it would be irresponsible not to address that spending crisis to ensure that we have sustainable long-term health care.

There's a particular politician whom I quote here now, who said, "I am convinced there is enough money in the health care system. I don't think we are spending it as effectively as we can." His name is Dalton McGuinty, the Kitchener-Waterloo leadership debate, September 22, 1996.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet. The government of Ontario is responsible for a number of services which are delivered by the civil service. What steps are we taking to ensure that the civil service continues to operate top-notch services for the people of Ontario and to ensure that these services will meet their changing needs?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): We believe in government that

people are the most valuable resource that we have in delivering efficient, effective and reliable services to the people of this province.

The Ontario public service is structured primarily by the Public Service Act and it sets out how government will shape its human resource policies and practices. The Public Service Act is now more than 120 years old and parts of it no longer really suit the demands of today's business practices.

Today I introduced legislation which, if passed, will help make the public service better able to deliver the services Ontarians need and deserve. The legislation, which will provide for more efficiency and flexibility, will also introduce choice and democracy to the way in which the civilian members of the Ontario Provincial Police are represented.

Mr Dunlop: I've received a number of phone calls and letters from people in my riding who are concerned that civilian members of the Ontario Provincial Police who work closely with uniformed officers are not represented by the OPP association but through the Ontario Public Service Employees' Union. Some of those I have talked to have led me to believe that the OPP association can better represent their interests than OPSEU.

As the minister will know, civilian members of municipal police forces are represented by their local police associations. Will the minister grant the civilian employees of the OPP the same right to be represented by their police association?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I thank the member for the question. I'm also aware of these concerns because, quite frankly, I've received hundreds of letters and phone calls from civilian members of the OPP, as has my colleague the Solicitor General.

As an employer, though, the government cannot unilaterally change the collective bargaining unit of a group of employees even if the members themselves request it. But what it can do in this case is amend the act to allow for people to democratically choose the bargaining unit that represents them.

The legislation I have introduced today, if passed, will make it possible for these people to decide, through an open and democratic process, whether or not to join the Ontario Provincial Police Association if they feel in fact that it represents their interests.

We are committed to maintaining a public service which is effective, efficient and reliable, and we will continue to look for ways in which we can improve the services to the changing needs for the people of Ontario.

PRIVATE CANCER CLINIC

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, I have to tell you that I don't believe your government has ever been interested in saving medicare because every bit of evidence is that every action your government has taken has undermined health care at every step of the way.

I believe you've been setting up the publicly funded health care system for failure and then you offer priva-

tization as a totally phony answer, and the best example of exactly that is the way you've handled cancer care.

Minister, I remind you that it was your government that created the crisis in waiting lists for cancer care; that your government delayed in setting up the new cancer treatment centres; that your government shut down the radiation therapy training program, so we have a shortage of radiation therapists; that it's your government that's refused to act on the physician shortages, so we have a shortage of cancer care doctors. Now you say you're going to be able to fix the mess that we've made by setting up this new private clinic.

Minister, I need to understand something very basic. I need to understand how this new private clinic is in any way going to deal with the real problems facing cancer treatment in this province. How exactly is this private clinic going to get the radiation therapists or the cancer care doctors that you have refused to provide to the public system? Exactly what does this private clinic do for patients that you couldn't or wouldn't do for the public system?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Speaker, in response to the first part of her question, "setting up for failure," we've funded the system 19% more over the last two years, 27% more over the last five budget cycles. That is not setting up for failure, that is racing, given the cuts to the federal health transfer, racing to try to make sure the system is sustainable, at least for the short run. I believe we need no tenders of apologies on that.

When it comes to Cancer Care Ontario, the after-hours clinic, 149 patients have gone through, 149 patients who don't have to leave their families behind, 149 patients who have a support network, 20 to 23 per week. If we go on at that pace, I have been assured we will get through the entire waiting list of people who were going to go out of country, out of this province, to Buffalo, to Detroit, to wherever, by the end of May, the beginning of June. That is the kind of commitment we've made to make sure that Ontarians get the service delivery they need on such a terrible scourge as cancer right here in their own community, in their own province.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, we all want to see the waiting lists for cancer treatment reduced, but I need to understand something that you don't want to answer. I need to understand exactly how a private clinic is going to get those same radiation therapists, those same cancer care doctors, when exactly the same man who failed to find those people to shorten the waiting lists in the publicly run clinics is now running your private clinic. I just don't understand that, Minister.

I don't understand why, if this new private clinic is actually going to enable patients to be treated faster in Ontario, you couldn't have brought exactly that same solution fully two years ago so that cancer patients didn't have to wait as long for treatment as they've been waiting in this province.

Your private clinic, Minister, can't cost less. That can't be the answer. There's not a shred of evidence that this private clinic can cost less. In fact, we know you're

going to be paying very hefty premiums to try and fix this crisis. So I ask you to try once more to answer this very basic question: exactly what will the private clinic do for cancer patients that you could not have done for those same cancer patients in public clinics at least two years ago?

Hon Mr Clement: I'll answer the honourable member very directly. We were advised by Cancer Care Ontario that nobody would step up to the plate, based on the extension of the current collective agreements and the current situation within Sunnybrook or any other cancer care facility.

If the honourable member has other information, other evidence, tender it. I have already agreed to a value-for-money audit. I'm willing to put the books to the province on the table, put the contract that CCO signed with the third party deliverer on the table. If there's a better way to deliver it, let's look at it. We've said from the very beginning of this question period we want better services, we want more efficient services, we want safer services, we want quicker services. If the honourable members on the other side have a better idea, let's hear it.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): For the last four months I've spent a fair amount of time talking to my constituents—

Interjections.

Mr Wettlaufer: Yes, about 16 to 18 hours a day. As a matter of interest, many of the constituents are very concerned about the accountability issue, whether it be health care, education or whatever. But the key one that they've been addressing over and over again is colleges and universities.

We have Conestoga College in Kitchener. We have a couple of universities in Waterloo. They are large institutions. They have an important role to play. They need to ensure that young Ontarians get the relevant skills they need to get jobs and to keep our economy growing.

1510

It was interesting, I just received a letter this morning from one of my constituents asking whether or not these colleges and universities are accountable to taxpayers and students for their performance, and whether or not they are accountable for delivering the services that the constituents, the taxpayers, the students and all Ontarians, of course, need.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm pleased to respond to the question from the member from Kitchener Centre.

Actually I was at the University of Waterloo this morning and I think that all of us in this House should be proud of our university and college system. The way that Conestoga, the University of Waterloo, Guelph and Sir Wilfrid Laurier are working together is something that we should all be proud of.

Of course, accountability is very important. It's important because we want to support quality programs and

we want to support quality programs that meet the needs of our students.

Last year we implemented a performance-based funding system. Dollars were distributed on the basis of key performance indicators such as graduation rates and the satisfaction of our employers with the young people who graduated. It does ensure and give information to students and their families about how successful our programs are.

Mr Wettlaufer: You've instituted a system of checks and balances. While those checks and balances will measure accountability, what have we done to ensure that accountability? What do you do to ensure that colleges and universities will perform as our taxpayers and our students expect?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Once again, we want to ensure that our colleges and our universities are accountable to the students and to the parents and of course to the taxpayers, and the students get good information so that they can make good decisions while they choose not only the courses that they take by faculty but each and every program.

Therefore, the college system did very well. My colleague representing Conestoga College would like to know that 91% six months after graduation is the highest employment level for Ontario college graduates since 1989—that's right across the system; this is very good—and Conestoga was a little bit above that average, at 92%.

As a system, employer satisfaction was at 91%; again Conestoga was at 91.6%. He should be very proud, as the rest of us are, about the students and how well—

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

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Energy: Minister, last Thursday Mr Osborne, the chief executive officer of Ontario Power Generation, admitted that your government intends to sell off over half the electrical power generation capacity in Ontario in the next 12 months. At the same time, two experts on hydroelectricity markets have come forward and said that deregulation will integrate Ontario and American markets and allow wealthy electricity-hungry Americans to deplete Ontario's supply, forcing us to bid against wealthy New Yorkers to buy our own Ontario-produced electricity and will double electricity prices in Ontario.

These are people who've worked at Ontario Hydro, finance experts from the academic community. Minister, why are you so intent on selling off the power generation capacity that belongs to all people in Ontario to international energy corporations whose only interest is to raise the price?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I don't know where the honourable member has been for the last three and a half years, but this has been a long, cautious and prudent process.

The market design committee, almost three years ago, reported to this government that Ontario Power Generation, in order to make room for new investors and competition in the generation side of the energy market, must vacate its dominance or its 90% position in the domestic market right now. Therefore, it has to sell off plant, lease plant or swap plant. In other words, if we don't do this, Ontario Power Generation will continue to be an electricity monopoly in this province, something that has driven us into some \$38 billion worth of debt in this province. We would continue to do things the old way and we would have no competition in electricity, which will help bring choice, green power and the lowest possible prices to consumers.

I don't know where the honourable member has been, because a market design committee in a public process recommended this some years ago, and the government is getting around to implementing that. It's a positive thing for our economy, a positive thing for jobs and the right direction to go in electricity.

Interjections.

Mr Hampton: You can tell by the rather tepid response from the minister's own backbenchers that this isn't getting very far.

Minister, this is what Myron Gordon, who is a finance professor at the University of Toronto, and John Wilson, who used to be on the board of directors of Hydro One, say: "Electricity deregulation in Ontario will double our bills, increase the cost of everything ... cause industry and businesses to shed jobs and raise our taxes." That's their point because, as they say, once you open up the market, once you start selling off our generating stations to international companies, they will want to sell the power where they can get the highest price, which is in New York, Detroit, Chicago. The only way Ontarians will be able to purchase electricity will be if we're willing to pay the much higher price.

They point out that this will have repercussions for jobs, for the economy, because the price is going to go higher. Why would you want to do that to Ontario industries, Ontario consumers? Why do you want to push the price higher and put—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Energy.

Hon Mr Wilson: April 27, the Ottawa Citizen: "Financially, Ontario Hydro was out of control for many years. It became a mammoth company with ludicrously high salary costs and serious efficiency and safety problems. It piled up a debt of \$38 billion guaranteed by Ontario taxpayers. Premier Harris had no choice but to dismantle this money-eating giant.... Yes, electricity is the juice of life of this economy. But the recent past has taught us that a monopoly system for providing this commodity is a public policy disaster. Bring on the marketplace." That's a full-page editorial endorsing the direction the government is going in.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, on August 17,

2000—last August—your ministry sent out a communiqué regarding the final round of long-term-care bed allocations. That bulletin said, “The new selection process will be different than the 1998 and 1999” requests for proposals, and it will be designed to encourage new, smaller and non-profit applicants.

Minister, we believe, and most working families can now see, that you instead are bent on further favouring the private sector. In fact, two thirds of all the beds that you’ve allocated so far have gone to the private sector, a major increase to the private industry. But you did say in your bulletin “smaller and non-profit applicants.”

Could you explain to us what is different in the request for proposal? Tell us exactly what will be different. How will it be designed to encourage new and non-profit applicants?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I’m happy to reconfirm to this House that we on this side of the House are responsible for an unprecedented \$1.2-billion investment of the taxpayers’ money for long-term care that will include the construction of 20,000 new long-term-care beds. This has been a bedrock commitment of this government and necessary in this province, considering the lack of investment by previous governments when it comes to long-term care.

There has been an RFP process of which the honourable member speaks. It’s a process that involves competitive tendering from both the not-for-profit side and the for-profit side. The objective is quite simply better health care, better care in the community and better long-term care on a basis that is justifiable when it comes to the taxpayers’ money. Those are the criteria that we use: is it the best care that has been tendered on and the most effective way to deliver taxpayer dollars in the form of new beds? Those are the criteria.

Mrs Pupatello: To the Minister of Health, I am asking for an answer to this question about what you supposedly changed about the process to more benefit the non-profit sector, which is what you said in a bulletin that you sent out to that industry. But let me tell you that two weeks later you removed that bulletin from this memo you sent and you decided you’re not going to benefit the non-profit sector. We on this side think you’ve been influenced by the \$360,000 the long-term-care industry donated to the PC Party.

I’d like to tell you what you changed in this new round. What you said was that in the new application process the applicant must own property. Maybe you can tell us where the non-profit sector has an advantage over the for-profit sector when you and I both know that’s the sector that likely doesn’t own property. In fact, you’ve changed the process to further favour the private sector in the allocation of these long-term-care beds. Minister, we expect you to come clean on something you should have said in the last campaign.

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member has taken something a bit out of context. Yes, it is part of the RFP process: to be eligible for consideration you’ve got to own or have an option or a long-term lease on land,

demonstrate that you meet the ministry’s financial land development and operating tests. Yes, we want you to own the property so you can build the building. That is not exactly rocket science. It is there to ensure that we get the most beds, the best beds as soon as possible, so that our long-term care—

Mrs Pupatello: It’s about the fastest and who you can get through your friends.

Hon Mr Clement: No. This is an RFP process designed to ensure we have the beds on the ground, built, with the ribbons cut and with the residents in the beds as soon as possible.

If the honourable member can’t understand that, maybe she’ll understand this: when it comes to competing for those long-term-care beds, what municipality doesn’t own land?

1520

EDUCATION LABOUR DISPUTES

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Labour. I read with considerable interest several articles over the weekend indicating how much effort you personally spent in making sure Toronto kids got back into school today, and yet it seems to me that all I heard on Friday were these dire warnings from the third party that the kids would not be back in school until at least Wednesday. Could the minister please confirm to this House today whether or not the kids are back in school today?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I first want to thank the members who were here Friday in our caucus and supporting the legislation that I think was a proper piece of legislation, that showed some clear leadership and offered some hope for the parents and children in Toronto and in Windsor and gave them an opportunity to get their kids back in school after many weeks of being off.

