



**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
Second Session, 37th Parliament

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de l'Ontario**
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 8 May 2001

Mardi 8 mai 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 May 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

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*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): Week after week, month after month we've been raising concerns about the inadequacy and unfairness of the northern health travel grant. Let me give one more example of the ways in which the travel grant fails the people who need it.

It happens sometimes that newborn infants have to be airlifted to southern Ontario for emergency care. When this situation arises following a Caesarean section delivery, the mother is not immediately able to travel with the baby. Obviously it's essential that the mother be with that baby as soon as she is well enough to travel. But the northern health travel grant rules say that since technically she's not escorting her infant, she does not qualify for financial support, not even the \$420 maximum that northerners are allowed. So in addition to the stress of a seriously ill new baby, the family has to worry about whether they can afford to get the new mother to Toronto or Hamilton or London to be with her ill child. No wonder people in my part of the province feel that the government simply doesn't care.

Too many people feel the anguish expressed by a constituent of mine who lives in Atikokan and has to travel regularly into Thunder Bay for cancer treatment. She writes, "I am upset because I am a low-income single parent of two children struggling to take care of them the way they deserve, but am forced to go into debt and possibly lose my home in order to continue my treatment. Everything I struggled all these years to accomplish has been taken from me, including a secure future for my children, because I am forced to go into debt to stay alive. Is this fair?"

We ask again, on behalf of our constituents who face enormous personal costs to get the health care they need, is this fair?

POVERTY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): The federal government recently released a report, entitled National Child Benefit progress report, 2000, that professes a decrease of child poverty in Canada. The report attributes

this to the success of the national child benefit supplement.

I've read this report and I'm deeply concerned about the federal government's readiness to ignore growing poverty in Ontario and deeper levels of poverty throughout Canada. The report asserts that the national child benefit initiatives are working because child poverty is down. Let me share with you the pertinent facts missing in this report.

Child poverty got worse, not better in many provinces, including Ontario. Poverty grew in the face of economic growth, it grew in the face of job growth, it grew in conjunction with the reduction in welfare rolls and it grew in spite of the national child benefit. Families living in poverty are poorer than ever and they need more help than ever.

Since 1989, Ontario has experienced the biggest increase in the average depth of poverty in Canada. The average poor family would need \$9,832 just to get to the poverty line, and yet Premier Mike Harris is being allowed to take \$100 a month from them through the national child benefit clawback. Why isn't this reflected in the national child benefit report? Crediting the national child benefit with the national decrease in child poverty ignores the shameful fact that one in five children in Canada still lives in poverty. It also ignores the multitude of factors that go into reducing poverty. It's based on faulty logic. Any statistician knows correlation does not equal causation.

EVENTS IN NORTHUMBERLAND

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to congratulate everyone involved in the second annual RAV ON trade show in Northumberland. RAV ON, which stands for Rural Agri Ventures Ontario, is a unique agri-venture trade show organized by the Campbellford-Seymour Agricultural Society. This showcase took place in Campbellford on April 28 and 29, featuring alternative livestock and crops as well as new ideas for traditional agriculture.

RAV ON was successful in giving everyone involved with a new innovative alternative or diversified agribusiness the opportunity to display their products and ideas. Visitors had the occasion to meet and greet owners of successful agribusinesses and seek advice on how to start up their own agri-ventures.

Some of the alternative agribusinesses featured in this year's showcase included emu, ostrich and buffalo farm-

ing; organic and herbal gardening; and farm vacation operations such as bed-and-breakfasts. Visitors were able to sample and purchase unique agricultural products.

This kind of showcase not only brings our attention to new and innovative ideas in agriculture, it also provides opportunities for these ideas to emerge and develop into new business opportunities. I commend Don Frise and the Campbellford-Seymour Agricultural Society for their hard work and dedication in organizing this trade show.

PAT CAREY

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I rise today to speak briefly of fire captain Pat Carey. He was kindly mentioned last week by my colleague Mike Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, and I attended his funeral on Saturday on behalf of our caucus and my constituents. Captain Carey died of a heart attack fighting a fire at Dundas Street and Scarlett Road in my riding.

There was considerable public notice taken in the Weston neighbourhood where the funeral was held, and weekend media reported a large contingent of firefighters present. I believe I met Captain Carey picking up food in a food drive a few years ago. I wouldn't want to eulogize him as a person; his stepson Andy did a fine job of that. However, there's a quality of Captain Carey that I believe should be appreciated by this House, and it was only partly available in the news reports. The Pat Carey I believe this House needs to take note of is the public servant. In this House we set the framework for fire, police, education, health care and a range of other activities to serve the public, but we rarely speak of the people we count on to carry them out.

Here was a man a year away from retirement, at age 59, on a dangerous assignment. He was one of the people we pay to head into a fire when the rest of us are going the other way. I suppose the conventional answer is, someone has to do it. But I don't believe we ask ourselves why often enough. Why would someone undertake a difficult job, leave what is otherwise an ordinary life and put themselves on the line?

Captain Carey's life suggests the answer. The only "public" in the public service we in this House can count on is the personal commitment people like Captain Pat Carey put forward to serve others, and we need to never take that for granted.

GREAT LAKES PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): On Thursday a couple of weeks ago, I was honoured to be invited to attend the opening of Great Lakes public school in my riding of Brampton Centre. It's the third new school opening I've been fortunate enough to attend since last year, and I want to congratulate all those who played an important part in the construction and opening of the school, including the staff at the Peel board of education, principal Mary Haslett and the wonderful teachers and staff members of Great Lakes public school.

I was there to present greetings from the Premier and the Minister of Education, and also an Ontario flag to the school. But I think one of the most moving elements of the entire ceremony was the procession of children who walked into the school holding 36 flags representing 36 countries. In addition, they gave greetings to everyone in 36 different languages, each from their own home nation. I think this reflects the wonderful diversity, the multicultural elements not only of Brampton but of our terrific province.

Congratulations to all the parents and students who are the heart and soul of our education. My constituents and I are proud to see this newly constructed school open.

1340

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): The Harris government is so out of touch with the doctor shortage in southwestern Ontario that it is, in effect, shutting down an urgently needed radiology clinic in Windsor. It is pushing out a dedicated young radiologist who desperately wants to serve the working families in our area. Why? Because the outdated numbers and bizarre process of the government have deemed that we no longer have a shortage of radiologists.

But I have a letter from the Essex Kent Lambton District Health Council stating that of course we do. I have a letter from the chief of Windsor Regional Hospital stating that they are short eight radiologists. He states that Dr Charles Gervais is one of the few community-based radiologists in Windsor. He says that if Dr Gervais is forced to relocate, it would be a significant loss to the community and would have a detrimental effect on the hospital's diagnostic imaging department. He says the hospital doesn't have the resources to meet the increased demand, and that further delay on this situation will compromise the health care of working families and struggling citizens. I am shocked and appalled at the ineptitude of your government.

On Friday, I sent an open letter with all the details to the minister, demanding an investigation. I urge those watching and the members of the gallery to contact the minister to ask him why he is forcing Dr Gervais out of a community that so desperately needs his services.

EDUCATION WEEK

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to mark Education Week, which is being celebrated this week.

The theme of this Education Week is "Excellence in school performance, excellence in student learning." That theme accurately summarizes the goals of our government's plan for education quality reform and yesterday's announcement.

I want to applaud the Minister of Education for her announcement, which will provide school boards with greater flexibility and increased resources. I'm also

pleased that recommendations are being accepted from the advisory group on co-instructional activities and our other education partners. Yesterday's announcement is an indication of our government's commitment to quality education and to student achievement.

Our government listened to the concerns of our education partners and responded by proposing an additional \$50 million for school boards and introducing measures that would help ensure that co-instructional activities are available to all our students. I look forward to working with teachers, parents and students in my riding to help implement these initiatives.

To help mark Education Week in my riding of Perth-Middlesex, the Avon Maitland District School Board is hosting its third annual excellence in education awards ceremony tomorrow in Mitchell. I want to extend my congratulations and thanks to all the award recipients for the contribution they make to public education.

Please join me in thanking the teachers, parents and students in Perth-Middlesex and everyone who is working to build a better educational system for our children.

STATUTORY HOLIDAYS

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I was reading on the Globe and Mail Web page an article that was just posted by Richard Mackie with respect to a campaign that's underway by the Labatt Brewing Co. It's a petition calling for a new statutory holiday in June for Ontario working families.

The petition reads, "Had enough of the rat race? Tired of pushing paper, answering phones, squeezing into packed subways, sitting in endless traffic, eating at your desk? Make your voice heard." More than 90,000 Ontarians have signed that petition to date.

This morning, they asked the Premier of Ontario what he had to say about the petition. Here's what the Premier said: "We think we have in Ontario the appropriate number of days of rest." Not a surprise that the Premier would say that. "I've not heard any compelling arguments that we need more days," said the Premier.

Isn't that interesting? This House has sat less than other Houses. This Premier has attended, in the past, fewer question periods than others. We're faced with working people looking for more days of rest, and of course the Premier says we have enough days of rest. What else is he going to say? What else will he say?

So we say to working families in Ontario, keep pressing for that. If you really think the Premier has had too many days of rest, sign that petition as a protest of his absence from true accountability in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It is an honour for me to rise in the House today to express my deepest thanks to all the wonderful volunteers in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka in recognition of

International Year of the Volunteer and pay tribute to the enormous contributions each and every volunteer makes in our community.

I would like to take a moment to inform the House of an extremely successful event that took place in my riding on Tuesday, May 1. I had the opportunity to host the Ontario Volunteer Awards night in Huntsville. I was honoured to be able to thank an outstanding group of volunteers from all over Parry Sound-Muskoka who give so much of their time and energy to make our community a better place to live.

I also attended the West Parry Sound District Museum and the Muskoka Volunteer Network to deliver two community volunteer grants to enable these organizations to host a community volunteer summit and help launch Ontario's Promise for our children.

My constituents in Parry Sound-Muskoka are excellent examples of individuals who make an exceptional contribution to our community. I can't possibly mention all of the groups that donate their time to hospitals, community centres, churches, arts, sports groups and numerous others in such a short period of time. There are just too many to list. However, each and every person who gives their personal time, warmth and kindness enriches the lives others in our province. I think it is very important to recognize the central role these volunteers play in making Ontario a better place.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we continue on, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery Mr William Bronrott, a member of the Maryland House of Delegates. Please join us in welcoming our special guest.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome in the members' gallery Mike Bradley, the mayor of the city of Sarnia.

The Speaker: I did actually miss that. I was speaking to one of the members, Mr Marchese, whose son is job-shadowing him today and he wanted to let me know that. Of course I can't make an announcement about that, but I'm sure his son is here, just in case people are wondering.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF GREATER SUDBURY AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA VILLE DU GRAND SUDBURY

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to amend the City of Greater Sudbury Act, 1999 / Projet de loi 43, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1999 sur la ville du Grand Sudbury.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This will be the first of a series of amendments that I bring in with regard to the City of Greater Sudbury Act to make government more accountable and more practical in Sudbury.

This bill alters the composition of the board of health so that, of the seven members appointed by city council, at least one member must be a member of city council and at least one member must not be a member of city council. The act currently provides that all members of the board of health appointed by city council are members of city council.

GAS PRICE WATCHDOG ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001

SUR L'AGENT DE SURVEILLANCE DES PRIX DU CARBURANT

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act respecting the price of motor vehicle fuel and the appointment of a Gas Price Watchdog /
Projet de loi 44, Loi concernant le prix du carburant pour véhicules automobiles et la nomination d'un agent de surveillance des prix du carburant.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): As you know, Mr Speaker, the price of gas is going through the roof. Petro-Canada, for instance, recorded a record profit of \$358 million during the first quarter of 2001, up a whopping 1,784% from a year ago. This government collects \$300 million every year in taxes. It has a job to protect the consumer and to get out of bed with the oil companies, and to ensure that if the prices go up, the excuses the oil companies make about too many people driving SUVs, that there's a shortage or that it is because of the weather—that this government stand up for consumers and appoint someone to look after the interests of the consumer and not look after the interests of big oil companies, as they're doing now.

1350

MEMBER'S DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin motions, yesterday the member for Toronto-Danforth, Ms Churley, filed notice of her dissatisfaction with the supplementary questions. I want to inform the member that I cannot allow the late show to proceed since she did not ask the original question. I cite precedents from May 14, 1992; April 11, 1996; and June 29, 1992, as authorities for my ruling.

QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I'd like to ask unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence to mark the anniversary of the 1984 shootings at the Quebec National Assembly and to remember the heroism of René Jalbert, the sergeant-at-arms who risked his own life to save others in the assembly.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed. If all the members, as well as our guests, would kindly rise and have a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker: I thank all members and our friends in the gallery.

VE DAY

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I seek unanimous consent of the House for a statement on the 56th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day. I believe we have all-party agreement to speak briefly about this very important date in Canadian history.

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

Hon Mr Jackson: It is a privilege today to rise and mark the importance of the 56th anniversary of VE Day. As well, Sunday past was the annual Battle of the Atlantic parade observed by all our naval veterans.

Almost a million men and women from all across Canada volunteered to put their lives on the line to fight for their freedom in World War II. Over 100,000 Canadians did not return. The veterans in this province represent our living heritage. Their sacrifice and their contributions in two world wars, the Korean War and in peacekeeping efforts around the world were made to secure the freedom we enjoy today.

We are honoured to have several veterans in the gallery of the House with us today. These gentlemen are all veterans of the Second World War. Several are active members of the Royal Canadian Legion, branch 60 in Burlington, and branch 165 in Toronto, as well the Royal Canadian Naval Association.

Mr Speaker, with the support of the House, I would ask that these guests rise and be acknowledged.

Mr George Lacey, Canadian army, was torpedoed en route to Sicily. He ended up in North Africa, and he took part in the campaign through Italy and the drive through Germany.

Mr Frank Russell, Canadian army, took part in D-Day and the drive into Germany.

Harold Penn, RCAF, was an air gunner on convoy escort duties, spotting submarines over the North Atlantic, and then transferred to the Far East theatre of the war.

Les Preston, RAF, was a navigator on mosquito planes attacking ships in the North Sea and did photo reconnaissance of Normandy beaches. He was awarded the

George Medal by King George VI for surviving three ops in the Battle of Britain.

John Kilpatrick, Royal Canadian Navy, took part in D-Day and the Battle of the Atlantic.

Don Scholefield, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, sailed on a convoy escort in the North Atlantic.

Bill Shields, Royal Canadian Navy, was a stoker first class and survived on HMCS Trentonian, which was torpedoed and sunk by German U-boats.

Mr Frank Whaling, Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve, served on HMCS Orangeville as a leading seaman and as a torpedoman on HMCS Assinaboia.

Ladies and gentlemen, our distinguished veterans.

Applause.

To all our veterans, we are indebted to them for the sacrifices they made through their military service to create a better future for us all.

We made a pledge to First World War veterans to never forget, but many of us in this country have indeed forgotten the sacrifice that men and women made on their behalf during these great wars. All members of this House are committed to making sure we honour the same pledge our veterans made to their fallen comrades so many years ago.

This House determined in 1999, the United Nations International Year of Older Persons, that we should do something special to recognize a unique group of Canadian citizens who helped deliver us safely through the last century. These people, of course, are our veterans.

Much has been said about the need for Canadians to better understand our rich history, filled with great humanitarian and military accomplishments, and we have undertaken several significant partnerships to that end. Today, thanks to the work of the Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario's curriculum has been enriched with strengthened Canadian history.

All members of the House are proud to join with the Dominion Institute to help veterans reach upwards of 50,000 Ontario students in the next three years through their memory project. This unique educational experience brings Ontario veterans and high school students together in classrooms and on line to tell the historic and rich stories of the bravery of our parents and grandparents who served overseas. Now in its third phase, the memory project's goal is to recruit, train and support some 1,000 Ontario veterans to tell their stories in classrooms all across Ontario. We hope to reach over 50,000 students across the province and many more through the Memory Project.

I am sure that when students hear the stories of veterans like John Kilpatrick, whom I introduced earlier, they will gain a brand new understanding and respect for the sacrifices that were made in the past for future generations. Mr Kilpatrick has been working with the Dominion Institute for the past two years to ensure that the legacy of our veterans is carried forward to new generations.

Every member of this House can be proud of our collective commitment to our veterans. As they share their

stories with the young people of Ontario, I don't doubt for a moment that they will also reconnect with their own youth, a part of their youth before it was interrupted by war. After all, they themselves were young, many nearly 18 years old, when they were first called upon to serve their country overseas.

Our veterans, as young men and women, solemnly promised their fallen comrades over 50 years ago that they would pick up the torch of freedom and forever pledge the oath, "We will remember them." Today veterans will be lighting the lamp of learning and sharing their stories with the descendants of fallen comrades and the sacred vow that they can never forget them.

As we mark the 56th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, our veterans deserve our profound appreciation for their sacrifice and, in turn, our province and her people will ensure their brave stories of courage and sacrifice are carried in the hearts and minds of each new generation in our province. We will remember them forever.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I'm honoured and privileged on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal caucus to pay tribute on Victory in Europe Day as well.

1400

Victory in Europe Day finally arrived on May 8, 1945. The previous year, Canadian, British and American troops invaded Normandy and began to drive the Nazis out of France. There can be no question that Canadians made a huge difference to the people in occupied countries and to the final outcome of the Second World War. Over 1.1 million Canadians served during that war, and over 42,000 individuals gave their lives. Annually, we remember them not only on Remembrance Day, but also on the Battle of the Atlantic Day, last Sunday, and on the Battle of Britain Day in the fall.

Canadian soldiers formed the main assault force for the raid on Dieppe, where over 900 Canadians were killed and almost 2,000 more were taken prisoner. As well, approximately 14,000 Canadians landed in Normandy on D-Day, and the First Canadian Army was instrumental in the liberation of the land of my birth, the Netherlands, in May 1945.

Everyone was touched by the war: families of the war generation here in Canada; families who served on farms, in the industries, in defence production, in the Red Cross and many other organizations; and the many others who were also involved in the war effort.

Indeed, our experience in World War II allowed us to grow as a nation. Through our wartime involvement, we gained tremendous abilities, which we are now putting into continuing our peaceful efforts. Canadian international peacekeeping activities are recognized worldwide. Canadians are called on in the most tragic conflicts that are still taking place. The respect we have gained around the world for being a peacekeeping nation is a positive legacy that grew out of the tragedy of the Second World War, and it is a legacy we should all remember.

As legislators, we are obviously very grateful to the men and women who served to defend democracy in

World War II. Without their service, we clearly would not be able to stand in our place and have the freedom to say what we say on the basis of democratic procedure within this Legislature.

As we celebrate today, we must each take a moment to pay tribute to those who served. We must each remember the incredible personal and human commitment made by thousands and thousands of people and their families. We must think of those who made the ultimate sacrifice and gave their lives so that we could enjoy the freedoms we benefit from today. We also stand proudly to recognize our veterans and to reflect on their bravery and uncommon commitment to our country and a more peaceful world.

We are so fortunate that many of our World War II veterans are with us here today. We must never take them for granted. They have made sacrifices that you and I cannot even imagine, and they did it so that our lives could be better. Each day, fewer and fewer of our veterans are with us. This sad reality reminds us that we cannot wait until tomorrow to pay our respects; we need to do it today and every day, and we must make every effort so that the younger generations of Canadians, who have the fortunate experience of not seeing war on a first-hand basis, remember, reflect on and appreciate the tremendous sacrifices made for them to keep our country free.

As legislators, we have an obligation to respect our veterans and seniors with policies that allow them to live a healthy, happy and comfortable life, and that includes the best of health care and accessibility. They have paid more than enough for this, and we have a responsibility to honour that.

If I might end on a personal note, Speaker, as I mentioned before, I was born in the Netherlands in 1942 during those war years. I know that there are a number of members on both sides of the House who were born in Europe and indeed in the Netherlands either before or during World War II. We owe our reason for being here in large part to those Canadian men and women who liberated the Netherlands and Europe.

If I might end by quoting from Jack Granatstein in *Remembering Victory* to indicate the pure joy felt in the Netherlands, the country of my birth, you could perhaps understand why the people of the Netherlands still feel so close to Canadians today. I quote from the memory project, as written by Jack Granatstein.

“The staid Dutch went giddy with gratitude on May 8, 1945, and ordinary Canadian soldiers found themselves treated like the conquering heroes they were. ‘Here comes liberation,’ one teenager in The Hague thought when she saw the first Sherman tank approaching. ‘The soldier stood up and he was like a saint.... And the people climbed on the tank, and took the soldier out, and they were crying. And we were running with the tanks and the jeeps all the way into the city.’ The almost Biblical cadences convey the emotion of that day.”

Although today was a day of great celebration 56 years ago when the flags of freedom once again flew all

over Europe, let us always remember the sacrifices of those 42,000 Canadian men and women who died during World War II.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Time shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.
We shall remember them.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): It is an honour to be here today to be able to remember the contributions of so many Canadian men and women to whom we owe such a great debt. Without them and without their sacrifices, our world would indeed be a different place today.

Most of us in this Legislature were either very young during the Second World War or, many of us, not even in the world yet, but all of us have been touched by the people who served so courageously in the Second World War.