I also want to suggest to the members of the House here that I was a little dumbfounded by the position put forward by the NDP during that debate, that (a) there was a settlement in Windsor, when in fact no settlement existed, and they wanted me to withdraw the bill because the settlement, they claimed, was at hand; and (b), which I found very interesting, that they guaranteed this government that schools wouldn’t be open on Monday if we passed this bill because they would ensure that schools wouldn’t be open till Wednesday. I’m very happy to report that 95% of the schools in the city of Toronto and 100% in Windsor are open and operating today.

Ms Mushinski: I thank you, Minister, for that response and I want to express to you, certainly on behalf of the constituents, the parents and kids in my riding of Scarborough Centre their gratitude for bringing in legislation that got the kids back into school and saved their school year. There were serious concerns that the school year was about to be lost. Could the minister please assure me today that all the kids will be back into school and that their school year will be saved?

Hon Mr Stockwell: It's my understanding, hearing from the directors at Toronto and Windsor, that their school years are not—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I hear the Liberals heckling. I was happy that you voted in favour this time to legislate the support workers back to work. I appreciate the fact, when it came to Hamilton-Wentworth, that you didn't vote in favour of sending them back. So now, as true Liberals, you can go back in the next general election and tell unions that you didn't vote in favour of sending them back and you can tell parents and students that you did vote in favour of sending them back. You're safe on all sides in this one.

I'd like to say that, come tomorrow, I think there will be 100% compliance as far as school openings are concerned. I appreciate the opportunity to say that in future we have to be very certain, when we introduce back-to-work legislation, that we get co-operation in this House, because we can't form part of the collective bargaining process. When leadership is needed, when direction is needed to be taken, I think parents and children can count on one thing: this government acting in a responsible manner.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. In the throne speech, once again the Harris government promised to ensure equal opportunity for those who live with physical and mental disabilities, yet your actions speak louder than empty words and phony promises.

The disabled no longer trust you. You have slashed the funding of the Chatham and District Association for Community Living. Parents are struggling to care for disabled children because of cuts to special services at home, and parents of children at the southwest regional centre live in terror about the future of the centre for their children, who depend on that care.

Minister, you and your government have failed them all miserably. When will you keep your promise and restore the funding that is critical to equal opportunity?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We have cut no funding for people with developmental disabilities that he speaks to in terms of services offered in his community.

This is a genuine priority for me, it's a genuine priority for this caucus, it's a genuine priority for this government. We've tried to do a substantial amount more for people with developmental disabilities. We were able to seek and achieve the biggest increase in services to support people with developmental disabilities—more than \$50 million this past year—building on the \$35-million budget increase that we got in 1999. We've tried to do a substantial amount to support aging parents who have cared for their adult children for many years in their

communities. We've tried to put more money into special services at home, to provide families with more options. We've tried to put more money into respite care, we've tried to put more money into out-of-home respite care, and we'll continue to make this a substantial part of it. I'll put my record up against anyone in this regard.

Mr Hoy: Minister, I don't know how many times you said "tried," but keep trying and try to get it right for these people. You need to tell that to the struggling families and their agencies.

The associations for community living face a funding crisis. There are almost 9,000 people waiting for services. Many of them are from my riding. They need \$440 million for the needs of existing clients and those on waiting lists. The Chatham and District Association for Community Living has followed every requirement that you dictated to achieve the outcome-based performance measures, but still their applications are denied and they remain critically underfunded.

No more rhetoric. Mr Minister, it's your job to fight for the disabled in the budget process. Will you fight to restore this funding?

Hon Mr Baird: I reject the notion that the member opposite is suggesting, that we've reduced funding in support of people with developmental disabilities. That is simply not the case. He is dead wrong.

The member opposite quotes what associations for community living say about this government. Let's read what they say. Let's listen to David Barber, president of the Ontario Association for Community Living: "You have rebuilt these channels of communication and re-established the trust." "It's reassuring to have a minister who understands the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families," June Chiu, president of the Toronto Association for Community Living. I could go on. "Your May 5 announcement"—the \$50-million announcement I cited earlier—"demonstrates the government's commitment to individuals and families with developmental disabilities," Sue Dolan, president of OASIS.

We've worked tremendously hard to make this a priority. We've expanded services each and every year over the past two years since I became minister. This caucus, this party, sees it as a substantial priority and we're going to continue to fight for more money.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Recently you provided \$90 million in additional funding to the oilseed producers in Ontario. I must admit that most of the farmers in Ontario are certainly grateful for the help that you provided.

But recently I was reading an article in the Farm Business Journal, and it says, "Competition with low-cost producers such as the United States is nothing new, says Kim Cooper, marketing coordinator with the Ontario Soybean Growers. "We can't compete with the United States in commodity soybeans. With Brazil, we can't do

anything. But the whole premise years ago was that we should be looking at markets in which we would not compete against the United States.”

1530

I realize, Minister, that you can't do anything about low commodity prices, but indicators indicate that we'll probably be facing low prices next year. What is your government doing with regard to dealing with the situation facing the farmers this year?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): As you know, the responsibility for international trade rests with the federal government, and I take every opportunity to encourage the federal government to defend Ontario farmers at the World Trade Organization.

It's essential that the federal government continues to fight for our farmers to eliminate unfair practices and subsidies from our international trading partners.

If it was a level playing field, our grains and oilseed producers would certainly be the frontrunners. They have the capability and the expertise to produce crops efficiently, effectively and competitively. Unfortunately, the field is tilted because of the subsidies that we get from the European Union and from our neighbours to the south.

Mr Beaubien: I know that the feds are having difficulty in finding the cheque book and handing out their money. I wonder if you could give them a hand.

In a more serious tone, Minister, what is your ministry doing with regard to opening new markets and doing research in the field of new products with the oilseed, and could you inform the House of any other endeavours that your ministry may be doing?

Hon Mr Coburn: Certainly, because the United States is a major player in the global market, it's virtually impossible to avoid competing with them. That's one of the reasons we've worked with our growers, producers and processors to develop new and lucrative niche markets. Ontario's agricultural food industry has earned a worldwide reputation of producing commodities to customer specifications.

For instance, over the past five years we've expanded our market into Japan for food-grade, identity-preserved soybeans. Soy, as you know, is a key part of the diet in Japan. Last year, more than \$290 million worth of oilseeds and oilseed products were exported to Japan from Ontario. The Ontario growers benefit from these new markets in that niche marketing.

CHILDRENS' SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, how much money from the national children's agenda will you give to Ontario municipalities to support children's services in our communities?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We're

committed to spend \$114 million of additional funds to support children in communities around the province.

Last week we had the first discussion about our vision. We talked about early years centres to try to do more to enrich community supports, to provide more supports to parents, to provide a mix of universal supports that are accessible to all parents and to provide substantially more supports to help children who are at risk and to provide children with special needs.

I think all ministers would love to be able to jump the Minister of Finance and announce funding prior to the presentation of the provincial budget. Unfortunately, I'm not in a position to be able to do that, but the announcement of how the government will move forward with the expansion of supports for the early years initiatives will follow the budget on May 9.

Ms Martel: Minister, the question was, how much money will you give municipalities from the national children's agenda to support children's services in our communities?

I attended a press conference at city hall this morning, and there were representatives from the city of Toronto, Markham, Ottawa and Kingston who all called on your government to let them know how much money you're going to provide.

You're the government that downloaded services like public health, regulated child care, family resource centres and libraries onto these municipalities without giving them the additional money to ensure they could deliver these important services to our children at the local level.

I ask you again, Minister, since municipalities are providing the services to children that you downloaded on to them, how much money will they get from the national children's agenda to support these critical services?

Hon Mr Baird: We'll be coming forward with an agenda on how to expend the national children's agenda money. I think what is exciting is that now you have all levels of government in Canada rowing together. Our support for children, our support for the early years, didn't begin on April 1 when the federal government joined us. I think it is a very positive symbol, though, when we have the federal government working with provinces right across the country to ensure we meet the provinces' local needs. When we come forward with the announcement, I think you'll see it's very much along the lines of the Mustard-McCain study that came out in 1999.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we believe that universally accessible, publicly funded health care is sacred and must be protected;

"Whereas Mike Harris intends on turning his back on working families and transforming our system into an American-style, two-tier system where only the rich will get quality care;

"Whereas we believe that Mike Harris has a secret agenda to promote two-tier health care in Ontario and now the secret is out;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not turn your back on Ontario's working families. Fight Mike Harris's agenda to destroy medicare and fight his plan to create a two-tier health care system."

I am in full support with those sentiments. I affix my signature to this petition.

CHILD CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government under Mike Harris has cut funding for regulated child care spaces in Ontario by 15% between 1995 and 1998;

"Whereas the Conservative government under Mike Harris has yet to implement the recommendations of its own commissioned Early Years report by Dr Fraser Mustard to create a seamless, integrated early years education system;

"Whereas the Conservative government will receive \$844 million over the next five years from the federal government for early years development projects;

"Whereas the Conservative government lags behind other provinces in announcing its plans for the \$844 million in federal money for early years development; and

"Whereas other provinces are implementing innovative, affordable and accessible child care programs, such as Quebec's \$5-a-day child care program ... ;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the Harris government immediately match and earmark a significant portion of the \$844 million from the federal government for expanded, regulated child care spaces and family resource programs."

This is signed by about 150 people from Windsor and I affix my signature to it.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, which reads in part:

"Whereas Karla Homolka and Paul Bernardo were responsible for terrorizing entire communities in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government of the day made a deal with the devil with Karla Homolka, resulting in a sentence that does not truly make her pay for her crimes; and

"Whereas our communities have not yet fully recovered from the trauma and sadness caused by Karla Homolka; and

"Whereas Karla Homolka believes that she should be entitled to passes to leave prison with an escort; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario believe that criminals should be forced to serve sentences that truly reflect the seriousness of their crimes;

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

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to ensure that Karla Homolka serves her full sentence;

"Continue to reform parole and make it more difficult for serious offenders to return to our streets;

"Fight the federal government's plan to release up to 1,600 more convicted criminals on to Ontario streets; and

"Ensure that the Ontario government's sex offender registry is functioning as quickly as possible."

I'll affix my signature to this and send it up to the appropriate people.

AIR QUALITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Harris government's wholly owned Nanticoke generating station is North America's largest dirty coal-fired electricity producing plant and Ontario's largest producer of the chemicals and acid gases which contribute to deadly smog and acid rain; and

"Whereas the Nanticoke plant, which has more than doubled its dangerous emissions under the Harris government, is now the worst air polluter in all of Canada, spewing out over five million kilograms of toxic chemicals each year, including many cancer-causing chemicals and mercury, a potent and dangerous neurotoxin; and

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"Whereas at least 13 Ontario municipalities and seven northeastern US states have expressed concerns that Ontario Power Generation's proposed cleanup plan for Nanticoke is inadequate in protecting the air quality and health and safety of their residents; and

"Whereas the Ontario Medical Association has stated that 1,900 Ontarians die prematurely each year and we pay \$1 billion annually in health-related costs as a result of air pollution; and

"Whereas because the Harris government has now lifted the moratorium on the sale of coal-fired power plants and has set a date for deregulation of electricity, the operator of the Nanticoke plant will likely stoke up production to maximize profits which will only worsen the air quality in cities like Kitchener, Windsor, London, Niagara Falls and St Catharines;

"Be it resolved that the Mike Harris government immediately order that the Nanticoke generating station be converted from dirty coal to cleaner-burning natural gas."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement with the sentiments of this petition.

BRAIN TUMOURS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas early detection and treatment of brain tumours are vital to survive from this devastating disease;

"Whereas brain tumours strike people of all ages, from newborns to seniors, crossing all economic, social and ethnic boundaries and all walks of life;

"Whereas brain tumours are the most common cause of solid cancer in children; and

"Whereas brain tumour research, patient and family support services and awareness among the general public are essential to promote early detection and treatment of brain tumours.

"We, the undersigned, therefore respectfully petition the Parliament of Ontario to pass a law proclaiming the month of October in each year as Brain Tumour Awareness Month."

SAFE STREETS LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas charities such as the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada, the Goodfellows, the Canadian Cystic Fibrosis Foundation, firefighters and many others participate in fundraisers on streets, sidewalks and parking lots; and

"Whereas the Safe Streets Act, 1999, effectively bans these types of activities, putting police forces in the position of ignoring the law or hindering legitimate charities; and

"Whereas charitable organizations are dependent on these fundraisers to raise much-needed money and awareness;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We ask that the government of Ontario amend provincial legislation by passing the Charity Fundraising Activities Act, 2001, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots."

It's signed by individuals from Amherstburg to Ottawa and I support their petition.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the report of the McKendry commission, released by the Ontario Ministry of Health in December 1999, finds that Ontario is facing a shortage of over 1,000 physicians; and

"Whereas at least 286 international medical graduates in Ontario have successfully completed the Medical

Council of Canada evaluating exam, demonstrating competence in clinical knowledge; and

"Whereas the number of Ministry of Health funded post-graduate positions in 'pool B' (that is, international medical graduates) has been reduced from 289 to 81 since 1994; and

"Whereas the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine has indicated that they have the capacity to absorb an increase in the number of entry-level post-graduate positions, as long as sufficient resources are provided to support the increase; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario unanimously passed private member's resolution 6 on November 25, 1999, which held that the government of Ontario should implement a plan to improve access to professions and trades for foreign-trained professionals.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care as follows:

"(a) to restore the number of Ministry of Health funded post-graduate positions for international medical graduates to at least 1994 levels;

"(b) to increase immediately the number of entry-level post-graduate training positions to the full capacity of the Ontario faculties of medicine;

"(c) to make the increased entry-level post-graduate positions directly available to international medical graduates who have successfully completed the requisite examinations;

"(d) to develop a plan to identify alternative funding mechanisms that allow more equitable access for international physicians"—it's very long, Speaker—"to the health care system in Ontario; and—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: It's very informative for you; you know that.