When I was growing up in the small town where I lived, I was about 10 years old when I discovered that my mother’s older sister, when she was 16 years old, had taken the train to Thunder Bay and gone to work in the Canada Car Factory where they were making Hawker Hurricane fighter planes. In fact, that factory became the largest factory in the world producing Hawker Hurricanes.

I discovered that my mother’s oldest brother had enlisted in the Canadian navy, that another uncle had enlisted in the army and was wounded. Before the war he was an excellent hockey player, somebody who probably was headed to the National Hockey League. He came back and still played hockey, but not at the same level he could have before he was wounded. Another uncle enlisted in the army and, thank God, came home without any injuries.

I discovered that my parents’ next-door neighbour—he had been their next-door neighbour for some 50 years, ever since he came back from the war—was in the Canadian army in Sicily and then in Italy. He was actually taken prisoner in 1943 and spent the last two years of the war in a prisoner of war camp.

Another fellow who lived on the next road over was in an armoured division and suffered serious injuries. Even later on in life, every once in a while he would feel something itching or painful in his back and out would pop a piece of shrapnel from the wounds he had suffered.

They were incredible people and many of us today probably don’t realize how really incredible they were, because they were all volunteers. No one said, “You have to do this.” They were all volunteers. They went willingly. People flew in Bomber Command in the RCAF knowing that the odds they would come back were horrendous odds, that if they survived 10 trips over the Ruhr Valley or the Rhine Valley, the odds were against them.

The father of one of my best friends in high school had probably one of the most difficult jobs in the war. He was a tail gunner in a Halifax bomber. Tail gunners had a

notoriously short life span because the German night fighters would come up from behind and attack the tail of the plane and you couldn't see them.

He never talked about it, a quiet man who hardly ever talked about it, but you knew that this quiet little man was somebody who was incredibly courageous.

1410

A few years ago I had the opportunity to go to a memorial service on a First Nation in my constituency, Couchiching First Nation. It's a small community, about 600 people, but they had a plaque where they honoured all the people from that small aboriginal community who served in the Canadian armed forces during the war. When you looked at the names on the list, you came away with the conclusion that anyone who was between the ages of 18, maybe even 17, and 35 had in fact enlisted in the Canadian armed forces—just an amazing state of things to happen.

We are all influenced by these incredible people in other ways. Later on, when I became quite involved in playing hockey, I discovered that virtually everybody who ran the minor hockey program—the convenors, the coaches, the referees—was a veteran. They were all people who had come back from the war and they were absolutely determined that they were going to make their community, our province, our country a better place to live. They sacrificed endless hours that I'm sure they never received thanks for in order that a whole lot of kids could enjoy playing hockey.

We need to remember that these people were also products of the Depression, that these were women and men who in their early years dealt with some of the most difficult economic circumstances that people had ever seen: they didn't have food to eat; they had no clothes on their backs; they had governments telling them there's no money for affordable housing, there's nothing that can be done to help put people to work, there's nothing that can be done to ensure you get an education. When they came back from the war and discovered how much money had been spent on the war, many of them dedicated themselves to ensuring that people would have housing, that people would get the education they needed, that people would have jobs and people would live in dignity.

It's interesting when you read some of the historical accounts of these incredible people. In a book written by Desmond Morton called *A Nation Forged in Fire: Canadians and the Second World War*, he actually interviews someone in the Belgian Resistance, a person named Gerard Adriaenssens, who was with the Belgian Resistance when the Canadian army liberated his family farm near Knokke in October 1944. Thirty years later, on November 1, he started an annual march to commemorate the liberation. When he was asked why, Adriaenssens said that a platoon of men had bedded down in his barn for one night in that hard October and that their demeanour had remained fixed in his mind. He said, "They were not Rambo soldiers, as one now imagines, but rather quiet, simple boys with a dull look in their eyes, who mourned their comrades who fell that day. They sat there quietly

and knew that it might be their turn to offer their lives the next day so that we here in Europe might live in freedom, friendship and peace."

That is what we must tell the youth: the sacrifice these young Canadian soldiers freely gave for us. They will always be remembered, and we must always remember them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Premier. Despite the fact that Ontario's corporate taxes are already very competitive in comparison with those in our neighbouring US states, you have gone out and recklessly promised to reduce them by another \$2.5 billion a year. Premier, I want you to know that I think that is irresponsible. I think you're putting us into a race that we shouldn't be in, and that's a race that is inspired by nothing more than the lowest taxes.

I want us to run, on behalf of Ontario's working families, a different race. I want us to win one where, when we win, it's because not only do we have competitive taxes but we've got the best schools, we've got the best health care, we've got clean air, we've got clean water, we've got a highly skilled and educated workforce. Those are the kinds of things that I think help create a highly sound and attractive business climate, and are also in the interests of our working families.

Premier, why would you jeopardize all that with an irresponsible corporate tax cut?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate very much all the things you want for Ontario. You want jobs, you want our families to be working, you want a first-class health care system, a first-class education system, an environment that protects people. You want the best of everything, and you seem to think you can wish all this stuff to happen.

Every measure we took to be more competitive—more jobs, working families—every initiative we took so that we could get investment in jobs and growth in this province, you voted against. As soon as the going gets tough, you guys just clear out of the road and say, "You're on your own, families. You're on your own, government. You're on your own, federal government." That's the kind of weak leadership this province had for 10 years that led to the bankruptcy or near-bankruptcy position we were in.

Mr McGuinty: Premier, you and your government suffer from a poverty of ambition. You are inspired by nothing more than low taxes. We have a grander vision. We have something much better on behalf of working families.

Families know we need more than just tax cuts. They know we need a plan for prosperity, something that is going to sustain growth over the long term. One of the

things that both families and business tell us repeatedly is that a very important part of a plan for prosperity is the development of a highly skilled and educated workforce. That means good schools. You placed our schools in turmoil, you've given us stressed-out teachers, you've taken \$1.5 billion out of primary and secondary education and you've starved colleges and universities.

Premier, we think that instead of sinking all that money into corporate tax cuts, there are better and more pressing priorities. Why do you insist on jeopardizing our true competitiveness by putting that money into a corporate tax cut?

Hon Mr Harris: You're right: the Liberal Party has a grand vision. Here was the grand vision when you had the opportunity to do something: you increased sales taxes from 7% to 8%, you eliminated OHIP premiums that were raising \$1.5 billion and then you brought in a payroll tax to raise \$2.5 billion, another \$1 billion right off the number one tax that attacks business and jobs. Fuel taxes were raised in 1988, 1989 and 1991, another \$1 billion off the drivers on the roads; in 1989, a commercial concentration tax imposed at a cost of \$115 million a year to Toronto businesses; retail sales tax brought in on insurance premiums; several new retail sales tax applications; a corporate minimum tax was introduced, raising \$100 million a year. Do you want to know what that led to? Double-digit unemployment, 1.3 billion on welfare—

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

Mr McGuinty: Premier, I assumed you were proud of this particular economic policy, but you refuse to speak to the question, so I'll ask again: why you are intent on jeopardizing our true competitiveness? For us over here, that means good schools, good health care, clean air, clean water and safe and livable communities. Those are the things that make for a strong and competitive business climate. Those things are good for our families and good for our business, Premier. You're darned right we voted against every single one of your budgets, because you cut things that are important to our working families, like their health care, like their education, like their environmental protection.

I ask you once more, why are you intent on jeopardizing our real competitiveness by proceeding with further tax cuts when our corporations are already on a very competitive footing?

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Hon Mr Harris: As you've heard, we know you have this grand vision of taxing the whole economy until it stands still and can't create jobs any more. We know that's your grand vision. We understand that.

You refuse to look at the fact that when we made businesses competitive, individuals competitive, we got more money to invest in health care, in education, in post-secondary education, in all those areas that we acknowledge are important. But how do you get the dollars to do it? Do you tax people until the economy stops, like you tried to do? Do you continue taxing them at the highest rates in North America, like you voted

against every measure we took to correct? Obviously, you're out of sync not only with this government, not only with everything we believe in; you're out of sync with every business person, you're out of sync with the Prime Minister of Canada and you're out of sync with Paul Martin.

Here's what the Prime Minister said: "Our tax system is now competitive with the Americans." If you look at Ontario, he said, who led the way, the income tax in Ontario, the federal-provincial together, is now competitive with the United States.

You voted against every one of those measures. You're against Paul Martin, who said, "Thank goodness we've got tax cuts now that the economy is slowing down." You're out of sync with the whole world.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier and it's about the shooting death of the First Nations person at Ipperwash Provincial Park in September 1995.

Last week, Premier, you said that on the day of the shooting death, September 6, you held a meeting to discuss the situation at Ipperwash and to discuss the OPP's request for an injunction. Can you confirm that you did have a meeting on September 6, the day of the shooting, to discuss the situation at Ipperwash and the OPP request for an injunction?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Last week I tried to correct the record for the misinformation that was given to this Legislature in your preamble to your question last December. The very matter, all these questions—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The Premier is going to have to withdraw that. You can't say "misinformation."

Hon Mr Harris: I withdraw that, but I stand behind the fact and the information that I've given you.

Secondly, the very questions that you ask, you ask piecemeal, one here, one there, with thousands of documents. These are the very questions that are in fact the matter of a lawsuit right now. We are complying completely with the judge in this matter—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Premier, take a seat. Sorry for the interruption. The member for Parkdale-High Park, come to order. He's shouted across at every question that's been asked. This is his last warning. If you do it, you're going to be thrown out.

Sorry for the interruption, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: These are the very same questions that are being dealt with in the civil case. We are complying completely and fully, providing the documentation. We intend to continue doing that. It is in the forum where it belongs, fair and complete and being considered by an independent judge.

I don't think it's appropriate to try and hash out the issues one piece of 50,000 things, one at a time. So we'll continue to comply. It's the matter of the court case, and

we're quite confident that our role in this and my role and our government's role and the political role has been exactly as the commissioner of the OPP said—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up. Supplementary.

Mr Phillips: I proceed with what the Premier just said the last moment there. It appears that on September 6, someone in the government changed the direction the OPP wanted to go. I will quote, Premier, from a log, a verbatim of two commanding officers at the command post about two hours before the shooting, when they found out that someone had changed the direction they wanted to head with the injunction.

The one commander says, "Well, that injunction surprises me." He went on to say, "They went from that regular type of injunction to the emergency type, which you know really isn't in our favour. We want a little bit more time." These are the commanding officers at the post responding to a change of direction here at Queen's Park. "This is typical," the officer goes on to say, "where we kind of get caught and ultimately the ball's going to be in our lap if they get this injunction tomorrow." They say, Premier, that it appears that someone changed the direction the OPP wanted to head here at Queen's Park.