"(e) to appoint a committee, with representation from the international medical graduate community, to review and dismantle the barriers which have been established to prevent international physicians from gaining fair access to licensure and practice in Ontario."

Speaker, I'm going to allow John here to take this petition to the Clerk's office, and I affix my signature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Further petitions.

HORSE RIDING SAFETY

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas an increasing number of Ontarians are turning to horseback riding as a recreational activity; and

"Whereas many of these inexperienced riders are children; and

"Whereas currently there are no minimum safety standards regulating riding establishments; and

"Whereas coroners' inquests into horse riding fatalities from as long ago as 1977 have called for the mandatory use of riding helmets and boots; and

“Whereas an unacceptable number of preventable injuries and fatalities have occurred while horseback riding;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: to pass into law the private member’s bill introduced by Tina Molinari, MPP for Thornhill, entitled the Horse Riding Safety Act, 2001, in order to increase the safety of horse riders under the age of 18 by requiring the operators of riding establishments to ensure that proper safety equipment is used, and to amend the Highway Traffic Act and make it an offence for any rider under the age of 18 to ride a horse on a highway without the proper safety equipment.”

I affix my name to the petition and I give it to Jason Apostolopoulos.

AUTISM SERVICES

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the citizens of Ontario, feel that the government is violating the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms by discriminating against autistic spectrum disordered children in the delivery of necessary health care, this is a petition to offer the intensive behaviour treatment required to all autistic spectrum disordered children, not only to those most severely afflicted, and abolish waiting lists for essential health care to these children. The government of Ontario must intervene and provide all autistic spectrum disordered children treatment and relinquish the appropriate funding to deliver the necessary care;

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

“To offer the intensive behaviour treatment required to all autistic spectrum disordered children, not only to those most severely afflicted, and abolish waiting lists for essential health care to these children.”

The government of Ontario must intervene and provide these children with the treatment that they deserve. I happily sign my name to this petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I have a petition with numerous signatures.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit material in many commercial establishments;

“Whereas many municipalities do not have bylaws in place to protect minors and those that do vary from place to place and have failed to protect minors from unwanted exposure to sexually explicit materials;

“Whereas uniform standards are needed in Ontario that would make it illegal to sell, rent, loan or display sexually explicit materials to minors;

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

“To pass Bill 95, Protection of Minors from Sexually Explicit Goods and Services Act, 2000, as soon as possible.”

Being in agreement, I attach my name to it.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas we believe that universally accessible, publicly funded health care is sacred and must be protected;

“Whereas Mike Harris intends on turning his back on working families and transforming our system into an American-style, two-tier system, where only the rich will get quality health care;

“Whereas we believe that Mike Harris had a secret agenda to promote two-tier health care in Ontario and now the secret is out;

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

“Do not turn your back on Ontario’s working families.

“Fight Mike Harris’s agenda to destroy medicare and fight his plan to create a two-tier health care system.”

CELL PHONES

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): It’s my pleasure to present a petition on behalf of my constituents.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death in North America; and

“Whereas studies conducted in the city of Toronto, the United States and Great Britain have reported that drivers using cell phones while operating a vehicle significantly increases the risk of collisions; and

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“Whereas people talking on cell phones while driving may cause a 34% higher risk of having an accident;

“We, the undersigned, respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ban the use of hand-held cell phones, portable computers and fax machines while operating a motor vehicle. We further respectfully request that Bill 102,”—which is my bill—“An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit the use of phones and other equipment while driving on a highway, be passed unanimously by all members of the provincial Parliament of Ontario.”

I’m pleased to sign in support of this and to give Dave time.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I have petitions to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we believe that universally accessible publicly funded health care is sacred and must be protected;

“Whereas Mike Harris intends on turning his back on the working families and transforming our system into an American style, two-tier system, where the rich will get quality health care;

“Whereas we believe that Mike Harris had a secret agenda to promote two-tier health care in Ontario and now the secret is out;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Do not turn your back on Ontario’s working families. Fight Mike Harris’s agenda to destroy medicare and fight his plan to create a two-tier health care system.”

I affix my name to this and pass this on to Kristen.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in her office.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): The following are the titles of the bills to which Her Honour did assent:

Bill 13, An Act to resolve labour disputes affecting the Toronto District School Board and the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board / *Projet de loi 13, Loi visant à régler les conflits de travail qui touchent les conseils scolaires de district appelés Toronto District School Board et Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board;*

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.*

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 26, 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 Michael Bryant (St Paul’s): I’m happy to respond to the throne speech. The last time I rose in this House to respond to a throne speech—I guess it was, for many of us who were elected in 1999 for the first time, our so-called maiden speech. Now, as then, I want to spend my time talking about what matters to the people in the community I represent. I’m going to be sharing my time with the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot, the member for Essex and the member for York West.

Let’s start with the 68% of the people who live in St Paul’s who are renters. That’s the second-highest proportion of renters in Ontario. What they’re going through is nothing less than a nightmare, because there is certainly nothing in the throne speech for tenants—not in this throne speech, not in that throne speech, not in any throne speech from this government. Why? Because the Harris government brought in legislation that created a frankly bizarre legal scenario whereby an incentive was put into our laws to get tenants out of their apartments.

What I am I talking about? If you can evict someone from an apartment right now, you can rent that apartment for whatever you want if you’re a landlord. That’s called “vacancy decontrol.” Does that mean there is an incentive for landlords to keep their present tenants? Of course not. The incentive is the reverse. Is this an academic issue or a real issue? I’ll tell you it’s a real issue in the riding, because with the eviction rates being what they are in St Paul’s and with the vacancy rates being what they are in Toronto, less than 1%, people have nowhere to go.

The problem gets compounded where people are living in a building and are getting an above-guideline rent increase for something that I think most people, if they heard the circumstances, would say is just the cost of doing business if you own an apartment. You have to keep the carpet clean, you have to keep the carpet fresh, you have to keep paint on the walls, you have to make sure it’s properly lit and so on. A lot of those basic matters, doing just the basic business of running an apartment, they now can claim on the backs of tenants, and of course they do. Therefore, the tenants’ rents are going up 8%, 9% or 10%. For somebody who is on a fixed income in particular, this is an intolerable situation.

Ida Mandel is somebody who lives in the riding of St Paul’s, and she wanted me to mention her name and tell her story. She’s a senior. She’s on a fixed income. She has received her third above-guideline increase in the last three years. Her rent keeps on going up and up and up, but of course, because she’s on her fixed income, this is like the most retrograde, regressive tax upon her that you could ever imagine. In her case, the Harris government has put her in a situation whereby she has to make a choice: is she going to have to cut down on the amount of money that she spends on groceries, or is she going to have to go and find a cheaper apartment? A cheaper apartment, meanwhile, good luck. It’s like finding cheap playoff tickets for the Leafs games. There are none in the city of Toronto right now. Why? Because the vacancy rate is less than 1%.

If the goal of the Tenant Protection Act—and I don’t believe that it was, but even giving someone the benefit of the doubt—was in some way to address the fair market, we don’t have a level playing field. We don’t have a fair market in the city of Toronto, and as a result, the large majority of the people of St Paul’s are paying the price.

Property taxes: homeowners in St Paul’s have been absolutely nailed with the prospect of property tax

increases. There are two problems. One is the process. As a result of the pennies that are invested in the current assessment system, more often than not citizens have to basically transform themselves into high-priced litigators in order to fight unfair property assessments. That's number one. Number two, of course, is that they are bearing the burden of the downloading exercise which, contrary to the recommendation of the Who Does What panel, ended up putting the burden not through a progressive income tax system, but through a regressive property tax system. Again, you talk about somebody on a fixed income who happened to buy their house in a neighbourhood which has happened to get hot, and they are suddenly faced with an unrealized capital gains tax. The can't afford to move, they can't afford to get rid of it, but they also can't afford to pay their property taxes.

I and the councillors in St Paul's, Joe Mihevc on the west and Michael Walker on the east, spent a good deal of time meeting with many folks in St Paul's who wanted to come out and talk about the issue, helping them fight the assessment and letting them know what we're doing both in Queen's Park and in city hall on their behalf.

People in St Paul's are calling about the Oak Ridges moraine and also about the local green space and the lack thereof in the riding of St Paul's. It's unfortunate, but the western part of the riding actually has one of the lowest percentages of green space in the entire province. It's increasingly becoming a concrete jungle. I can tell you that our commitment to saving and not paving the Oak Ridges moraine is an indicator of our commitment to green space in the riding. A lot of people in midtown Toronto, quite rightly, care about the issue. Fine, it's not happening in their backyard, but of course they're downriver from the effects of the adverse policies of this government with respect to the Oak Ridges moraine.

ODSP, social assistance payments: again, these people are just the expendables in the Common Sense Revolution.

New Canadians: Dr Ali, a representative of the Somali community, came in to meet with me to tell me about what we all know is the case in this province. People are coming from around the world. They are bringing their expertise. They could address and assist in the labour shortages that we have with respect to doctor and nurse shortages, with respect to teacher shortages, engineers, high-tech people, and they're being told either by the self-regulating body or by the province, "You've got to start all over again," as if their experience is worthless. I know the commitment of Dalton McGuinty and our proposal for access to the professions is one that they were grateful for, but at the same time they want the government to do something about this in the midst of this labour shortage that's affecting our province.

Education: I don't need to tell anybody in this room about the turmoil that's affecting communities all across the province, as of course we saw with the closing of our schools. The e-mails and the telephone calls that I got on this, like so many members in this House, I know, were heartbreaking: kids calling a couple of weeks ago to say

that their school stunk, that it was infested with rats and mice, that there was garbage everywhere. Suddenly we had a tragic metaphor, but it was a literal one as well, that represented our education system at present.

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I know that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals will continue to put forward positive proposals of progress and peace plans so that we serve the people we're supposed to serve in our public education system: the schools.

Annie Kidder, a spokesperson for People for Education at the Niagara conference hosted by Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals a few weekends ago, said that often we forget what the purpose of public education is. When you look at some of the proposals put forth by this government, you would think that they just, "Oh, here is an idea. Let's just drop this bomb in the middle of public education." Instead, Annie Kidder said, "I think that everything that drives public education ought to be asking the question, 'Are we assisting students in becoming better citizens who can better participate in our democracy?'" Isn't that the purpose of public education, doesn't that make sense, instead of the focus on creating a crisis, sustaining and maintaining a crisis? That's the approach of this government. We're trying to put forward positive proposals, and that's frankly what the people of Ontario want.

Lastly, we're looking forward, in fact, to a question period tomorrow because it is a unique and wonderful event. I'd like to respond to something that the Premier said in the media. He said that he doesn't want to show up and answer opposition politicians' questions. Why? He said because, in fact, the questions from the folks at the doughnut shops are more relevant. I'd say this to him: unless you want to reform our parliamentary system, it's the one in which we have to operate. In our parliamentary system we have an official opposition. It's the loyal opposition. It is our job, just as it's the government's job, supposedly, to govern, although this government denies that it is the government, it is the opposition's job to hold their feet to the fire. It's our job here to represent the folks in the doughnut shops. We were elected to do that. The Premier may try to address this issue with rhetoric but the truth is that the people of Ontario expect him to be held accountable by the means we have in our present system, and that is, yes, through the media, but in particular in question period in the Ontario Legislature. I'm proud to be here and ask questions, and I wish the Premier was proud enough to be here to provide some answers.

Mr Speaker, I'll defer now to the members for Eglinton-Lawrence, Ancaster-Dundas, Essex and York West.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): I caution the member for St Paul's not to refer to any member's absence.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I am honoured to follow my colleague from St Paul's and the great work he's done in bringing fresh, energizing ideas to Ontario

in the last while with his vigour and search for better solutions. Just like the member for St Paul's, I want to comment on a few things that were in and not in the throne speech.

I would say first of all that I know in the throne speech there was a complaint about excessive spending in health care. I just wanted perhaps to remind the government that one of the reasons there is maybe more spending than there should have been is that this government has mismanaged the health care portfolio.

I'll give you an example in my own riding. Remember three or four years ago we had this vaunted, highly publicized Mike Harris hospital restructuring commission that went across the province closing hospitals, closing emergencies, and under the guidance of the great guru Duncan Sinclair there, they said they had all the answers then. It seems they don't have the answers, because the hospitals are in a mess, the emergencies are lined up, and health care is in peril not because they're not spending enough but because they're not spending wisely or investing wisely and because they took that reckless approach of closing hospitals before they had an alternative in place.

In my own riding we had a great hospital on Keele Street in west Toronto called Northwestern hospital, built by people's donations, door to door, in the 1950s. Mike Harris's restructuring commission closed that hospital and said that they were going to invest in a hospital up the street where they had very close Tory ties: you know, Mark Rochon; President Devlin of the Tory party is up there. They said, "We're going to open up Humber." You can't get to Humber by bus. It's a small, five-acre parcel. They said, "No, we're going to invest in the five-acre hospital site," and the community said, "You're crazy. That site you have to bulldoze homes to build parking lots. It's going to cost you a fortune." No, the Mike Harris closing commission with Duncan Sinclair went ahead and closed Northwestern, which was a new hospital—it's still empty, not being used—while they spent tens of millions trying to figure out how this Humber hospital is going to work.