Premier, did you and the cabinet members go against the type of injunction recommended by the OPP?

Hon Mr Harris: That's not what it says, and secondly, this is exactly the matter that is before the civil court, and that's why it's there in a fair and impartial hearing and we're complying fully.

The Speaker: Final supplementary?

Mr Phillips: That is exactly what it says, Premier, and it appears very much that what you have been saying here in the Legislature is contradicted by evidence elsewhere. We have time and again pointed out to you where things that you and your cabinet ministers have said have been contradicted by evidence elsewhere. You say there was no involvement; we find that the injunction changed. You say you left hands off the OPP the day of the shooting; "Queen's Park to Take a Hard Line" with "Occupiers." You say there was no evidence of a burial ground; the government was forced to drop all the charges against the First Nations people because you found, and admitted in court, that the government had in its possession evidence of a burial ground.

I say to you again, Premier, the only way we will get at the truth in this matter is for you today to commit to holding a full public inquiry on these matters, so Ontario can finally get the truth. Will you agree to do that today?

Hon Mr Harris: You're absolutely wrong. The only way we will in fact get the truth out—and I am quite confident of our position in the civil case—is in the civil case, and that is the option the George family took. We have been fully complying with that, and we're very confident the truth will out.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is also for the Premier. Premier, you and your

energy minister keep saying there's enough electricity to meet our needs. But your American friends George Bush and Dick Cheney are saying that they need more energy, they need more electricity—in fact, a new power plant every week for 20 years. They say there is an electricity crisis and they want our electrical power to solve it. Why do you and your energy minister keep insisting there's enough electricity when your American friends are telling everyone there isn't enough electricity, that in fact there's an electricity crisis and they want our power?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): They can't have our power. It is our power for our consumers. I think we've made that very clear. We've insisted that whether we own it, somebody else owns it, how it's regulated, we will look after Ontarians first. That's our role. I'm not elected in the United States. I'm elected here in Ontario and I will stand up, as I have always have, for Ontarians.

Mr Hampton: There are a couple of problems with what you've just said. Your energy minister has announced that you're going to sell off 65% of Ontario's generating capacity to international energy corporations. We already know that the price immediately south of the border in New York or Boston is double the price here. Those energy corporations will do what they are created for: they'll want to sell the power where they can get the highest price. NAFTA says you cannot interfere with that trade. If NAFTA says you cannot interfere with that trade, then I think you owe it to the Ontario people to tell us how you are going to stop those international companies from exporting the power to where they can get the highest price. If they start exporting it there, how are you then going to ensure that Ontarians don't have to pay the same price in order to get electricity?

Hon Mr Harris: Watch us.

Mr Hampton: This government, three years ago, was talking about California, but what you're planning and what you're about to do is even more irresponsible than in California. Our American neighbours are telling us very clearly there is an electricity shortage, that they want the electricity and will build the transmission lines necessary to get the electricity. NAFTA says that once you sell to international companies that want to sell the electricity, there's nothing you can do to stop it.

Premier, if you do believe you can stop them from exporting electricity, you owe it to the people of Ontario to say here and now how you can do it. Tell us, how are you going to stop them once you sell off the generating stations?

Hon Mr Harris: We will sell electricity to the United States this summer, as we did last summer, as we did the summer before, as we did when you were in office, as we did when the Liberals were in office. Nobody came to us and said, "You've got to sell power that Ontario needs to the United States." Nobody has said that before and they're not going to say it in the future.

If Americans need electricity, like they need our automobiles, like they need other products that are there, and there is an opportunity to build one, two or 10 \$10-billion nuclear plants and put all those people to work—the safest, greenest electricity around. Would this not be a

miraculous opportunity, if we keep our taxes competitive and don't follow the Liberal track of trying to be the highest-taxed jurisdiction in North America? Wouldn't this potentially be an exciting opportunity for us, particularly if the private sector says, "We'll build the plants. We'll put the people to work. We'll create the hundreds of thousands of jobs"?

This is something I acknowledge the Prime Minister and I have talked about. I don't know why you are opposed to that.

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IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My next question is also for the Premier. People across the province do not understand how you can have one account of what happened on the day Dudley George was killed at Ipperwash Park, and then on another day you can change your accounting of what happened. They don't understand how over a short period of time like that you can change your version of what took place. When we don't know what to believe any more, when the story changes that quickly, we have to have a process to get to the bottom of the facts. That's why we need a public inquiry into the events surrounding the death of Dudley George. Premier, if you care about getting the facts out there, will you hold a public inquiry and call for it now?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): As you know, there is a process underway that will do exactly the same thing. It's a process that was chosen by the George family. We're complying fully and the facts will out. We're quite confident as well that the facts will support the statements we have made in the civil case.

Mr Hampton: Premier, the only reason there is a civil case is because your government refused to call a public inquiry into the death of an innocent man. There has been a criminal case where someone has been convicted, there have been unexplained changes in OPP procedure, and there have been other cases where your government has been forced to withdraw with respect to this incident or forced to admit you were wrong, yet you still refuse to call a public inquiry into the death of an innocent man. This is unheard of in our province. It is unheard of in the rest of Canada.

Premier, when people hear you change your story from day to day, it leads people to believe there is something that is being kept out of the public view here. Doesn't the death of an innocent man call for a public inquiry as to how he died and what were the events that led up to it? Doesn't that call for something?

Hon Mr Harris: As you know, we didn't rule that out, but as we were proceeding through the criminal cases, the civil case was brought forward. We've fully complied. We've made hundreds of thousands of documents available. As I've said, this is not a matter to be decided one little piece out of context here and one little piece out of context there; this is something that should be decided by an impartial judge, and it is.

NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Premier. Everybody knows that we are now short thousands of nurses in Ontario, and we also now know that you fired them by the thousands. Now you tell us you want to bring them back. Well, I know of 200 nurses living in Ontario right now who are highly skilled and who are ready, willing and able to get to work in health care. They are nurse practitioners. Working families were pleased to invest in the training of those individuals and now they desperately need to have them on the job. Premier, why haven't you found jobs for these nurses who are so desperately needed?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Minister of Health can respond.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question. The news on the nursing front has signs of encouraging trends. I can report to this House that there are more than 4,300 applications to nursing schools for this September, up by more than 1,000 since last year. It shows that students want to learn about nursing in Ontario, that they want to practise nursing in Ontario, and that is at least partially as a result of the \$375 million of taxpayers' money that we, as the government, have put into retention and training of nurses in the province.

Nurse practitioners are no exception to that. I can report to this House that, pursuant to the budget commitments of last year, we made a commitment to 106 nurse practitioner positions. We are up to 94 and I have every confidence the remainder will be hired by the end of the year.

Mr McGuinty: I wonder if the minister might concentrate his mind on the question. There are 200 today without work. Together we invested in their training. They want to stay here. I'm not sure if there's ever been a better example of your government's incompetence. First, you fired thousands of nurses. Now we suffer from a desperate shortage of nurses. You tell us that you are looking for nurses. I found 200 nurse practitioners. They're ready, willing and able to get down to work. In fact, things get worse: if they can't find work in the near future, they are going to lose their certification after, together, we invested in their training.

I ask you once more, how is it that at a time when we suffer from a desperate shortage of nurses I have found 200 nurse practitioners who can't find work?

Hon Mr Clement: As I said to the honourable member, we have a plan for nurse practitioners. There are future employment opportunities for nurse practitioners as we move ahead with family health networks. I encourage the honourable member to stay tuned.

Here's what happened when the Liberals were in power. Here's a quote from the Windsor Star, January 25, 1989. Here is what they were saying about nurses under a Liberal government: "Most nurses are disillusioned. They want more money, more respect and more say in decision-making. Seeing none of this happening,

many registered nurses are leaving their jobs for other careers offering far more money and fewer hassles.”

That’s the Liberal record. We are picking up the pieces after humpty dumpty got through with it.

SPORTS AND RECREATION

Mr Bob Wood (London West): My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. The minister said in this House yesterday that his ministry plans to undertake a review of policy related to amateur sport and recreation. I welcome this review. We heard a lot in the press about Canada’s performance at the Sydney Olympics, and of course we’d always like to do better and bring home more medals. Our Olympic athletes are role models for our youth. Yet today, with all the distractions of video games, television and the Internet, it’s hard to get young people involved in physical activity. What is the minister doing to address this problem?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation): I appreciate the question from the member from London West, who is right. It’s very important for us to encourage youth to get more active in physical activity, whether at a young age, whether it’s amateur sports, all the way through to high-performance athletes. No doubt we would like to continue to bring more gold medals back to Canada. That’s why I’ve been such a strong supporter of the Olympics for Toronto in the year 2008. I want to build on the good work of my predecessor, Minister Helen Johns, in bringing forward things like community foundations and other programs to develop grassroots recreation and sport activities. Active Ontario and the community sport opportunity fund are other examples.

Certainly, the very hard-working parliamentary assistant from London-Fanshawe, by the name of Frank Mazzilli, is very interested in this file, and that’s why I announced yesterday that Frank is going to lead a review of sport and recreation programs to make sure we deliver those dollars in the most effective ways possible to encourage more youth to participate in sport and recreation.

Mr Wood: People in London have been working hard to bring major sporting events such as the Ontario summer and winter games to our city, because they recognize the opportunity sports events bring to the community. What is the minister doing to attract major sports competitions to Ontario?

Hon Mr Hudak: There’s no doubt, if you look at the success of the Olympics and what it did for Barcelona in 1992, you see not only development of infrastructure and inspiration of young athletes, but an increase in tourism year after year after that. So we know the Olympics can be a boon for Toronto, not only for 2008 but much beyond that.

Other events, like les Jeux de la francophonie, and the Canada summer games coming to London this summer are right at that nexus between recreation and sport and

tourism to help create jobs in the community, to help create investment in the community and to inspire young athletes. That’s why it’s important as well for my parliamentary assistant, Frank Mazzilli, to come back to me with advice on how to attract even more national and international competitions to Ontario, to inspire our youth and help create jobs in our communities.

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CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): My question is to the Premier. Earlier this morning we heard some heartbreaking testimony from some parents of special kids. These parents came to Queen’s Park to tell us that your government is breaking the law, that your government has a legal obligation to provide services to their special sons and daughters, but that since 1997 your government has systematically eliminated that support.

By refusing to sign and fund special-needs agreements between these working families and the appropriate agencies, despite the fact that they are called for under your own legislation, your government has left these parents with a horrific ultimatum: either give up custody of your child to the province or lose access to medically necessary supports.

Premier, four months after a firestorm of negative publicity, which only happened as the result of the courage of some parents to tell their stories publicly, your government is still not funding special-needs agreements.