Lo and behold, two months ago the president of the Tory party of Ontario said, "Listen, I want to close all the hospitals and build a mega-hospital at Downsview air force base." We told them, "This is what we told you in the first place, that your plan wasn't going to work." Now he's going to close more emergencies, he's going to basically spend more money and we still have no adequate emergencies in the west end of Toronto, we still have second-rate hospitals. It's not because of the doctors, it's not because of the staff or the nurses; it's because this government has been reckless, tinkering and disinterested in doing what's right. They are more interested in building these monuments to their friends who are benefiting from building these hospital expansions rather than providing orderlies, nurses and doctors. That's all I'll say about health care.

In terms of education, in my riding of Eglinton-Lawrence I have I think some of the finest elementary

and high schools in all of Canada, if not in North America. People from all over Canada will come and live in my riding because they want to go to John Ross Robertson, they want to go to Allenby school, they want to go to John Wanless, they want to go to Marshall McLuhan high school, they want to go to Lawrence Park. These are some of the finest publicly funded elementary and high schools in all of North America, paid for by property taxes. People will have a \$1-million home and send their kids to John Wanless, or they'll have children living in an apartment and they'll send their kids to John Wanless. It's an excellent neighbourhood environment. Children and their families walk to school—superb.

This government continues to disrupt public education in the city of Toronto by its cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approach, which doesn't work. They try to micro-manage education from Queen's Park in the backrooms. It doesn't work. So what was once, as I say, one of the best public school systems in North America this government has attacked non-stop for five years. They are basically being told by my constituents, "Leave us alone." You collect property tax dollars in Toronto for education. Keep that property tax dollar in the Toronto school. The schools are quite all right only if this government stops playing political war games with public education, which it continues to do.

I also want to talk about another interesting part of the throne speech. There was a reference to the new buzzword, the new pseudo solution to stopping sprawl. It's the new buzzword copied from New Jersey called "Smart Growth." Obviously it sounds good. The problem is the Premier doesn't understand what it means nor do his ministers, because every time they talk about this pseudo Smart Growth, they talk about highways, "We're going to put toll roads with more highways." Smart Growth has got nothing to do with highways. It's almost like you don't mention the two together, and if you do you don't know what you're talking about, but every time they mention Smart Growth they mention highways.

If you're going to have Smart Growth in this province, you have to rely on environmentally, ecologically sustainable planning practices and transportation practices. As you know, this government is the only jurisdiction—and the member from Ancaster will tell you—in the western world that doesn't fund public transit. Yet it says it is going to now reinvent growth. How can you do it if you don't fund the GO system, you don't fund public transit? You can't have sustainable growth without investment in public transit, and that's what this government doesn't understand and that's why this government will do nothing but keep feeding the giant beast called "Tory sprawl." You can see sprawl: cookie-cutter, ugly garage homes all over southern Ontario that this government promotes and sells. It loves these garage homes everywhere on farmland.

Mr Speaker, you live on some of the best farmland, in Wellington, in this province. This government is chewing it up, spitting it up, hating it. In fact as we speak, right now near the Duffins Creek we have some of the best

farmland in Canada near the Rouge Valley. It's a connector between the moraine and Lake Ontario. This government's Ontario Realty Corp is selling off this A1 farmland, environmentally sustainable land, to developers. That's government-owned taxpayer land it is selling as it purports to be in favour of pseudo Smart Growth. How can you be in favour of sustainable planning when you sell off farmland and watersheds on the banks of Duffins Creek? They're doing that right now by order of this government. That is not smart growth, that is stupid sprawl, and this government is the best government we ever had in promoting and feeding that beast called "sprawl."

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In fact, if you go to the corner of Weston Road and Highway 7, there's a big monument, a church. It's like a big, giant hubcap, where they come and worship sprawl. You should go and see it. They call it a theatre of some sort. But they do nothing but feed sprawl, promote it, pollute our environment, contaminate our water table. This government doesn't understand what sustainable, lasting, beautiful, natural ecological growth is.

Perhaps we should encourage the Premier to read this book. The book is by someone who was at the Niagara conference that my colleague from St Paul's had so much foresight in bringing. The name is James Howard Kunstler. Remember that name: James Howard Kunstler. He is basically telling us we had better wake up or we're going to destroy one of the most beautiful parts of this country and this province. Here's what Kunstler said:

"We will have to downscale our gigantic enterprise and institutions—corporations, governments, banks, schools, hospitals, markets, farms—and learn to live locally, hence responsibly. We will have to drive less," God forbid, "and create decent public transportation that people want to use. We will have to produce less garbage ... and consume less fossil fuel. We will have to reacquire the lost art of civic planning and redesign our rules for building. If we can do these things, we may be able to recreate a nation of places worth caring about, places of enduring quality and admirable character."

As you know, that doesn't happen in rural Ontario, thank God, but we have these civic buildings of great stature. Main Street Ontario is beautiful. But what we are doing is we are now replacing it with the Mike Harris agenda of Wal-Mart architecture. Costco, Wal-Mart, Canadian Tire—they're great places, but they're ugly. They're concrete boxes with no windows. Give me Main Street in Port Perry; give me Main Street in Tweed. Forget these slums that basically pay homage to the automobile. The automobile is a great invention, but we shouldn't have to get down on all fours and beg the automobile to save us. What can save us is our commitment to things that are natural and lasting.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I just want to comment on one of the points made by the member from St Paul's, which I thought was actually an interesting one. He said he had heard the Premier comment in

an interview he had done earlier this week in response to questions of why Premier Mike Harris does not want to show up at question period and we don't see him in the House any more. Mr Harris's answer was, "Well, it's more interesting answering questions from people in the coffee shops than the people in the Legislature."

I think that is really disturbing, because it tells me to a certain extent that the Premier doesn't hold this House in any kind of respect. I would say if that's the case, I want to join that club, because I don't believe that this Legislature, based on a system that was designed over 300 years ago, called "first past the post," really serves constituents or the Premier, for that matter, or members of the opposition. I would argue you have tyranny of the majority, a party that was elected with 42% of the vote, in this case, that has more than 50% of the seats and is able to do what they damned well please. Prior to that you had Bob Rae, my government, that was elected with 38% of the vote, who had a majority in the House as well. I say that's not good for democracy.

If the Premier thinks it's not a good idea to come to the House because he doesn't like the way this House operates because of our antiquated rules developed 300 years ago, I want to applaud that—not that he's not here, but maybe I'm hearing that the Premier would be willing to make changes to how this Legislature works. Maybe we could modernize our democracy in order to take a look at what has been done in other countries, for example Germany, where they developed a good hybrid system of proportional representation, which still allows you to elect members directly through your ridings as we do now, so that at the end of the day if you have 42% of the votes in a general election, you would end up with only 42% of the seats. That way, maybe people would be more interested in what happens in this place.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Timmins-James Bay not to make reference to the absence of any member of this House.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Premier comments about how he does not want to be here; therefore, I'm commenting on a comment that he made, which is, if he holds this House in contempt—

The Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I was watching with some interest the comments made by the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. I felt some harmony in what he was saying, specifically when he mentioned my riding of Durham. It always touches a tender spot with me. He specifically mentioned Port Perry and the streetscape and the beautiful kind of rural landscape, if you will, but also a thriving community of people, which, by the way, doesn't have all of the services of the city of Toronto, which he represents. But that's exactly where we've been.

He mentioned the author Mr Kunstler and his profound statements about no more economy, basically. He was talking about downsizing everything to a kind of home-based business scenario. That brings to bear the question of, if we need all these public transit systems,

where exactly will they be going? If we're going to downsize everything so that there is no economy, basically we won't need the public transit infrastructure that he's referring to.

But I think if he wants to make sure that I'm clearly on the record of defending many of the same things I think our government is defending with this whole theory or theme of smart growth, it is to protect those areas. If you want to look at the Living Legacy that Minister Snobelen has brought in, the greatest number of reserves and preserves of parkland and other important features of this province that are pristine and clean, that's exactly what we're doing. In fact the sprawl that occurred, I think from the 1980s, the big-box concept that he was so critical of, is symptomatic of just no plan.

So if you pay close attention, smart growth does address, I think in harmony, many of the things you want, but it does talk about growth. What we had for 10 years was no growth, no investment. Clearly, the federal government has lost its way; probably you're imitating them.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm very pleased to be able to respond to my colleagues the member for St Paul's and the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. I think both brought out some very salient points that relate to the people they represent. I think they very ably explained their understanding of the problems that were not addressed in the throne speech.

With regard to comments made by the member for St Paul's, who made reference to an individual in his riding, since I've had this role as member, I am part-time resident in a building not so very far from here. I meet a number of the residents rather regularly on my floor. There's one very nice young man; his name is Cal. One day we were chatting and he asked what I did. I explained I was a member of provincial Parliament. The first thing that came to his mind that he thought he needed to impress upon me was the need for rent control.

This is a young man who would say to me that there are people in our building where we live who are on fixed incomes, who have endured above-the-line rent increases. They're at the point now where many of the residents who lived in our building have had to leave. This is a community. This is where people look out for each other. They have been forced to leave, not because they want to, but because they can no longer afford the rent in that building. They're forced to consider accommodation that perhaps is less secure, less ideally located for them.

Cal said to me, "Would you please see if you could tell Mike Harris, have him understand, that we need more concern and control for people in their situation so that people who have come to be comfortable in a community won't be forced to look for accommodation elsewhere because they are on a fixed income?"

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey): I'd like to comment on some of the remarks made by the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He spoke specifically about several elementary schools. One of them which

sparked my interest was John Ross Robertson public school. It's a great school. I went to that school from kindergarten to grade 8.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It's never been the same.

1620

Mr Tilson: Well, I can tell you that I hope my friend from Eglinton-Lawrence is looking after the riding, because a number of great provincial and federal politicians have represented that riding. Len Reilly represented this area from—

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: He was a Tory, to the member for St Catharines. Mitchell Sharp represented that riding, and Donald Fleming and a whole slew of others I'm sure he's aware of.

My only concern about some of his comments was suggesting that the area has better education, and I'm sure that wasn't his intent. But what we've tried to do on this side is to say that whether you go to John Ross Robertson in the member's riding or whether you go to Princess Elizabeth, an elementary school in my riding of Orangeville, the education should be the same and the funding should be the same and the program should be the same.

Mr Bradley: That's not what the Fraser Institute says.

Mr Tilson: Well, I say they are the same. We intend to continue with that philosophy so that education, no matter what part of this great province you're in, will be identical and you will have that equal quality education.

I congratulate the member for speaking about my former alma mater. I hadn't thought of it for a long time. I spent many great years in that elementary school and it helped shape my childhood. I'm pleased to be here.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes to respond.

Mr Colle: I'm certainly heartened by the intelligent comments of my colleague from Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey. I think he really added to the debate; the member from Durham also, and my colleague from beautiful Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. The member from James Bay—I'm not sure what he was referring to.

I just want to say that the challenge for us at Queen's Park is not to try and reinvent and make all schools in this province fit a cookie-cutter. That's what I'm worried about. I don't like schools micromanaged by backroom people at Queen's Park. That tendency is really dangerous.

I just want to tell the member from Durham that if you use our resources intelligently, you will have more long-term sustainable growth. If you waste and squander resources like water and farmland you won't have that long-term growth and prosperity. That's why I'm saying be very careful that you use our limited resources properly.

We have rail lines that go throughout the GTA that are sitting there empty. There's a wonderful rail line that goes up to Goodwood—you know, beautiful little

Goodwood—that's empty. Why not run a train all day from Goodwood so people don't have to pack the 403? Why not have a train instead of another highway in the Niagara Peninsula that goes through farmland and cuts out all those beautiful tender fruit crops? Why not have a train go from downtown Toronto to Niagara Falls all day?

Use highways, but invest wisely in public transportation. If you look at Rome, Paris, London, Chicago, Washington, DC, that's what they're doing. We're going to back to the Neanderthal age by just paving everything black. It's not smart to pave farmland and riverbanks. We have to start using our intelligence to save our resources.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): It is my privilege to speak on the throne speech. I just want to make one comment. After listening to a couple of comments from the opposition today, I want to give them a touch of advice. I know they won't take it, but I would suggest they quit thinking in the past. It's great to look back, but for goodness' sake, don't go back, I would caution you.

It's interesting, the comment that governments squander. When the Liberals were in power, they had the largest increase in revenue in their last year and the greatest increase in welfare. If you're talking about accountability, let me give you a bit of a lecture, for lack of a better word, on accountability.

One of the things about the throne speech, in my mind, was that it set a precedent this year. Not only was it short, not only was it concise, but it also came to the point, and the point was that we must look to the future. I just made that comment a minute ago about looking back. It's great to look back, but you can't go back. You've got to think about the future.

One of the problems over the many years has been that past governments have looked at the past and haven't planned for the future. Politicians at all levels have a tendency to look within the box or within the time for which they are elected. They don't look beyond.

This throne speech, the 21 steps into the 21st century, looks at how we want Ontario and Ontarians to be in the 21st century. I'm not talking two or three years out; I'm talking 10, 15 or 20 years down the road. As I said, many past governments and politicians of the day—and there are those across the way who think the same thing now, look with no direction, make promises that are never, ever kept. They believe responsibility is to throw money at a problem or a concern, but you know and I know that when the money is all spent, the problems and concerns are still there, still exist.

Unfortunately, the word "accountability" is often used in this House but is not always practised. As well, some people really don't know what the word means. As I said, to their mind—and we've heard it this afternoon—it's "More money, more money, more money." That is not accountability, nor is it going to solve the problem.

This was very evident when the Mike Harris government took over back in 1995. The province was very close to bankruptcy. There wasn't any accountability and

hadn't been for a good number of years previously. We were in a situation where we had to look at accountability for our government because it hadn't been practised for a number of years.

Spending by the previous two governments had been totally out of control for a number of years. Unemployment was skyrocketing at that time; welfare was running rampant; environmental concerns were basically non-existent; new technologies like cath labs, MRIs and dialysis expansion basically were dreams.