My question to you is quite simple: why is your government failing to live up to its legal obligations for special-needs kids?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): We understand that the situations some families face can in fact be very difficult. It is an important priority of this government to provide the appropriate services to children with special needs. It is a budget area that we increase each year.

I want to be very clear about this. Where no protection exists, no parent will be forced to give up the custody of a child to access special-needs support. That is the policy of this Premier, of the minister, of the government. No family will be forced to give up their children to access special-needs supports.

If you know of any individual, anywhere, any time, bring it to our attention.

Mr Gravelle: We do know about it, Premier. You know it as well. Your minister said the same thing, and he was wrong as well. You can attempt to skirt around the issue, but the facts are clear. Your government is breaking the law. Instead of giving children like Luca Rosati, Alexandre Larcade, Julie Caudle, Graham McCarney, Benjamin, Emily and Sarah Williamson and thousands and thousands of other special-needs kids the full supports they need, you are forcing their parents to make desperate choices. You have done that.

Premier, while you and your finance minister were hamming it up for the cameras this morning, gloating

about more corporate tax cuts for your friends, we heard how your government's indiscriminate cost-cutting and abdication of legal responsibility have devastated families.

These special kids deserve every support and opportunity we can give them. Thousands of loving parents across Ontario need supports in order to give their children hope that they can and will become the best they can be.

You are breaking your own law, Premier. You are failing these kids. Will you agree today to at least restore funding for special-needs agreements, or will your government continue to put corporate tax cuts ahead of the interests of our special-needs children?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member will know that I am not at liberty to talk about individual names or cases. I have no authority to do that individually. But let me be very clear. To access special-needs supports, which have not been cut by this government and will not be cut by this government, no parent will ever be forced to give up their children. If you know of anyone, you bring them to my attention and I will fix it.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I'd like to ask the Minister of Citizenship a question. Given that I represent a number of constituents who are disabled and given that the current government has an outstanding commitment to introduce legislation, I would like to ask the minister: when will the Ontarians with Disabilities Act be introduced, and how will it address the needs of people with disabilities?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): First of all, I want to thank the honourable member for his question. I want to assure all members of this House that this year, as Minister of Citizenship, we will be bringing in Ontarians with disabilities legislation in accordance with the all-party agreement that was reached in this House some time ago. I am—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Jackson: "This year" is what I said. We are in the process now of finalizing the consultations. I want to acknowledge Mr Peters's efforts—he has been very helpful—and several members of the House who have brought together members of the disabilities community; also members of municipalities and the private sector. As committed in the throne speech, we are going to seek common ground and find shared solutions with individuals. We are very committed to bringing in an Ontarians with Disabilities Act that will be leading our nation, one of which all members of this House can be very proud.

Mr Chudleigh: As a follow-up, the largest school for the deaf in Ontario is in my riding. I have been continually impressed with the way in which the deaf community adapts to the hearing world. When offered opportunities, they generally exceed all expectations.

Breaking down the barriers to these opportunities will be a great legacy for our government.

I would like to know what steps have been taken to ensure the concerns of the deaf community have been heard so that their needs will be addressed in this legislation.

Hon Mr Jackson: Members are probably aware that my colleague from Halton is very involved with the E.C. Drury school and has on many occasions raised issues of concern about the deaf, deafened and hard-of-hearing community in our province.

This government has made significant commitments in the last few years, increases of about \$800,000 in net new programming to add to the \$6 billion in supports that we're providing. We know there's more we can be doing, and that is why we're working closely with this community and why I've met on several occasions already with the Canadian Hearing Society. I've engaged a former member of this House who is well known to all of us, Gary Malkowski, who's been very helpful in helping us craft the legislation and getting it ready.

I am quite convinced that if we continue to work together and reach common ground, we're going to come through with an Ontarians with Disabilities Act that every member of this House can be very proud of.

TAXATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is to the Premier. Premier, you've been quoted as saying Ontario has a fiscal problem, but you could stop the fiscal problem right here today.

It's as simple as this: if you go ahead with your sacred tax cuts for the well-off tomorrow, you either plunge Ontario into deficit or you have to begin a fire sale of Ontario's core assets and slash more from health, education, the environment and communities. But the real priority ought to be to build those things up.

Will you end the fiscal problem, Premier? Simply say here today, "There will be no tax cuts for the well-off tomorrow."

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the member is well aware that it's not appropriate for me to comment on the budget that will be brought down by the Minister of Finance tomorrow, and certainly on anything as specific as taxation levels.

But let me say something very clearly by way of response to the preamble. For example, health care spending: through our tax reductions, through our tax competitiveness, through getting people back to work, through getting businesses making more money, we've been able to increase health care funding in excess now of some \$5 billion, about \$1 billion a year, on average, since we've taken office, and more in the more recent years, as you are very well aware.

So when you talk about cutting spending, I can only assume you mean the federal government, who in 1994-95 transferred \$6.3 billion to us, then \$6.2 billion; in

1996-97, \$4.8 billion; in 1997-98, \$3.9 billion. Now, as they start—and they still have not—to restore—

The Speaker: Order. The Premier's time is up. Final supplementary.

Mr Hampton: Premier, you can try to manoeuvre however you want. The fact is that cuts to our colleges and universities are a matter of the public record. The cuts to the Ministry of the Environment and environmental protection are a matter of the public record. The cuts to municipalities, while you download the cost of services on to municipalities, are a matter of the public record. The fact that health care services are not being provided as they should in this province is a matter of the public record.

So your choice tomorrow is, yes, you can give more tax cuts to your well-off friends, but if you do that, you'll have to cut more from health and education and environment and communities and you'll have to put the province's assets on e-bay to sell them off. It doesn't make sense, Premier.

Say it now. Say, "No tax cuts tomorrow. We're going to invest in the things that Ontarians really need instead."

Hon Mr Harris: The question is full of such bumph by a party that drove this province into bankruptcy, by a party that took already high taxes that were increased by the Liberals and tried to take them even higher.

1450

The fact of the matter is that we have been able to increase health care funding while the Liberal government in Ottawa slashed health care funding to us. So the Liberals have cut. We had to make up all those reductions they gave us and increase spending as well. That is a matter of record. It's a matter of record that education funding is going up, a matter of record that you will see tomorrow. We will continue to take the priority areas of this province and increase funding. The only reason we've been able to do this is because, over your objections, over the Liberal objections, we were able to bring in tax-competitive measures so that we could get the average Ontario working family back to work where they belong.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The Premier's time is up. New question.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is also to the Premier. We have heard you strongly defend cuts for the well-to-do and tax cuts for corporations. I would like to talk to you about tax relief that would help working families.

The volunteer firefighters in our community have formed the Life Safety Committee of Hastings and Prince Edward. They have through sheer hard work raised \$50,000 and purchased a fire safety unit, which they take around the schools so that fires can be prevented and children and families know how to safely get out of a fire.

They did it on the assurance that they would be able to get a rebate of the provincial sales tax. The provincial Retail Sales Tax Act says, "Firefighting vehicles, as defined by the minister," are eligible for a rebate. Both

the previous and the current Minister of Finance have refused to define a "fire prevention vehicle" as being "related to fire." Your government is stealing donations from the public that were meant to make their community safe.

The Speaker: Order. The member can't use that language. I'd ask him to withdraw the word "stealing."

Mr Parsons: I withdraw it. Premier, the government is taking money out of my community that was donated by working families to provide for the safety of their families and their neighbours. Will you overrule the Minister of Finance and permit these volunteers to have the money returned to be used for fire prevention purposes?

Hon Mr Harris: There was a little bit of yelling from your own side of the benches that precluded me from hearing exactly the name of the volunteer fire department. Perhaps by way of supplementary, you could repeat that, because I want to congratulate them and thank them for their efforts, and for the efforts they do year in and year out to protect property. Let me thank all those who contributed and donated.

Let me, finally, thank you as the first MPP who is Liberal whom I have seen or heard in this Legislature who is in favour of some form of tax cuts. Let me congratulate you. Let me say, you stand tall here in our books. I hope that perhaps over 50 years, maybe it could filter right through to the leadership, because when it does, your party will be relevant too.

I'd be happy to talk to the Minister of Finance about your request.

Mr Parsons: It is significant to me that the tax I was talking about was relief for working families, and it's equally significant, Premier, that—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member take his seat. Stop the clock, please.

The member may continue.

Mr Parsons: Premier, it is significant to me that when we talked of relief for working families, you did not answer the question in any way, shape or form. I'm sorry I didn't have more names for you to thank. But Premier, you have the opportunity to do something tomorrow. We have heard rhetoric about your concern for the firefighters of this province. I believe you are sincere. Do something for them. In 30 seconds tomorrow, you can put in the budget relief for volunteer organizations that are trying to serve their community, rather than just the well-to-do, as your government does.

Hon Mr Harris: I don't think I could have been more complimentary to the member, to the folks who raised the money, to the volunteer fire department. I made a commitment to you that I would talk to the Minister of Finance. I'm always happy to look at tax cut proposals, particularly from a Liberal. You've set me back on my feet. I'm astounded and I don't know what else I can say. A great question. I appreciate you taking this kind of initiative. Let me say to the member from Prince Edward-Hastings, and let me repeat, I will talk to the

Minister of Finance and see if this tax cut is one that's appropriate for us to look at. My guess is, the budget for this year is already at the printer's or has been printed, but it's something I'm happy to take under advisement and I'm happy to talk to the Minister of Finance about.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to our Attorney General. Since 1995, the Harris government has established itself as a national leader when it comes to providing services for victims of crime. In 1995 and 1999, victims' rights and victims' services were, and I might say are, the centrepiece of our public safety platform. As you know, Minister, we passed into law a Victims' Bill of Rights, and our government spends millions of dollars each year on providing services for victims.

I know that one of our Blueprint commitments was to create a permanent Office for Victims of Crime. The necessary legislation, the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2000, has been passed, and I know that my Durham constituents, especially Glen and Brenda Copithorn, whose daughter Jennifer was murdered in 1998, want to see this become a reality. I'm sure Nola Lachance, Cheryl Carpenter and Kris Hills would also be interested in hearing your response today. These women were recently recognized by the Durham Region Police Service with a civilian merit recognition as they were involved in making sure Jennifer's murderer did not get away.

Minister, could you tell the House today when the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act will be proclaimed?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member from Durham for what is indeed a very important question on a very serious matter.

Let me say at the outset that this government's commitment to victims is complete, ongoing, and unequivocal. In December last year, we came forward and brought to this Legislature the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act. I'm pleased to say that this act, which created a permanent Office for Victims of Crime, passed first, second and third readings. As a result, we have an advisory agency, the OVC, that will perform many important tasks, including advising the government on how to spend the money that is in the victims' justice fund and helping to ensure that the principles set out in the Victims' Bill of Rights are respected and adhered to.