In my own municipality they had been trying to get a cath lab for about 12 years, they had been trying to get an MRI for about 10 years, trying to get a dialysis unit for 15 years, and trying to deliver health care out of a building built in 1947.

When our government came to power, we started to be accountable. We started to look at savings within the government first, because you must look internally before you look externally, and things started to happen. Cardiac care was expanded. In my municipality we now have a cath lab, thanks to many people who got behind it and a government that saw the need. We will be opening an MRI in about another month. We have a dialysis unit, with another one coming onside again within the next couple of months. We found the necessary dollars within the system because of accountability on the part of our government.

One of the concerns I have is that there still seems to be a perception across the way that you solve your problem with a whole bunch of money. But the philosophy they have is not accountability. It is, "Throw money at it."

Accountability has many facets. As I listen to them over there, sometimes some of the facts they are giving are not always necessarily correct. That is a degree of accountability, and I have concerns with that because the public listens to this. There are days I wonder why they do, but they do. They like to see what goes on, and I can tell you that some of them are not very appreciative of the type of conduct that all of us in this House engage in. That is one degree of accountability, again: the way we conduct ourselves in this House, accountable to those people who are watching.

1630

Our government has restructured big time since we took over in 1995. Why? Because, as I said, spending was totally out of control, unemployment was rising drastically, and welfare and social assistance were rising drastically. We had to start to get things under control. We had to start to be accountable to the people, because it is the taxpayers' money. It isn't mine, it isn't yours; it's the taxpayers' money that we are spending up here. I suggest to you that we should be somewhat accountable, and more accountable. When we formed the government, we looked within all of the ministries, and let me assure you we still have a long ways to go.

I can remember restructuring my own business, and we did it many, many times over a period of about 30 years. We would have a team meeting of the staff,

saying, "Hey, if we do this we're going to save a bunch of money. If we do the other thing, we will be more accountable. We'll be able to give better customer service." After we had that meeting—and some went on for half an hour; other ones went on for two or three or four hours—the final comment was, "Tomorrow morning we'd better start re-looking at it and looking at ways to achieve the accountability, to achieve the savings and to make sure that what we are delivering is the best possible product." Again, as I said, look inside before you look outside.

A year ago or less, when our government passed the balanced budget act, what it said was that we will be responsible, we will be accountable, something that had never, ever been done in this House before. Governments can no longer run deficits: kind of a unique way to do it. You try to do it in your business and you try to do it in your home. Why then would we not do it in government? Again, we are the people who spend the people's money and create the programs we have to offer.

As we have said, the eighth step that was created in the throne speech was holding the broad public sector accountable to the taxpayers. As step eight of this plan, our government will introduce sweeping reforms to ensure that all public sector institutions are accountable to the citizens of this province. Certainly there are proposed amendments to the Audit Act which would empower the Provincial Auditor to ensure that institutions funded by Ontario taxpayers use the money prudently, effectively, as intended, and become as efficient and accountable as possible. This is a policy in many businesses in this province. It's a policy we try to achieve in our own home budgets. Granted, we don't always do it, but we try. Sometimes there are more things you need than there is money to go around, but we try to do it. Why then would we not do it in government, and why would other governments in the past not have done the same thing?

One of the interesting things is that we're going to introduce legislation to cancel the OHIP billing numbers of providers convicted of health fraud. It will be introduced shortly. Why would we not do that? If there is fraud in the system, then what it does is take the money away from those people who really need it. It doesn't matter whether it's in health care or whether it's in social assistance or whatever. If money is taken out of a system and used fraudulently, then I suggest we have to introduce legislation and changes that will make that not happen.

Running deficits is not sustainable, and if you believe that then I feel very sorry for you, because they are not sustainable and I believe they are not acceptable. Your government, your municipalities and school boards are now prohibited from running deficits. The budget will introduce measures that will require the entire public sector, including hospitals, to act in a fiscally responsible manner.

It was interesting. I was talking to the CEO or the administrator of our local hospital, who is extremely

supportive of this type of legislation, the reason being that it means that those that are accountable, those that are running good, effective and efficient operations, should be complimented. They are the ones that should be given the extra dollars that may be necessary. One of the problems we have had over the past many years is various groups who spend without some degree of accountability, and what do they do? They run off to the government and say, "Oh, I've a deficit. I need more money." In the past it's been, "Throw the money to them," but that doesn't create any type of accountability whatsoever. I believe, as the gentleman who is the head of our local hospital suggests, that if you are spending wisely, things will move along well.

The taxpayers are concerned. In my own riding, I have approximately 50 requests that I have passed on for an audit of a certain organization that we fund. People are concerned that these organizations that we fund are not to some degree spending wisely, and I can tell you this: I believe we're not going far enough. I believe we should be auditing externally every organization that we fund. We should be doing that, absolutely. The Provincial Auditor does it to us and publicizes what we're doing wrong, and indeed should. If we are not doing something right, if we are being unaccountable in a certain area, why in the name of goodness can the taxpayer not know? But over the years it seems, "Oh, let's hide it. Let's throw some more money at it. Let's put it under the bed and everybody is just going to be happy."

I know that's the way the opposition and the third party think. I know that. I can appreciate that's the way you think. You don't want accountability. I said accountability means certain things. Where was the accountability last Friday from the third party to the students, to the teachers, to the parents, to the grandparents, to all of the people to make sure that those students were going to get their year? Where was the accountability in that? I'm sorry. There was no accountability. I've made comments about accountability being in many forms. One happened to be a very poor example of it last Friday. I couldn't believe it, and as I said very publicly, I was actually ashamed to be in this House last Friday because of some of the comments that were made.

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Sustained growth: that's accountability. Honouring your pledge, honouring a promise: that's accountability. A new business impact test, which is what's going to happen through the Red Tape Commission, is accountability. As I said, there's no such thing as government money; it's your money. It's your money, people of this province.

The government will sell businesses it should not operate and assets it should not own—that is accountability—and have sunset clauses to make sure you look at things, to make sure they're working well. I know the opposition wants us to be in absolutely everything, because they don't believe the private sector should do anything. Anybody who goes private or any private person, they tell you, is wrong. They're the bad guys.

They're the guys who don't know nothing. They've all got to be in the public sector. You say it every time you stand up.

The 21st century: businesses can set up shop anywhere fairly quickly. That, ladies and gentlemen, is accountability, very much accountability.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that we all use this word "accountability" and many do not practise it. We get out and go through the rhetoric, "Everybody's wrong but me." I'm a great believer that if you're going to point the finger, for goodness' sakes, look in the mirror while you're doing it. If you're going to be factual in this House, for goodness' sakes, be factual, don't twist things around that sometimes are not.

I am very proud to have stood today and talked about the throne speech, a throne speech that will lead us into the future, a throne speech that has 21 steps, a direction, a plan. I know it's a surprise for the opposition to have an idea, but we have ideas. We move forward—

Mr O'Toole: No vision, none at all.

Mr Stewart: That's right, they have no ideas at all.

It was interesting to listen to what the member from Eglinton-Lawrence talked about. I guess I'll go out and I'll untie my horse out the back and get on and ride home, or I'll get in the buggy. You want to go back, I'm sorry, I know you do, but you didn't do it very well in the past. I suggest to you that with the type of lack of accountability, with the type of no direction, with the type of leadership, I really hope the opposition does not form the government for a good long time, because if they do, our future is in jeopardy because they can't think out of the box. They can't think about what this great province needs to look like. We've got to prepare now for what we want 10 or 15 years down the way.

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

Mr Bradley: I'm glad the member brought up the issue of accountability. I want to commend him for that because I was thinking of some areas where accountability would be very useful.

There was an agreement signed with a private sector firm to run a highway called Highway 407. That particular deal, which costs the users of that highway an awful lot of money all the time, is a rather interesting deal, whether one agrees or disagrees with it. I'm very apprehensive about the details of that and the concept of the fact of the private sector owning and operating a highway of that kind, but be that as it may, the problem is that even under the freedom of information act of the province of Ontario, we cannot get that information.

It would be useful for us to have that so that the government could be accountable. If we had all the facts on the table, and the public were able to assess those facts, the public could then make an informed judgment as to whether that was a good deal or not. It's not simply what's in the government's talking notes, but whether that's a good deal objectively agreed to.

A second would be government advertising. We have \$234 million now of government advertising. I think

most people who are objective would agree, even some government members, that the kind of advertising we're getting is clearly of a partisan kind, that it's not independent, that it's not information that is provided; it is self-serving, blatantly government advertising.

Another area I would like him to look at is the cabinet office. The member for Sarnia-Lambton mentioned there had been a huge increase in the cost of the cabinet office this particular year. It would be good to have accountability for that cabinet office and the huge raises that were given to ministers' political staff, two years ago, of 30%.

The last is the radiation treatment to be available at Sunnybrook hospital. I would like to see the details of that. I think the government should be accountable and then the public could make the appropriate judgment.

Mr Bisson: I find it interesting that a government member would stand in the House and say that we should never look at what happened in the past, that we should not look at the past to learn what we can learn, that we should only look at the future.

I remind the government member that we learn a lot by our past; we learn how to do things well and we learn how to do things better. That's how progress moves along. I thought that was an amazing comment.

He tries to leave us in the House and those watching back home with the impression that whatever was run by the public sector, not directly by a ministry but by some agency such as a rape crisis centre, maybe a children's aid centre, whatever it might be, public housing, you name it, was run badly and that we need to have this really good type of auditing brought in because God knows how they spend their money; they just keep on spending and they come back to government.

It flies in the face of reality. The organizations out there like the children's aid society, yes, like women's crisis centres and others, have been running quite effectively, quite efficiently, and do you know what? it's now the law that they need to be audited by an outside firm.

The member across the way tries to make it look as if these people are spending money like drunken sailors when it's not the case, and then says they're not accountable because we need to have them audited in some way, something that already happens.

I wish the member would just check his facts a little bit better before he starts to speak.

Then on the question of deficits, I think his whole idea is a great one. I think he's right that governments should not run deficits, and therefore I think we should get rid of every credit card every consumer has in Ontario, that we should outlaw the loaning of money for mortgages, cars and everything else, that we should not allow any lending to the private sector, because those are all deficits and we know how well our economy would work if people didn't have credit. Imagine that.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I was certainly very entertained and really enjoyed the presentation made by the member from Peterborough. As usual, he put forth his full effort and gave everything to that presentation.

He really zeroed in on accountability and pointed out to both opposition parties their errors in accountability in the past. I thought he did extremely well in talking about how they've thrown money at things in the past, the old spend, tax and borrow philosophy, particularly of the Liberals, and the NDP was really the borrower and built up the horrendous debt in this province.

It is interesting that he pointed out the three themes that were in that throne speech, along with the 21 steps, the three themes being growth, fiscal responsibility and accountability. It seems to grate on the opposition tremendously when we talk about accountability, because obviously for the 10 lost years in Ontario that was what was indeed lacking here—accountability.

He made reference to conduct here in the Legislature, and I too have become disappointed over the last few years with the style that the opposition uses. They do not come up with alternative ideas, but rather are obstructionist. They really obstruct every move the government tries to make, but don't come forward with good ideas. That's really what the opposition is there for.

Also the member from Peterborough talked about it being the taxpayers' money. When you listen to the opposition, you'd think it was their money or government's money. They really lose track of where those dollars come from.

He talked about running deficits and their not being sustainable. I couldn't have said it better myself: the lack of sustainability, and we saw that going on for so many years in the province of Ontario. I thank the member for Peterborough for just a great speech.

The Acting Speaker: Time has expired. Comments and questions.

1650

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): Aristotle is busy today, so I won't—I'd love to be able to quote the Premier, but he of course, speaking of accountability, is here so seldom, it's difficult to know what he's thinking.

The Acting Speaker: We don't allow you to do anything indirectly that you can't do directly.

Mr McMeekin: Thanks, Mr Speaker. I want to say that, in fairness, it took the Premier—

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You know that the Speaker took a very defined position on members mentioning whether or not another member was present or wasn't present. We continue to see the Liberal official opposition drag this up time and time again. Each time it is dragged up by this member, that member, this member, that member, the Speaker warns those particular members.

I suspect, unless the House considers the option of saying to the opposition or any member of this Legislature that the next time it's done, they'll be named, it will not stop.

Mr Bradley: Are you telling the Speaker how to do the job?

Hon Mr Sterling: I've noticed this three or four times this afternoon, as I sit here quietly listening to this debate

and wanting members to get on with the debate, rather than this childishness. I just wanted to express that particular opinion. I hope that the Chair will take it under consideration.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order. I will take that into consideration.

Mr Bisson: On two points of order, Mr Speaker: One is, I would ask for unanimous consent in order to give the member back his time so he can finish his spot that he had. I would ask for unanimous consent first.

Interjections: No.

The Acting Speaker: There is not consent.

Mr Bisson: You didn't even ask for it, Bert.

The Acting Speaker: Is there consent to restore the lost time? No.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: I think you made a good ruling and I appreciated very much that you took into consideration the rules of this House.

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

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You know I rose on two points of order. I did the first one. The second one—

The Acting Speaker: I just wanted to clear up that I don't take numerous points of order in rotation. I give attention to people who stand up when they want something. So after you had your first point of order, there was another member who came in order before you. If you have another point of order, I'll hear it now.

I would like to hear the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot for about a minute and 30 seconds, please.

Mr McMeekin: Mr Speaker, thank you for that. I should say at the outset that when I heard that the recall of the Legislative Assembly would be delayed a month, I actually wrote in my biweekly column, suggesting that was probably good, because I took the Premier at his word that the government would be about the process of identifying a vision for Ontario and attempting to articulate that vision. I said in my column that there was a sense of excitement that was permeating the entire province. We were waiting in breathless anticipation for the chance to come back and to be about the task that we were elected to be about.

Little did I know, though, that we would come back to a situation where we would have 21 excuses offered as to why the students didn't do their homework in the four months that they had off. It's rather disappointing, and I can tell you that a number of my constituents in Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot understand accountability. They understand very much that this is the people's house and that the people's Premier should be here answering the questions of those who were duly elected to represent their interests throughout Ontario. So the term "accountability" coming for the opposite side of the House is somewhat shallow in that context.

The Acting Speaker: I want to be clear. I want to be very clear about the ruling of the Chair, and that is that you don't do something indirectly that you don't do

directly. In that, I'm willing to accept your withdrawal of the last remark.

Mr McMeekin: Which remark was that, Mr Speaker? Mr Speaker, if I've offended anybody or touched a sensitive nerve, I certainly wasn't—

The Acting Speaker: No, I'm sorry. I don't want it conditional. Either you withdraw it or you don't.

Mr McMeekin: I'll withdraw whatever anyone found offensive, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Peterborough. Two minutes for your response.

Mr Stewart: You know, I kind of chuckle to myself when I talked about accountability for 20 minutes over here, and people get up and try and circumvent the rules in this House. I suggest that they maybe get the dictionary out, look at what the word "accountability" is and start to practice it a little bit more.

I made the comment that I believe that anybody that we supply money to or give money to or grant money to should be accountable—and many of them are—and also should be audited. It's much the same as teacher testing. Teacher testing is not to point the finger, it's not to criticize, it's not to suggest that they're doing wrong. Just maybe we could help them. Just maybe we could help them become—by knowing what the problems might be, maybe then we could assist them in having a new direction, having a new program or indeed having a plan. They don't like testing. Why wouldn't you? You want to know whether people are being taught well, whether the quality of education's good.

When you talk about accountability, should we not make sure that people are spending the money wisely? And for goodness' sake, if we can assist them, why would we not? If people are scared of it, then I suggest to you they're the ones that we should be looking at very carefully, because most of them—and I'm quite sure many of them out there—do the job well, they're efficient, they're effective, they do it extremely well. But just maybe within that we could also assist them a little bit extra.

Again, I listened to the opposition criticize the private sector—

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Stewart: —and it happens forever. Thank you, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate. The Chair recognizes the member for York West.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): There's still two minutes, Mr Speaker. We still have, I believe, two minutes, or are we done? Are we done?

The Acting Speaker: No. As usual, there were four and then a reply.

Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot.

Mr McMeekin: Heretofore known as ADFA, Mr Speaker. I'll try to be more careful with my comments.

In direct response to the throne speech, I want to say that the people of ADFA, my home riding, were looking for leadership in the throne speech. Very much a move

away from what is perceived in our part of the world is the no-fault insurance that this government policy seems to carry with them. Whenever something goes wrong, it's somebody else's fault.

1700

They were anxious, but I think there was some encouragement from their member, who led them to believe that there would in fact be a substantive vision shared as to where this province would be going. They were quite anxious to see that substantive vision, rather than a bunch of worded vagaries that they found profoundly disappointing, I think it's fair to say.

I've heard it said that vision without action is a dream and action without a vision is a nightmare. I would commend those words to the government opposite. As one of my farm constituents said after reading a copy of the throne speech I'd sent on to him, he suddenly understood what the words "compassionate conservatism" mean. They mean having compassion for Conservatives.

I know what the people in my riding were looking for was a government that would be prepared to address the real concerns of working families and articulate a plan that would indeed be one that would see us acting in the common good.

The people of Ancaster, Dundas and Flamborough have a bunch of concerns, some of which I want to share with you.

They're worried very much about health care, this universal access to publicly funded health care. They were worried, as I was worried, when we read the government's own reference to the spending in that area being 19% higher than ever before.

Talk about a government that claims they want to be accountable, I couldn't believe that in the throne speech, after lamenting the rise in health care costs, they posed the rhetorical question, "Is the health care system in fact 19% better than it was?" I think it says something significant that the government wasn't in a position to answer that.

There is concern in my community about some \$250 million in health care costs that are about to be off-loaded on to the local municipality and the suggestion made by the government's own special adviser that half of that be picked up in the municipality, perhaps through property taxes.

There is very real concern about the lack of foresight around front-end loading of capital costs with respect to long-term care. Some 24% of the people who are currently in the four acute care hospitals in the Hamilton area shouldn't be there. They are there at \$802 a day when you get wonderful long-term care at St Joseph's Villa for about \$100 a day.

They are very concerned that tuition fees have escalated 65% in the last five years.

They are phenomenally concerned with the off-loading of costs to municipalities. They specifically worry about what's going to happen to their property taxes if and when we ever see a slowdown in the

economy; these recession-sensitive services, particularly social services and social housing.

They are concerned about democracy and how it sometimes appears to them to not be working anywhere near as well as they'd like.

And of course they are concerned about tax increases and the kind of off-loading of costs that is going to make it very difficult, particularly for seniors and those on fixed incomes, who very soon, if things keep going the way they're going, will have to make the very cruel decision of giving up their homes.

There is continued concern—and we saw it on the front page of the Hamilton Spectator today—with the escalation of user fees; anticipated service cuts; the assault on literacy, as community-based libraries close; the school chaos that's been created by pitting one community against another with this off-the-wall funding formula; the lack of accountability with respect to the \$9.1 million that were saved by this government in the face of a plan by the school board and parent groups to use that money that was saved during the work disruption to rescue some days for our kids, and this government's unwillingness to respond to that.

Needless to say, there is ongoing concern about amalgamation, particularly since the C.D. Howe report came out and spelled out the experience. We have the city of Montreal promising that they're going to learn from the mistakes of the city of Toronto. We had the city of Toronto promising they'd learn from the mistakes of Halifax. We had Halifax promising they'd learn from the mistakes of Winnipeg.

Yet, we've got a government on the other side of the House which continues to put increasing emphasis on very foolish and misguided restructuring. We're seeing this in some of our partner associations out there. AMO recently came out with a report which was very consistent with the municipal tour that I and a few of my colleagues had undertaken, showing profound mistrust for this government and many, many comments about their very poor communication with municipalities.

On the issue of Smart Growth, there is a real sense that this government hasn't been clear as to what they mean by Smart Growth. Yes, we're hearing all the buzzwords, but we're getting very little substance. In fact, to date, this government's statements seem to raise more questions than answers. Government references to consultation are in fact helpful, but we need to acknowledge that they only make a difference to the extent that we can move from process to substance.

Frankly, it's a lot like the old Wendy's commercial when you come to this Smart Growth animal. I need to ask, being from a rural constituency, where's the beef? It just doesn't seem to be there.

Let me state that what's needed in order to foster Smart Growth rather than dumb decline are what I call the three Ps. We need to be talking seriously about partnership planning with our partners; we need to be talking about power sharing, something that's new to this government; and we need, of course, to be talking about

proper funding. That's what's needed if we want to replace the kind of dumb decline that we've been seeing over the years with Smart Growth.

It's not enough for members of the opposition just to lean on their horns all the time. There's a responsibility to be positive and I certainly want to do that. I want to suggest that problems can't be resolved at the same level and awareness that created them. I think it was Einstein who defined insanity as doing things the way they've always been done and expecting a different result.

I want to make a series of very specific suggestions in the minute or so that I have left, that I want to commend to the government because I want, like all the other members of the Liberal caucus, to be as helpful as we can.

I think the government needs to be looking at job creation tax credits. That's something I think there'd be some support for. We need an enhancement of historic preservation tax credits and a commitment to revitalize inner city and rural schools. We need to look seriously at the establishment of rural legacy programs. We need to give some real credence when we talk about government policies that will actually preserve local decision-making authority.

We need imaginative transit policies that recognize the need for ongoing sustainable capital and operating costs. We need to respond to a burden and deferred infrastructure expenditure vacuum. And we need to find special capital cost allowances for the brownfields developments that this government frequently talks about but doesn't really seem to be developing a strategy for.

Finally, we need the courage to mandate urban growth boundaries that make difficult choices between spending more to grow, or less to sustain the strong and healthy communities we currently have.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I appreciate the opportunity to stand today to speak in reply to the speech from the throne. Traditionally, speeches from the throne have been long on rhetoric and short on substance. I agree this year's speech set a precedent, because it's short on rhetoric and short on substance, both. I hope that doesn't continue in the future and certainly, given the opportunity that we hope to have some day, I would hope that our throne speech does not fall into the category of this year's.

1710

Nonetheless, I want to speak, in the few minutes that I have, a bit about health care to begin with, and health care in the context of accountability, because that seems to be the theme of the day. As the member for Peterborough mentioned earlier that we don't give any credit to privatization or the private sector, on this side of the Legislature—he should be very careful in imputing any motives on this side of the Legislature. He has quite enough to take care of on his own side. But let me tell you this, and I'll repeat it so that people can hear it, because the Minister of Transportation appreciated it when I said it before. I was in the private sector for 36 years—and I suggested in fact the Minister of Trans-

portation might not even be that old; I don't know whether he is or not, but I wish him well as he grows older—and I have an appreciation for the private sector. There is a place for the private sector to play; there is role for the private sector to play. But the Premier said over the last few days, and particularly last Saturday night in a television interview, “You know, we've spent 19% more in the last two years, I think it is, on health care, and do you think it's 19% better?” No, we don't. In fact, I think the Premier in his remarks even said that he doesn't think we got 19% more results.

But when it comes to accountability, who's responsible for that? You've been the government now for six years and if you're not getting 19% more out of it, who are you going to blame? Are you going to blame the public sector and say, “The only answer to it is we've got to hand this over to the private sector”? I think not. I think that you, number one, government members, have to shoulder that blame if you haven't gotten the results you wanted. You've been the government for six years and when it comes to being accountable in health care, what do we have? In my riding of Essex, we have 40,000 people who don't have a family doctor. That's shameful. If you'd been more accountable in even the first year of your government, we would have those doctors ready to graduate today.

What happens in hospitals across the province, not only in my own riding? There are lineups. Were there lineups six years ago? I don't recall, when I first was elected in 1993, over seven years ago, that there were the lineups in emergency wards that there are today. So who's accountable for that? Well, the government says, “It's not our fault. It's the hospitals' fault. It's not the fact that we took \$7 billion away from them. That doesn't matter. They're the ones who are accountable, not this government.” I think it's time you stood up and took the view that—wasn't it the former President of the United States, Harry Truman, who said, “The buck stops here”? If you're not happy and you've had six years to work on it, then at least take the blame for it and don't try to shove it off on to somebody else.

Another thing in accountability: we have a great need for special-needs assistants in our schools in Essex county. It just isn't adequate; there's a shortfall. If you'd only taken some of the \$235 million that you spent on advertising and put some of it toward those special-needs kids in the riding of Essex and other ridings across this province, you wouldn't have to bear that responsibility, that accountability, that shortfall. But believe me, there is one. And who's responsible for it? You folks are. You've had your six years so far to solve that problem.

When we talk about privatization versus public, I have a definition. I'd like to look at it this way and I think people understand it this way: “public” is either funded by the public purse—that being the taxpayers of this province—or volunteers. That, to me, is generally speaking the not-for-profit sector. But do you know what “private” means to me? It means for-profit. It means that somebody is going to make a buck out of this, and you

can bet it isn't the ordinary working family in this province. It isn't the ordinary working family in this province that's going to benefit from the privatization of, say, our public hospitals.

As a matter of fact, some are fans of that program ER. That takes place in a publicly funded hospital. It's a county hospital. But do you know what they're always faced with in that county hospital, if you believe the dramatization of it? They're always faced with the fact that they have patients come in and they aren't supposed to give them the treatment. You know, where those doctors are found out and the little, short head surgeon comes and berates them? There's nothing wrong with being short, mind you, but I'm just trying to describe the doctor I'm speaking of—

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: As opposed to the tall one, yes.

But he's always berating them because they're giving inappropriate treatment, not because it's not needed but because the hospital shouldn't pay it because the hospital can't afford it because it's a publicly funded hospital in that American system.

Do you know what they don't show you? They don't show you the private hospitals. They don't show you the plush private hospitals that make hundreds of millions of dollars in profit and that, even then, you have to struggle to get into because of the managed health care system that they have in the United States. Believe me, I honestly believe in my heart of hearts that if we privatize public hospitals, we're going to end up with a managed health care system where you won't be able to get the health care you need unless some insurance bureaucrat says to the doctor, “You can give that treatment.” Otherwise, you'll end up in one of those county hospitals where that mean-spirited doctor says, “You can't give them the treatment they need,” and where doctors and nurses will be forced to work around the system. That's what I think we're going to have with private hospitals.

Something that wasn't mentioned in the throne speech—and I'd like to go on about health care and hospitalization because there is so much to say about it and so much that you haven't done in the six years that you've had the opportunity, but I want to say a little bit about agriculture. Again, the throne speech was short on substance. In fact, it didn't even mention agriculture. The word “agriculture” was not mentioned in the throne speech, and where I come from in the county of Essex, that's a shame, because we have a thriving agricultural industry when it comes to the greenhouse growers, although they're not without their challenges these days with high energy costs and competition from the US. We have grain and oilseed farmers who aren't getting the assistance they need. Are they getting enough assistance from the federal government? I don't think so. Are they getting enough from the provincial government? Absolutely not.

In fact, I challenge you to put it on the table and challenge the federal government to come on down and match it. But you guys didn't even have the decency to

mention the second-largest industry in the province of Ontario. That shows me, then, where is the accountability to the farmers of this province? You have absolutely none, not only—at this point you just don't have any credibility with them, I don't think, because you've hung them out to dry.