I'm very proud to be part of this government that will respect the rights of victims in not only one part of the province or another but throughout the province.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you for that, Minister, and I thank you for standing up for victims as you do.

Last week, the member from St Paul's claimed in this House, and I might say in print, that the Mike Harris government has abandoned victims and that victims of crime are being ill-served by our government. Mr Bryant wrote, "The Harris government fails to back up their big

talk about victims' rights without any substantial movement." Minister, we know this is not the first time this member has had the facts plain wrong when it comes to this government's record on supporting victims of crime. Can you remind the member from St Paul's and in fact every member of this House what the Mike Harris government has done to support victims in this province?

Hon Mr Young: Let me start off by stating that I categorically disagree with the member from St Paul's. This government has come forward with more initiatives than any government in the history of this province; in fact, more initiatives than any government in the history of this nation. This year alone we will be spending \$135 million on no less than 40 projects to assist victims.

Because my friend across the way raised it last week, and because it was raised this week by the member from Durham, let me be very clear about this. We plan to proclaim the Victims' Bill of Rights Amendment Act, 2000, during the week of June 5 to 11. We are doing it that week after consulting with victims because we know that Ontario's Victims of Crime Week is a most appropriate time to come forward and proclaim this very important legislation.

1500

RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, I have a very direct question. Will you guarantee there will be no more cuts to an already devastated ministry budget in tomorrow's budget announcement? For once in the history of the Mike Harris government, are you going to live up to your 1995 promise of no cuts to agriculture?

Minister, your ministry has seen its more than \$600-million budget cut nearly in half, to \$365 million. Your ministry once accounted for 1.2% of provincial spending, but now you are at less than 0.5%.

You offer us platitudes about food safety, yet you see nothing wrong with cutting food inspectors. Is this what your government means by common sense?

The animal health lab is key to ensuring quality live-stock herds, yet cost slashing has forced this lab to buy used equipment. Is this a commitment to agriculture?

Minister, can you stand in your place today and promise that there will be no more cuts to agriculture?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): My ministry and our government pride ourselves on the innovative programs that we have brought to the agricultural community. In fact, part of the initiatives that we plan to introduce are to take advantage of some of the economic incentives of various organizations that we partner with to provide more opportunities for rural Ontario and for the agricultural community. I look forward to the coming year so that we can implement some of these programs and provide more economic opportunities for a lot of our communities and agricultural businesses.

Mr Peters: Minister, there are persistent rumours circulating that your ministry's budget is going to be cut by another \$15 million. This is inconceivable. You say that you want a made-in-Ontario safety agreement.

Interjections.

Mr Peters: Could you stop yelling at me? You accused me yesterday of yelling. Please stop yelling.

You say you want a made-in-Ontario safety net solution, and I commend you because this is a wonderful goal. But how do you plan to achieve this without the necessary funding in place? Quebec has a quarter-century-old commitment to sustain a strong and viable provincial agricultural community. We should be looking at Quebec as an example. Quebec, though, commits over \$300 million a year for its safety net programs. How do you propose to create a made-in-Ontario plan when your entire ministry's budget is barely enough?

Minister, you didn't answer my question. Do the right thing: stand up in this House today and tell the farmers of Ontario that there will be no more cuts to their ministry.

Hon Mr Coburn: Actually, we've got a track record: the \$90 million we announced for safety nets. We were off the mark quickly and identified some of the stressful situations that the agricultural community found itself in. And there are other initiatives. We're quite proud. The made-in-Ontario solution is one that I'm working on with our stakeholders, and I'm quite pleased to tell the House today that the leaders of those stakeholder groups are working shoulder to shoulder with us to provide something that is long-lasting, effective, and sustainable for the agricultural community so that there will be future growth and we will be able to meet the challenges of the global marketplace.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): New question.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is also for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and I want to add my voice to that of the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London in congratulating the minister for the dispatch with which they got the aid out to farmers this spring.

Minister, your statement yesterday indicated that this government and your ministry—

Interjection.

Mr Johnson: The member for Hamilton East may want to listen to this too—plan to focus renewed attention and effort on rural economic development. But rural economic development has been a part of your ministry's mandate all along. Mr Minister, what have we been doing to date to foster growth and job creation in our rural communities?

Hon Mr Coburn: I thank the member for Perth-Middlesex for the question. Since 1995, our government and private and public sector partners have worked together to address the barriers to economic growth and to create new opportunities in rural Ontario. To date, we've invested more than \$250 million in rural Ontario. As a result, that has created more than 20,000 jobs and, in addition to that, learning opportunities in communities right across this province.

In the process, we have also overcome many of the barriers to growth that we have identified during consultation with our stakeholders. That's the benefit of working with stakeholders, that we work together to identify some of these challenges and provide economic opportunities.

Mr Johnson: Those jobs are welcome in my constituency, to the people in Perth and Middlesex.

If these programs and investment initiatives have been so successful, why are further resources being directed to fostering rural economic growth?

Hon Mr Coburn: The task force report on rural economic renewal, which was ably done by Dr Galt, the member from Northumberland, revealed that one of the remaining barriers to rural economic development is the uncoordinated provision of business development services.

A wide array of federal, provincial, regional, local and non-profit economic development organizations offer business development opportunities and services to rural entrepreneurs and communities. In some cases, communities are experiencing gaps in this variety of services, and in other cases there is some duplication.

The actions I outlined in my statement yesterday include steps designed specifically to address this particular barrier to growth, such as working with our communities to establish what are in essence one-stop opportunities and centres for business development services.

CHILD POVERTY

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Premier. You have a chance tomorrow to create a brand new day for some very poor men, women and families across this province. In your budget, you could announce that you are going to stop robbing them to pay Andersen Consulting. You've frittered away literally millions of dollars to Andersen Consulting, as they morph into Accenture Consulting, in a program of persecution of poor men, women, families and children across this province.

Premier, how much money are you going to continue to give tomorrow to Andersen Consulting at the expense of poor men, women, families and children across this province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): We don't plan to give one cent to anybody at the expense of anybody in this province, particularly the most vulnerable, who have been helped the most by our policies. I think you will see in the budget tomorrow that they too will be given even more opportunities: opportunities you took away from them; opportunities to raise themselves up, where you were holding them down, to get out, to get experience, to get work, to get a job.

When I look at the welfare policies of your government, on top of the Liberal government, the dependence you created is shameful. It is absolutely shameful that you wrote off 1.3 million people on welfare and said,

“Stay there. Forget it. No job for you, no opportunity for you.” For you to stand in your place and criticize the policies of a government that has given over 580,000 people the opportunity to break that cycle of dependence, to get the dignity of a job, is disgraceful.

Mr Martin: Premier, let me tell you what the truth is in this province. One in five children lives in poverty, and it's gotten worse since 1995. One in three children in Toronto lives in poverty. Some 471,500 children in this province are living in poverty. In spite of the fact that the economy has improved, in spite of the fact that you have created new jobs, in spite of the fact that you've thrown thousands of people off welfare, child poverty continues to soar in this province because of your cruel policies.

Let me give you an example: the clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement that takes, on average, \$80 to \$100 per month away from poor families that could go to feeding their children. Premier, in your budget tomorrow, will you stop taking that money away and giving it to these rich consultants?

Hon Mr Harris: First of all, when we get dollars from Ottawa, we invest every dime of that into programs for those children.

Let me also tell you that every study using recent data shows that while there are still children living below the low-income cut-off line, there are fewer than under your government, fewer this year than last year, fewer last year than the year before and fewer than the year before that. Every factual study shows that, including the study by Olivia Chow, a prominent member of the NDP here in Toronto.

Having said that, one child living in poverty in this country is not acceptable. That's why we've substantially increased funding. That's why we continue to give more opportunities. That's why we invest every nickel we can in programs to assist families, low-income families, so that we can have program after program—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Harris: Well, if the member wants to continue to yell out and spew out that kind of information, that's what got you into third place and that kind of policy will keep you in third place.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I will handle it, member for Scarborough East, or you'll be kicked out. You're not going to sit here and yell in my ear. I'm going to look after it. Last warning to you today.

1510

NORTHERN ONTARIO HERITAGE FUND

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): To the Premier: last week I asked you about the inconsistent way the northern Ontario heritage fund was handing out grants in northern Ontario. We had learned that when the Raino brothers of North Bay were told that a for-profit company could not receive money directly from the heritage fund, they approached your best friend, Peter Minogue, who went to Royal Poulin, your hand-picked

manager of the heritage fund, and together they hatched a scheme to circumvent the guidelines of the heritage fund so that your buddies in North Bay could get money that was against the heritage fund rules.

Subsequent to that, we found out that an operator in Sudbury who wished to put on a similar type of tournament in the same vein as the one in North Bay also approached the heritage fund, but was told there were no such funds available for the for-profit company. Why is there such an inconsistency, with one set of rules for your friends, Premier, and one for other northerners?

Mr Michael D. Harris (Premier): There's absolutely no inconsistency, and I think the Minister of Northern Development answered that yesterday.

Mr Ramsay: Premier, the inconsistency is glaring, and I think you should be checking your records to see if anybody else in your riding or northern Ontario has also made the same inquiries to your office directly or to the heritage fund as to the availability of grants to put on golf tournaments throughout northern Ontario.

There is a glaring inconsistency here. You said this was on the up and up, and I said back to you that if this was on the up and up, why can't all northerners understand and share in this scheme that your friends hatched, so that we all could have these golf tournaments funded by the heritage fund throughout northern Ontario? But that's not the case. It only happens with the North Bay friends of yours, who get the money and the rest of the northerners are out of luck. Why is it that just your friends get the money from the heritage fund, but for everybody else who applies the answer is no?

Hon Mr Harris: My friends get nothing from the heritage fund unless they have applied the same as everybody else can apply. It's the same process that was followed for the very successful tournament that was held in Sault Ste Marie. I didn't hear you complain there. About the tournament that will be held this year in Thunder Bay: I don't hear you complaining there. The Minister of Northern Development pointed out to you yesterday and answered the question: same rules, open, transparent. All the processes have been followed, and that's it.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): My question is to the Minister of Energy, Science and Technology. I understand some \$30 million annually has been allocated through the Ontario research performance fund to cover indirect costs related to Ontario-sponsored research and development carried out in Ontario colleges, universities and research institutes. Can you explain how the research community in Ontario has benefited from the research performance fund.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): This is a question that is of vital importance to our post-secondary education institutions that carry out world-class scientific research in the province. We had asked Dr Heather Monroe-Blum at the Univer-

sity of Toronto to help us to reverse the brain drain and help us to make sure we were investing taxpayers' dollars wisely into post-secondary education and research. She suggested that we cover the indirect costs. We're the first jurisdiction in Canada, that we're aware of, to actually cover the costs of scientists having to use libraries and computer labs, keeping the lights on, frankly, and paying the indirect overhead costs.

Under our research with the research performance fund, in addition to the hundreds of millions of dollars to the Ontario research and development challenge fund, the Premier's Research Excellence Awards and the Ontario Innovation Trust, we're now covering 40% of the indirect costs of research to make sure that the labs stay open, that the libraries stay open and that the world-class research which will create jobs by introducing new products and services in Canada will create jobs in Ontario.

We challenge the federal government. Although they are giving a lot of money for research these days, they're not covering the overhead costs of universities, and subsequently money has been taken out of regular classrooms and is being directed to areas—

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

PETITIONS

OPP DISPATCH CENTRE

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

“Whereas we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to locate the eastern regional OPP dispatch centre in the vacant and relatively new OPP building on Wallbridge Loyalist Road in Belleville, Ontario;

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

“To locate the eastern regional OPP dispatch centre in Belleville, Ontario.”

I very happily sign this petition.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): A petition from many concerned citizens of Ontario. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the annual rent increase guideline for multi-unit residential dwellings in Ontario increases every year more than the rate of inflation and more than the cost-of-living increase for most tenants;

“Whereas no new affordable rental housing is being built by the private sector, despite the promise that the implementation of vacancy decontrol in June of 1998 would encourage new construction;

“Whereas over 100,000 people are on the waiting list for social housing, homelessness has increased as a result of unaffordable rents, and high rents are a direct cause of the national housing crisis;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement an immediate province-wide freeze on rents which will stop all guideline increases, above-guideline increases and increases to maximum rent for all sitting tenants in Ontario for a period of at least two years.”

Lisa-Marie from Woodbridge is going to bring this petition, supported by me.

REINSTATEMENT OF TEACHER

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I have a petition that I wish to present to the Legislature of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas a suspended schoolteacher was reinstated and an independent public inquiry is requested;

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

“To appoint an independent body to conduct a complete inquiry into why Laura Sclater was reinstated as a ‘teacher in good standing with conditions and limitations’ after having been suspended from teaching and placed on the provincial child abuse register for sending letters containing sexual innuendo to a 13-year-old student.

“We expect policy changes to be implemented to prevent this situation from recurring.”

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”—Bill 26, standing in the name of Mr Crozier—“the Charity Fund-Raising Activities Act, 2001, to allow charitable organizations to conduct fundraising campaigns on roadways, sidewalks and parking lots.”

In support of this I affix my signature.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 307 people.

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials 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.”

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas this government is planning a complete overhaul of the developmental services system, which could result in the closure of the three remaining developmentally handicapped regional centres;

“Whereas suitable quality medical, behavioural, social, emotional and spiritual services are readily available in the three remaining centres;

“Whereas there is a distinct deficiency of services available in the private sector, including reluctant dentists, kinesiologists, psychiatrists, physicians and emergency services;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ask that you recognize that the three remaining centres for developmentally handicapped individuals are providing a community for the residents that live there and acknowledge that these centres deliver quality care and services by keeping them open and by directing private-public agencies with limited resources and services to access the resources at the centres and to work in partnership with them.”

It’s signed by a number of residents from Merlin, Chatham, Blenheim and Wheatley, and I affix my signature to it.

1520

HORSE RIDING SAFETY

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): 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 ... 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 signature to this.

PRIVATE HOME DAYCARE

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I have a petition from a group of parents from Casselman to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas private home daycare in the Day Nurseries Act is defined as temporary care for reward or compensation of five children or less who are under 10 years of age;

“Whereas in rural areas, there is a lack and in great part no public transportation and considering that the population is often far away from centres and schools;

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

“That the Ontario government bring forth the following amendment to the definition of the private home daycare under the Day Nurseries Act which would allow a greater number than five children or less who are under 10 years of age in the rural areas.”

I affix my signature.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I’ve got a petition from many, many people here concerned about the particular issue I’m about to read.

“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 to the health care system in Ontario; and

“(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.”

I support this petition.

BRAIN TUMOURS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 14 people:

“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.”

HOME CARE

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I have a petition which reads:

“To the Parliament Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“The heads of government reduce homemaking hours for the elderly and special cases. Governments have also reduced stays in a hospital after surgery or illness, by

promising more homemaking at home, but now we know that the governments are reducing these hours. The elderly are on a fixed income and cannot afford to have help come in.

“We, the undersigned, request that” the government of Ontario “review their action on home care policy and also request that they reinstate the home care program to act immediately on the above.

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows,” and this is signed by 350 residents of eastern Ontario. I have signed the petition also.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 106 people.

“Whereas children are being exposed to sexually explicit materials 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.”

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

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

“Whereas the northern health travel grant was introduced in 1987 in recognition of the fact that northern Ontario residents are often forced to receive treatment outside their own communities because of the lack of available services; and

“Whereas the Ontario government acknowledged that the costs associated with that travel should not be fully borne by those residents and, therefore, that financial support should be provided by the Ontario government through the travel grant program; and

“Whereas travel, accommodation and other costs have escalated sharply since the program was first put in place, particularly in the area of air travel; and

“Whereas the Ontario government has provided funds so that southern Ontario patients needing care at the Northwestern Ontario Cancer Centre have all their expenses paid while receiving treatment in the north which creates a double standard for health care delivery in the province; and

“Whereas northern Ontario residents should not receive a different level of health care nor be discriminated against because of their geographical locations;

“Therefore we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Ontario Legislature to acknowledge the unfairness and inadequacy of the northern health travel grant program and commit to a review of the program with a goal of providing 100% funding of the travel costs for residents needing care outside their communities until such time as that care is available in their communities.”

This is signed by a number of constituents from the town of Atikokan and, in full agreement with their concerns, I affix my own signature.

BRAIN TUMOURS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 14 people:

“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.”

BEAR HUNTING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here that was taken up in my area, and other areas of the province as well. It’s addressed to the Parliament of Ontario.

“Whereas mother bears and cubs are hunted in the fall as they prepare for hibernation; and

“Whereas about 30% of the bears killed in the fall are female, some with cubs; and

“Whereas orphaned cubs have a reduced chance of surviving; and

“Whereas an average of 12% of the fall hunt, or 343 cubs a year, are shot in the fall; and

“Whereas bears are the only mammals that are hunted so extensively over bait;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to stop the hunting of mother bears and cubs in the fall and prohibit the use of bait in all bear hunting activities.”

It has been signed by well over 1,000 individuals. I’m handing it to Christopher.

1530

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO STUDENT LOAN HARMONIZATION ACT, 2001

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 7, 2001, on the motion for second reading of Bill 19, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act / Projet de loi 19, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It is nice to be able to continue the debate on Bill 19, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act.

At the beginning, I’d like to recognize the member from Durham, who brought to my attention just before we adjourned at 6 o’clock yesterday, that I had brought up the accountability act brought in by the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale and I shouldn’t have been discussing that when he was not here. I certainly appreciate the member from Durham bringing that to my attention. On the same point, I’d like to talk about it today, but again I find I’m in the same position. I can’t talk about a bill that—

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member is being deliberate in trying to screw around procedure and decorum in the House. It is clear that you cannot say indirectly what you can’t say directly. The member is being too cute by half. I would ask you to rule him out of order and suggest you cannot make reference to a member’s absence or presence in the House directly or indirectly. He’s done that on three occasions in the last two minutes. I would ask you to correct that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): That is a point of order. I would ask the member to refrain from such practice.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. To begin, I’d like to speak about two specific measures: key performance indicators and also performance-based funding. Students and parents deserve a clear picture of the ability of our colleges and universities to prepare graduates for jobs. That’s why the Ontario government is now requiring post-secondary institutions to provide students with accurate information that can help them make more informed choices about their educational careers.

For example, if a student is trying to decide between program A and program B, the knowledge that twice as many graduates of program A find related jobs as those from program B could indeed be a deciding factor. At the college level, data are based on surveys of graduates to see if they’re satisfied with the quality of education they have received and whether it led to a job. It is based on surveys of employers to see if recent graduates had the

skills and expertise to gain entry into the workplace of choice. It also takes into account how well graduates have managed repayment of the costs of their education.

At the university level, our students can now review graduation rates, graduate employment rates and Ontario student loan default rates from every institution. These performance indicators demonstrate the quality of education provided in the province of Ontario. The most recent indicators show that an average 94% of 1998 university graduates had a job six months after leaving school and 97% were working within two years. Colleges had similar results, with 91% of the 2,000 college graduates working within six months of graduation. I'm proud to note that this is the highest employment rate of college graduates since 1989. In addition, 91% of employers reported satisfaction with the preparation that college graduates had received.

We believe these statistics are vital for students and parents. They allow them to make informed decisions about programs or which institution they want to attend. I think we can clearly see that access to information about performance levels helps all of us ensure that the system is responsive to the needs of learners and accountable to the taxpayers. We can look at the system and see what is working and what needs further attention. We can also ensure that taxpayers' dollars are being spent well. Most important, those people about to enter the system can select a program or course knowing how previous students felt about the education that they received and whether it led to a job.

While I believe it is important for institutions to be accountable, it is also important for students to fulfill their obligations as well. While we are prepared to help students to repay their loans in various ways, it is ultimately the responsibility of the students to manage their debt.

One of our concerns was the high default rate on student loans we inherited upon taking office. I am very proud of our government's balanced approach to increasing the number of students who successfully repay their debt to the Ontario taxpayers.

As you may be aware, this year the default rate is 15.5%, of course still too high, but that is down from the 18.2% back in 1999. As a matter of fact, this is the third consecutive annual drop in loan default rates for the province since 1997, when the overall rate was 23.5%. This puts us all well on our way to meeting our goal set in 1998 of reducing the overall OSAP default rates to less than 10% by 2003. We need to ensure that there's fairness in the system, both to the taxpayers who fund the student loan program and for the hard-working students who pay back their loans.

I'm pleased to note that the default rate has declined across the system. The rate for the university students is 7.1%, down from 8.4% and already below the 10% goal. The rate for college students is 17.2%, down from 20.1%, and the rate for students at private vocational schools is 28.9%, down from some 31%.

I want to emphasize that the default rates have maintained a steady decline since our government started

reporting publicly on the default rates. This clearly demonstrates that our commitment to accountability—to measuring and reporting on how taxpayers' dollars are spent—does improve efficiency and effectiveness. Information on default rates is now available to the public along with information on institutional performance in key areas such as student and employer satisfaction and the employment rates of graduates. We are now allocating a portion of the institutions' operating grants on their performance in these areas.