I've touched on health care and agriculture. I have a letter from a radiologist who needs your help, but I know my time is up.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

1720

Mr Bisson: I kind of appreciated the reference that was made by the member when he talked about accountability of the government. There was a whole theme inside their throne speech, where they talked about government being more accountable. I guess generally everybody wants government to be more accountable. God, I want my wife to be more accountable with our finances. She certainly wants me to be more accountable in how I spend my money. So it's a sort of motherhood-and-apple-pie kind of statement.

But my problem is this: There's a lot of doublespeak by the government. They talk about accountability and I look at the decisions they've made where they've not been accountable since 1995. I'll just give you one as an example.

Mike Harris said, "I'm going to go out and privatize highway maintenance. I'm going to do that because I'm going to tell you right now there is going to be better service and we're going to do it for less." In fact, on the record was Ernie Eves, the then Minister of Finance, who said, "If we go out and privatize highway maintenance and we don't save at least 2% per year, we're not going to do it." Where's the accountability?

At the end of the day, we privatized highway maintenance and now, guess what? It's costing us more money than it used to before, by quite a bit, and we're getting less service and worse-maintained roads when you look at what happened over the last couple of winters. So I say, where is the accountability in their decisions as it touches on issues that they're directly in control of?

I look at, for example, the Premier, who says outside of the House that he doesn't like to come to this place. I say, listen, like it or dislike it, the British parliamentary system says that you have to have a thing called question period where the opposition is able to ask questions of the Premier in order to make him accountable for the decisions he's made as Premier of the government and of this Legislature. But the Premier himself says he doesn't want to come to the Legislature. So if he doesn't want to come here, it seems to me he is not being accountable. Therefore, they're not practising what they preach. Another promise made, another promise not kept.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Transportation): I want to touch on health care, if I may, because I find the debate right now fascinating. I've got a book in my hand that was written back in 1984. Back in 1984, people were talking about the problems we had in health care.

Mr Sergio: That was a century ago.

Hon Mr Clark: It was a century ago, the member says. It was a century ago. In fact, then, you know what? Governments weren't listening. The quote in the conclusion of this chapter says about the present health care delivery system, "... the general agreement [is] that the present delivery model is inefficient and may lead to inappropriate care for the elderly. It was noted that this delivery system is very expensive and, without revision, can be expected to become more costly as the population ages." This was written by an actuary, Professor Robert Brown at the University of Waterloo, 1984. The CMA, the OMA, every province in the country knew that health care was not sustainable, and every government in the country refused to address the fact that it was not sustainable in its current mode.

What we have is the Canada Health Act that states very clearly, "You must have universal access for this amount of services for everyone." Then, the province of Ontario, because it was a compassionate province, under all governments that were in this province, developed another set of services that were beside the Canada Health Act—not in the Canada Health Act—that we provided. The federal government went from 50-50 funding to 13 cents on the dollar. So we have to maintain the Canada Health Act with an aging population that in about 10 years will actually bankrupt Nova Scotia—this is the truth. We have to maintain this, but we also have this political reality of these other services that the federal government doesn't want to look at.

Quite clearly, either the federal government has to come to the table and fund 50-50 to ensure the Canada Health Act or we have to start looking at the services that are outside of it that we're providing today.

Mr Sergio: My compliments to my colleagues the member from Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot and the member from Essex on a terrific explanation of some details of the last budget—a budget, really, that wasn't. The only thing that it gave us were 21 missteps—not 21 steps; 21 missteps.

Interjection: Excuses.

Mr Sergio: Excuses, yes. We have seen in this particular—I won't call it "budget"—what they have done frantically to the health care system and to hospital care, and then we have seen that they have introduced the "three Cs," I call them: chaos, crisis and confrontation. They totally devastated these two areas and now they are trying to bring back some measures with repairs and stuff like that.

The Premier says, "What is the problem with privatizing health care or hospitals?" We have a lot of problems with that. "Why do you have a problem with private universities, education, stuff like that?" We have a lot of problems with that. You can ask anyone today and say, "Are you better off today than five, six or seven years ago?" The answer is, "No, we are not better off." Are we getting a better education today?" "No, we are not." "Is education important?" "Very important." That is why Dalton McGuinty, the Liberal leader, four years ago

introduced the report called First Steps with respect to childhood education. We said to the Premier, "Take it. Run with it. It's yours. Go ahead and do it." They didn't do it because it came from us. Yes, indeed they have created chaos, crisis and confrontation in every aspect and now they are trying to cover up.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate this afternoon. The member opposite from ADFA, Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot—the name of the riding is as long as mine, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and of course the member from Essex took part in that. The Minister of Transportation spoke so eloquently about health care and health care needs of Ontarians. He may not have mentioned it in today's debate, but I know we have had discussions with him that private health care is not such a bad word. That has been going on in Ontario for a long time.

Hon Mr Clark: Shouldice Clinic.

Mr Gill: Yes, the Shouldice Clinic, which is one of the best hernia hospitals anywhere. They have private labs. I don't know why it has become taboo. People just don't even want to think about it. When Mr Romanow goes around the country talking about the state of the health care system in Canada, I think anything and everything should be on the table.

I don't think we can sustain the present spending. As the Minister of Health said the other day, under the current rate of spending, within the next four or five years every tax dollar will be spent on health care. I don't think we can ignore any other programs. There's a lot of need for other programs. Therefore, we must go down to the so-called basic or zero-based budgeting and find out what the best value is for taxpayer dollars. Like the opponent members sometimes say, it's not the government's money; it's the money of the taxpayers. Similarly, when we found that we had \$1-billion surplus, we gave \$200 back to each individual taxpayer. That was their money and people know how to best use their money, not the government.

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

Mr Crozier: It's too bad the minister from Stoney Creek doesn't understand that specific transfers under the health and social services transfers were reduced perhaps and, in some cases, it was changed because a former Conservative government wanted tax credits instead.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member should be fully aware, after all the years he's been here, that the proper way to address a minister of the crown is to address him by his full title, not as "the minister from" a certain area. The minister he referred to is the Minister of Transportation.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order, but I've heard them referred to as both or as either.

Mr Crozier: Now I know why the first part of your name is spelled the way it is.

Let me read too from somebody who's written something. Dr Gervais is a diagnostic radiologist in my riding today writes:

"There are four-to-seven-week waits for basic diagnostic tests, both in and out of hospital and more specialists are leaving each month ..."

In February of this year, he wrote and reapplied for funding for diagnostic testing that he had received in the past. Two months later, the day before appeal must be filed, the ministry writes him a letter denying continuation of his diagnostic services in the Windsor, LaSalle and Amherstburg areas. There are only four community-based radiologists in a county of 300,000 and Dr Gervais writes for our help. He needs your help.

I have another letter where they're pleading for money for a son who needs special care and yet they're denied.

1730

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's a pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to a throne speech. I want to welcome the citizens of Ontario to this political forum. It's 5:25, it's Monday afternoon—

Hon Mr Clark: It's 5:30.

Mr Marchese: Give or take a couple of minutes? Five-thirty of the clock.

Hon Mr Clark: Not from your angle.

Mr Marchese: Because the angle is always important, it's true, Mr Chair—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Yes, they do it all the time. But it's a pleasure. I like it. I don't want the Speaker to interrupt our debate and dialogue, because I enjoy it.

Hon Mr Clark: Absolutely.

Mr Marchese: But let me get into this for a while, then we'll engage each other. OK. Because one of the—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Hold on, John, I've got a lot of things to say, and then we'll dialogue. OK? Because one of the key features of this government, or at least one of the buzzwords, is "accountability," isn't it, member for Stoney Creek? Correct. We are in agreement with that. And they—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Well, that's the question for the citizens: "Do you believe that? Yes or no?" And the question of accountability is, accountability to whom, when—

Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General): That would be the auditor.

Mr Marchese: And the question is, are they accountable to you, good citizens? If so, when do they do that and how do they hide themselves when they are caught by people like the auditor of this province, who I think has got a very keen eye?

Hon Mr Turnbull: He just refused to sign your books that year.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Marchese: Ah, well, let's talk about your books for a while, David.

Hon Mr Turnbull: He's never refused—

Mr Marchese: OK, but I want to talk about your books, right? Because you've got the limousine, right? When you have the four wheels and somebody's driving you, it's your books we're talking about and not mine, because that's what counts. And accountability is something that you value a great deal.

The member from Stoney Creek says, "Yup."

Hon Mr Clark: I couldn't hear you.

Mr Marchese: No, no, but you agreed earlier; I'm just repeating it. Ah, he's going to stop.

The Acting Speaker: I'd like to caution those on this side that you can't interrupt and interject, and I'd like to ask the speaker from Trinity-Spadina to address your comments through the Chair, please.

Mr Marchese: As always, Speaker; always through you, although from time to time I glance with my left eye to the members to engage them and from time to time I tend to keep my right eye on you. But I don't mind the dialogue with the members. I appreciate it, except when they're interrupting me too often. Then I plead for your support to keep the order. But unless that's the case, I like the dialogue, Speaker, if you don't mind. OK.

The auditor's report, you will recall—that was, what, in the month of November of the year 2000? It's not too far away. It's within grasp of our memory. Usually they tend to go deeply into the recesses of our minds and bodies, but in this case November 2000 isn't so far away that you are likely to forget.

But you will recall the auditor's report exposing some of your failures with respect to issues of accountability. The wonderful quotation I want to bring to bear on this discussion, because I remember the member from London West, in a program that he and I did, the Michael Coren Show, where I said that the government has been quoted as saying, "We are not the government."

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Could he get a word in edgewise?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Etobicoke North, come to order.

Mr Marchese: I remember saying on that program, "We are not the government, you often said," and the member for London West said, "We never said that. Who said that?" I said, "Well, you did. Most of your members have said that, your government, your Premier."

But the quotation is, "We are not the government. We are the people elected to fix the government." That's just to remind you that you did say that you are not the government and that you're—

Hon Mr Sterling: Come on now, what's the context? Put it in the right context.

Mr Marchese: Sorry, what context are we talking about?

Hon Mr Sterling: In terms of when we say that, context.

Mr Marchese: I'm not sure it matters what context it's in. I'm not sure it matters. The fact of the matter is, you said that you didn't say that you were not the government. It doesn't matter what the context is; the quotation

is, "We are not the government. We are here, we are the people elected to fix the government," which means you guys are not politicians, which means you don't have a clue about being government. You're here to just fix it.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Well, if they're not the government, they can't be accountable to anybody, except that they say they are, and by virtue of their power, "We're accountable." You just have to say, "We're accountable." That's all that matters. But I understand you are not the government; somebody else is. Perhaps Ralph Klein in Alberta is, but here, you're not.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I know, member from Stoney Creek. Just bear with me. The good citizens of Ontario will just have to decide—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: They're not?

Mr Wettlaufer: They're not watching you any more.

Mr Marchese: But of course they are.

Mr Wettlaufer: They're looking at you and you're just preaching drivel.

Mr Marchese: Oh, I'm not sure they think what I am saying is drivel. I am not sure of that. But it's for them to decide, not for me, or for you, member from Kitchener Centre. It's for them to decide, and you will agree with that. It's something we can't dispute because the public will decide for us whether they like us or not, whether we're speaking drivel or not and whether you're the government or not or whether you're the non-government government here to fix the government.

Hon Mr Clark: My remote's broken. You're still on.

Mr Marchese: It doesn't work. You've got to fix it.

"Consider the case of Agricorp." This is what the Provincial Auditor at the time told us was a matter of serious concern. It's an issue I want to connect with respect to the issue of accountability. These are the people that you appoint. The people of Agricorp are people you have appointed—remember, 99.9% Tories, because that's the way you guys like it. It makes you feel good to appoint Tories because then you know how to control the agenda. They only have to be accountable to you and no one else. By and large, 99% of the time they're Tories. I wanted to leave some percentage for some people to escape through the net so they could be non-Tories, but by and large, I think you will agree with me that they're all Tories.

"Agricorp holds crop insurance funds in trust and is supposed to invest them prudently so that they're available if crops fail." That's its purpose and mandate. M. Peters said the following: "We became so concerned about Agricorp's repeated attempts to violate its fiduciary responsibility that, in a very unusual move for my office, we had to take action to ensure that Ontario crop insurance assets were not inappropriately used." Remember, these are people that you appointed to the board.

"The inappropriate uses? Among other things, Peters said, 'Agricorp lost \$325,000 of taxpayers' money in two

weeks of speculative day trading and tried to charge the loss to the Ontario crop insurance fund.”

My first point is, if you are here to fix government, you've got to watch that the people you appoint, with whom you have a very special relationship, have some accountability to someone, and it ought to be you people. You, the non-government government, should look out for us, should look out for the taxpayers, and you should look out for it in advance of the problem happening.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The members for Stoney Creek and Etobicoke North, come to order.

Mr Marchese: The problem is, the issue came and went and everybody left you alone. It didn't last for too long. It was just one brief little day and, God behold, it disappeared. It's amazing how people do not hold you as accountable as they need to. You are one of the few—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Come on, member for Stoney Creek, don't do that. Mr Speaker, it's unfair when he does that, as if to dismiss me so nonchalantly. It's not so simple. Again, my relationship isn't with you, it's with the public. We are discussing with the public whether or not they will say this to me or whether they're going to say this to you, because the issue that I'm speaking to is accountability and the special relationship you have with the very special interest groups you hire to be on these committees. They ain't ordinary working people you're putting on some of these committees. These people have a very close and special connection to some of you, and I don't trust a whole lot of them.

1740

Hon Mr Sterling: That's how you guys operated. You assume we operate it like you.

Mr Marchese: That's exactly the point I make, that you claim to operate differently, and I'm pointing out the errors in terms of how bad you really are and how unaccountable you people are. The fact that you appoint Tories doesn't mean they will not expose themselves at some point in terms of these problems.

The next one: far bigger in dollars is the Teranet system, which in 1991 when we introduced it was a \$275-million project to automate the land registry system.

Mr Tilson: I can't believe you're raising that.

Hon Mr Sterling: I can't believe you're going down this road.

Mr Marchese: No, that's an interesting one. I'm sorry, but by 1998, while you people were in government from 1995 to 1998, three years into Harris's mandate, the cost estimate hit \$560 million. You guys are in control; you've got the wheel. If you don't like it, if you obviously didn't like the idea of automating the land registry system, you've got to fix it, right?

You can't say on the one hand that you're here to fix government and on the other hand say, “Oh, no, but you guys started it,” right? It's like saying, when the NDP was in government—you will recall, Minister Sterling, that when we were in government former Premier Bob Rae used to rail against the federal government, both

Tory government and Liberal government. I recall some of you guys here sitting on this side saying, “Oh, stop whining. You're whining so much about what the federal government has been doing to you. You've got the wheel. You've got to rule. You've got to manage the economy.” You remember that, Minister Sterling? Then, when you guys get into government, you say, “Ha, we have to start blaming and attacking the federal Liberal government because they're not giving us any money for health, they're not giving us any money for housing, they're not giving us any money presumably for post-secondary, or whatever it is.” You're the biggest whiners I've ever seen in this place.

You, in the context—

Hon Mr Clark: You should listen to yourself.

Mr Marchese: No, I am listening, member from Stoney Creek, because I remember very clearly your Premier, Stockwell—

The Acting Speaker: I'll not warn the member for Stoney Creek again.

Mr Marchese:—and including Mr Carr, the Speaker, with all due respect, who often attacked us when we attacked the federal government in a recession for not giving us the financial support we were due. You guys hit the jackpot in terms of having a good economy and you start whining about the federal Liberal government not giving you any support, whining like little children.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Members from Bramalea and Oxford, come to order.

Mr Marchese: With loads of money coming into your coffers, you start attacking them for not getting the support. Please.

So talking about the land registry system, last year they hit \$700 million. This year they're more than \$1 billion. What are you managing here? If you're here to fix the government, fix some of these things. Why haven't you fixed it? That's disappointing. You might laugh, Minister Sterling, but the fact of the matter is I take your word, saying, “We're the non-government government. We're here to fix it.” Lo and behold, there's a whole lot of people who profit so much from you.

Hon Mr Sterling: You did the deal, Rosie. We didn't do the deal.

Mr Marchese: We did the deal.

Hon Mr Sterling: You signed the papers.

Mr Marchese: In the same way, with the 407, which within 20 years would have been in our hands as a government, you people decided, “No, it's not good enough. We're going to give it away to the private sector for 99 years and they have complete control in terms of how much.”

The member from Stoney Creek is holding his head.

They give it away completely to the private sector for 99 years and the rates have gone up in the last couple of years. They have doubled in the last couple of years, all because they have a special relationship with the private sector. It's called grana, it's called moolah, it's called pecunia, it's called a special connection to the special

interest group which is the private sector. That's what I'm talking about. Or what about what Peters says, that it will take \$100 million to get the ambulance system to the point where lives won't be at risk and the government has only put \$30 million. Talk about accountability to the public in saving lives. They put in \$30 million and Provincial Auditor Peters says we need \$100 million, in terms of accountability of human lives. Right?

You guys can find the billions and billions of dollars to give away to the special interest groups—the private sector special interest groups, special relationship you have with them—and that's OK to give my money and the money of the good citizens of Ontario and you give it away to the private sector because you say, "Because we can."

The pecunia, the loads and loads of moolah that goes out to these private guys, and they're drooling with excitement, like they drool with excitement to be able to let—Minister Sterling, I tell you they're drooling with glee and excitement as my money and the taxpayers' money and the citizens' money simply just rolls away in wheelbarrows. Drooling, salivating, salivating continually, they're saying, "What more can we privatize so that we can squeeze a little more?" Here we have a government, the instrument of the private sector, ready to privatize water, ready to privatize hydro, all for and ready to privatize more of the health care system. Why? So that some of the special friends can be greased a little more. That's the special relationship you have with this sector.

The highway maintenance was mentioned earlier on by my colleague from Timmins-James Bay. The highway maintenance was supposed to have saved money. I recall M. Eves, the former Minister of Finance, said, "It's going to save us money." Well, the auditor revealed that we're not saving money. Even in that regard we're not saving money. We were supposed to have a 2% saving, but we are losing money. The taxpayer and the citizens of Ontario combined—you're losing money. Why? Because M. Eves and you, Speaker, and all the rest of them have decided that to give it away to the private sector would save. Save for whom? It's a big saving for those who've got the moolah and the power, and you people are so closely colluded to them it's just insulting to see the whole thing. It's almost perverse, I would add—"insulting" doesn't say anything, but the relationship you have with them is almost perverse.

What more? The cabinet office costs. It was so nice to see the deputy leader, I think it was. I don't know. He blah, blah, blahed about something in response to the fact that you're spending more on hiring special assistants to do your work. You people have increased costs to yourselves in terms of cabinet offices to the tune of, I don't know, a 30% increase. What accountability is it, concerned citizens of Ontario and taxpayers? To whom are they accountable? Are they accountable to you? Maybe they speak for you, but I'm not sure.

All these examples I give you—and there's so much more—how do you respond to that? Their responses to the economic woes are the following: "We've got to

tighten our belts some more. We had a good five years of a wonderful economy," they say, and then all of a sudden the economy is in a tailspin in the US and they're worried—they ought to be. They are saying, "The way to deal with this retrenchment of our economy is to do three or four things: "We've got to fire some more civil servants"—because firing 15,000 wasn't enough." "We've got to tell the ministries they've got to tighten their belts"—as if they haven't done that for the last five years. "We've got to tighten some more." And they said, with the typical arrogance and peacockery of this government, "We're going to continue with our tax cut no matter how wayward, no matter how whacko it is and no matter what other economists say. We are hell-bent on giving people more of a tax cut. Why? "Because we can. Because we say so." By fiat, by ex cathedra power that you hold in your little hands, four more billion bucks are going to go away to the private sector and other individuals. These are the wonderful ideas these people have to keep our economy strong. It's going down the tubes soon, and you remember your Premier saying, "We've created a recession-proof economy." How? The tax cuts. And what are they going to do? They're going to give some more tax cuts for the next couple months or years.

Applause.

Mr Marchese: God bless you. David Turnbull, God bless him. He's OK. David Turnbull from—somewhere.

The tax cuts are the answer, the magic bullet for economic growth. I don't know whom they're talking to, good citizens, but it's not serious economists. They have a special interest for those people who gain from it, and it's not you.

1750

Mr Galt: I'm always pleased to be in the House when the member for Trinity-Spadina is speaking. He is indeed very entertaining. I love his body language, but some of the content of his presentation leaves a lot to be desired.

He talked about the 1995-98 period of whining, and the Bob Rae government and whining. Wow, I heard the whining all the way down to Northumberland when Bob Rae was whining. He didn't need a PA system; you could hear it across the province. I don't hear that kind of whining now. We're doing what is necessary.

I think he was talking about the recession in Ontario. Who caused the major part of that recession? They were going to spend their way out of it, spend their way out of a recession. I think we could be into the same kind of recession right now if we had the same policies as the NDP back in 1990-91. We could be spiralling right into the same kind of basement they went into.

With the kind of policy we have, the fiscal responsibility, I think that's why we're hardly even seeing a blip in Ontario. When they were in such a recession, things were moving along in the US and also in provinces like BC. But when they got the kind of policies you people were using, they spiralled down similarly.

You talked about Highway 407 and its being privatized. I heard your minister talk about its being a private

organization. That's how they were going to build it. I was here six months before I started to realize that you people were building it with public money. I was under that impression, and certainly I was at the Good Roads Association when your minister was speaking about, "It's going to be a private highway." I was very disappointed to find out where it was at.

When you talk about good managing, I suppose good managing was slashing every collective agreement negotiated with the public service. Right across this province you slashed each and every one of them and called it a social contract. I don't think that was good management.

Mr McMeekin: This afternoon has been a real education for me. I've heard about perverse dollar trading and I've heard the terms "arrogance" and, I think, "peacockery."

I thought the throne speech was supposed to be about inspiration and imagination and determination. I need to say, as a relatively new member of this House who listened to the Lieutenant Governor speak for her 19 minutes or so, that there seemed to be, through no fault of hers, very little inspiration, next to no imagination and a seemingly dogged determination to avoid specifics of any regard with so many issues.

One of my colleagues earlier talked about the throne speech saying absolutely nothing about agriculture. It says next to nothing about the environment. It talks vaguely about gridlock and smart growth, whatever that is. There is no mention at all about social housing and the people there.

I had the good fortune, some 25 years or so ago, of working for a member of this House in one of the intern programs. I think it's appropriate to say that this government is very different from the governments of Frost, Robarts and Davis, governments that could perhaps, with some credibility, be referred to as common sense governments that really understood the common good. That's not this government and that's not the throne speech we heard the other day. Davis, Frost and Robarts did a lot of work with select committees, and they made a commitment to working together to solve the problems of this province. I'd like to suggest that's what we need.

Mr Bisson: It is always a pleasure to listen to comments by the member for Trinity-Spadina because, like many people in the assembly, I get to learn more words I can add to my vocabulary each and every time. I'm amazed. There was the word "peacockery." There were a whole bunch of words that I am now going to add to my new dictionary of words that we can use within the Legislature. First of all, on those new words, Mr Marchese, I would like to congratulate you on bringing them to the House.

To the other issue, though, the bigger issue that he raises, which is that of accountability, I've got to say that I agree, not only because we are good friends and we are colleagues in this House, but I look at the government and they say one thing in the throne speech, where they

talk about how, yes, they want more accountability, but when it comes to all the decisions they've made since 1995 when it comes to government expenditures, there are a whole bunch of examples where they've not been very accountable. I say good for the member for Trinity-Spadina for pointing that out.

He pointed out, for example, highway maintenance privatization, where the government said, "We're going to privatize because this is going to save us money and we're going to get better service. The private sector does it better; the public sector does it badly"—you know, that mantra they keep on repeating. We find out at the end that it cost us more money and we get worse services. But there's no accountability mechanism. Is anybody out there doing any kind of value-for-money audit that this government talks about, about what the private sector is not doing when it comes to highway maintenance and why it's costing us more money?

I say to the government, OK, if you want to have accountability, let's talk about mechanisms of accountability. But let's not just have you choose where you want that to happen so that you can make arguments about why then you should privatize this or why then you should privatize that. I say the government talks a good line when it comes to accountability—

Mr Marchese: Blah, blah, blah.

Mr Bisson: Blah, blah, blah, as my good friend from Trinity-Spadina says—but at the end of the day they speak one language but they act totally differently.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr Hastings: First off, we have to correct the record on a couple of items, to the member for Trinity-Spadina. I didn't know he was this fascinated. It must be because of my own interest in agriculture issues, because we have to eat and the farmers of this province provide the food.

Let's get to the point. He talks about the auditor and the issue of misuse or misallocation of funds regarding Agricorp. Yes, it's true, there was a problem there. But as usual with the new debtors' party, what do we get? Half the story. If he went on and accounted for what occurred in the response from Agricorp regarding the \$325,000, you'd find that it has now been replaced. There isn't a penny lost for crop insurance. So I think on that he should get his score right.

For somebody who wants to talk about accountability and that this party or government has no interest in agriculture, again let us say we're still waiting on the feds, still waiting and waiting for their contributions for agricultural producers in this province, particularly the oilseeds sector. When is Mr Vanclief ever going to come through with his portion of the monies in addition to the \$90 million we've already put out?

In terms of the cheques getting out more quickly, I haven't seen anything—to counter or to contrast with the federal government's quick response, ours were out within a week. Proof? The Ontario Corn Producers' Association letter, one of many letters I have received on this issue. We did respond well.

To the member for Trinity-Spadina: accountability? When he was chairperson or a school trustee, surely he wouldn't countenance this kind of waste of money from the Toronto District School Board.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. The member for Trinity-Spadina has two minutes to respond.

Mr Marchese: Good citizens, my question to you is, who is watching this government that is not a government, that wants to fix the government? Who is keeping an eye on them? I tell you, they're not accountable to anyone except themselves. I've got to tell you, you have to be vigilant. Nobody can be vigilant except yourselves, taxpayers, those of you who are worried about your pockets. They often refer to you. But, citizens, you've got to become much more actively involved, because they have a special connection to a most special interest group; that is, the most powerful people who are looking for this government to free up, to get out of the way, except when they need them to loosen up the purse strings. It's pecunia, it's grana, moolah. You know what that means. They are three peculiar words to you, I know, but you have a good sense of what this means, because this is a universal language. You don't need to know the

word "pecunia" to know what this means, right? No, we know. I've got to tell you, with respect to the last point I made, one of the business writers says the following: "But where Flaherty gets it all wrong is in his pre-occupation with tax cuts as the solution." He quotes the minister as saying, "If there is one constant in the equation, it has to be the tax cuts'..." This writer disagrees and so do I, profoundly. "But will businesses invest if they cannot find qualified people? Will they invest if traffic congestion is so bad, employees can't get to work or trucks cannot deliver products on time?"

He continues, "While tax rates are important," and he agrees with you that they are important, "they should not come at the expense of education, transportation, cities and other factors that make up the business environment." So while he even agrees with you in some areas, he's saying that you can't abandon everything else that's so important to—

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, good citizens.

The Acting Speaker: It now being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Vaughan-King-Aurora	Vacant

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

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