This decline in student loan default rates can be attributed to a number of government initiatives. These include credit screening new loan applicants to be sure that loans are not given to students with a history of credit abuse; second, providing students who have low incomes after they graduate with enhanced opportunities to apply for interest relief on their loan repayments; third, participating in the tax credit to help students cover the interest cost on student loans; fourth, requiring institutions that have very high default rates to help pay for the cost of these outstanding debts; and fifth, requiring institutions to give students accurate information about default rates, graduation rates and graduate employment rates by program so students can make informed choices about their studies. All of these measures ensure that both students and institutions fulfill their obligations to the Ontario taxpayers.

Accountability was an important element in the government's \$1-billion investment in colleges and universities through the SuperBuild initiative. Funds were awarded competitively to institutions based on how efficiently they could use them to create spaces for new students; evidence of both program and institution demand; the level of contribution to the long-term economic strength of the community and the presence of partnership funding with private sources.

I'm pleased to say that Ontario's colleges and universities responded to this challenge, and today spaces for 73,000 new students are under construction right across the province.

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The Ontario government has also introduced a new approach to funding post-secondary institutions to ensure that colleges and universities keep pace with the changing needs of students and the demands of the workplace. By linking funding to performance, our government is rewarding schools that do the best job of preparing students to succeed after graduation and ensuring that colleges and universities are accountable to students and taxpayers. As in all sectors of education, this government is not afraid to ask how students are doing or tell parents and taxpayers what the results are.

This is important, because we cannot set out to improve the quality of education offered at Ontario's colleges and universities without first asking basic questions about performance: how many students are satisfied with their educational experiences, how many employers feel that the graduates are well prepared for their chosen fields and how new graduates are faring in

the job market? These are the sorts of questions we're asking in a consistent way, and the result is increased accountability to students and the public.

This year, a portion of our \$103-million increase in operating grants was allocated based on the performance of post-secondary institutions: 2% of the operating grants to colleges was based on the institution's performance as measured by graduates' employment rate six months after graduation, employers' satisfaction with graduates and graduates' satisfaction with their education. This portion will increase to 4% in 2001-02 and to 6% the following year.

This year, 1% of university operating grants was distributed based on performance as measured by graduation rates, graduate employment rate at six months after graduation and graduate employment rate at two years after graduation.

Working in partnership with institutions, we will further refine our key performance indicators to ensure accountability in post-secondary education. This new approach to funding will benefit those institutions that are responsive to student and community needs by providing relevant and high-quality programs.

Increased accountability is good for students and it's also good for taxpayers. The government has already taken steps to ensure accountability and efficiency in our post-secondary education system, and I am confident that the Ontario Student Loan Harmonization Act, 2001, if passed by the Legislature, will take us another step toward our goal of ensuring that our young people will indeed be well prepared for the challenges ahead.

Perhaps most importantly this afternoon, our government understands the importance of giving students and parents the power to choose. There are different students with different goals and different requirements, and every student needs to make the choice that is best for them. Quite simply, when students and parents have reliable information about post-secondary programs, they make better choices for themselves than the government can.

For taxpayers, performance-based funding and key performance indicators mean accountability for public money. Citizens should have the right to know not only where their tax dollars are going but also what they're getting in return. These measures give taxpayers a tool to hold government and institutions accountable for the use of public funds and to complement our accountability initiatives in other sectors.

For institutions, these measures reward achievement and encourage innovation. There are a great many examples of post-secondary excellence and creativity in our province, and we should recognize and encourage those institutions that are producing great results for students.

This government is not afraid to recognize excellence, and it will continue to support accountability, choice and innovation in post-secondary education. For these reasons, I'm very pleased to be able to support Bill 19, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, particularly as it relates tremendously to accountability. Accountability has become a hallmark of

our government and I look forward to unanimous support in this House. I'm sure with the understanding of the opposition parties, once they really understand this bill, they will be supporting it. I don't think there's any question. I look forward to its speedy passage.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'd like to reassure the member opposite that this side of the House does understand the bill very well. I received a briefing last week from a very good bureaucrat in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Our complaint is, why did it take so long? However, we do support the bill.

We support anything that allows students easier access to loans, but this bill does not give back that part of the loan forgiveness that your government cut in 1995. This bill does not give back the millennium fund that your government sucked up from the federal government. This bill does not give loans back to part-time students that this government cut in 1995. What this bill does is make it easier for students to cut through the red tape and the bureaucracy, and that is welcome on this side of the House. Anyone who has worked with students, who has children who are going to go to post-secondary, welcomes those moves.

As well, I'm pleased to say that the interest rate at the provincial level is actually lower than that of the federal level. I'm very pleased to see that we can be role models in that one area. However, that does not do anything to address the fact that the students should have been receiving \$3,000 a year in the Canadian millennium scholarship and instead you are giving them what you would have given them anyway: in other words, a net value of zero to the students. The spirit of the millennium fund was for the students to get \$3,000 a year.

Your own task force, Portals and Pathways, aside from saying that OSAP should be simplified, is also saying that this is a very underfunded system, and we're looking forward to tomorrow's budget with eager ears and eyes to see if in fact you will be funding the system to the level that it was funded at before you came to government. You cut nearly half a billion dollars as soon as you came into this place and you've continued to cut operating grants since. Your own task force has called for this and I hope you listen to those people that you commissioned to do the report Portals and Pathways.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): This bill quite clearly takes over from the banks, who no longer want it, because they're saying, "We're not making enough money, so here you go, government, take it back. It's not something we care to hold on to if the profit isn't rich enough." So governments are always there to make sure that the public is protected in some way when the private sector, on whom they rely, abandons their role in dealing with this matter.

To the member for Northumberland, the problem is the government needs to immediately tackle the root cause of students' indebtedness—immediately. Across-the-board tuition increases of 60% in regular program-

ming and up to 520% increases in those deregulated programs, where universities and colleges can now jack up tuition fees as much as they think they can jack them up, are causing serious problems for students. Tinkering with the loan system is not what Ontario's students and families need. Quite clearly that's not what they need and/or want.

Students are experiencing record debt loads. This condemns young and struggling families to a life debt sentence. Governments ought to be there to help those students and to help parents—middle-class and lower-middle-class—from having this kind of burden, which they will carry with them not just for one day, not just for a week or a month, not just for here, but for a long time. These are the things you've got to tackle, and this bill doesn't deal with any of those other matters.

I urge the people in the province who care about this issue to condemn the government and connect with them to change this procedure and this bill and the laws that are affecting these families and students in Ontario.

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Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): It is a pleasure to take part in the debate this afternoon on Bill 19.

The member for Northumberland very clearly indicated the progressive measures we are taking to make sure OSAP funding is available and that it's available without having too much red tape. Our government is there to reduce the involvement of the government and it is there to cut through the red tape.

The member for Hamilton Mountain spoke, and I am pleased that she is pleased that we are doing the right thing. The member for Trinity-Spadina spoke yesterday as well as today.

Among the initiatives we have taken is interest relief. We want to make sure that if there is any student who is having hardship in repaying the loan, we've increased the interest relief from 18 months to 30 months. We'll be looking forward, in case there is somebody still in hardship, to them contacting the government, I suppose, or the members, so we may be able to do further than that.

Another thing also in this bill will be credit worthiness. We want to make sure that the students—if they've defaulted earlier or if they've had bad credit, then we may be very careful or the institutions will be very careful in extending that student loan. Our commitment is to reduce the default rate and we are committed to reducing the default rate to less than 10%. We are moving forward in that respect.

The new application for loans will be a single application, as I've said earlier, and this will actually facilitate the students' access to the funds. I'm very happy to be supporting this bill and I'm glad the members opposite are supporting it.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Overall, I agree with my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who made a compelling argument regarding post-secondary education the other day, and overall it is a good and

necessary piece of legislation. There's a need to streamline the student loan process and the ministry needs a new mechanism to provide students with loans.

However, the government should be focusing on reducing student debt load as well, because accessibility is of great concern to most working families in Ontario. It's accessibility to post-secondary education that will provide the opportunities for our young people to be able to succeed, but also to be able to provide this wonderful resource for economic prosperity, which is, of course, our brainpower.

One of the things we have to remember, unfortunately, is that the university tuition fees are 45% higher today than they were in 1995-96. University tuition now makes up 40% of university operating funds. The average student debt load has doubled since 1995.

Statistics Canada reports show there is a growing gap between the participation rates of students from higher-income families and students from lower-income families. If we truly are going to have accessibility to post-secondary education, we have to deal with the hard issues of providing proper funding to post-secondary education.

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

Mr Galt: I appreciate the responses from the four various members. I particularly appreciated the response from the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. Some of his comments were very insightful. Also, the other members who recognized cutting through the red tape and streamlining—the member for Hamilton Mountain as well as the member for Sarnia-Lambton commented on that, and I certainly appreciate it. That's been a hallmark of our government, to get rid of some of that red tape and make it a simpler, one-application type of thing.

You're focusing in on debt load and you're focusing in on not giving back etc. What they're missing is—I believe it is the student opportunities fund, or some such name, but it funds those who are in need over that \$7,000 per year. For a four-year course, at the end it's a \$28,000 indebtedness. When you compare that, say, with a car and you are investing in your future, I can't think of a better investment than in your own education, something like \$28,000. When you think about what taxpayers are putting forward, they're putting forward a lot more than that. There's been a certain amount in the donations that went to create those funds, but I think in all fairness, the members of the opposition should recognize what is happening in these other areas and that indeed there is an awful lot of assistance for students that was not there back in 1995.

The default rate and the changes in the default rate were also mentioned. I think it's only fair to the public that those students pay back what they have borrowed, and certainly we're moving in the right direction.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): Mr Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kingston and the Islands.

This is a bill that's had a great deal of debate, and I would reiterate what many others have said. It's not really a bad bill, but the question is, does it do anything for students? I think the response is, it does a lot for banks. It will help banks, which have been struggling to keep their profit increases in the double-digit range.

For students, it does produce a little easier system to get a loan, so from that viewpoint it's nice, but it doesn't really address the problem. The problem is the overwhelming costs facing young people and adults who are trying to return to the school system. Indebtedness is an issue for people making an investment. I would suggest that there is nothing better that we as a society could invest in than an investment in education for our citizens. The province goes ahead when our individual citizens go ahead.

I have previously noted in this House that over the last six years for community colleges, tuition increases have had to happen because the province has reduced the grant from \$5,000 to \$3,000 per student. I know tuition is now about one third of what it costs for a student. But I noted with interest over the weekend, when this government announced that they were signing a contract with a private firm to run one of our jails, that it was going to be only \$80 per day. This government views spending \$80 per day to lock someone up and make them non-productive as a very good investment, but for a community college system we spend about \$19 a day. That's 19 bucks a day to educate someone who's going to help. For another \$10-a-day investment into a community college student, we could move back from the \$3,000 per year to \$5,000 per year. But the language we always hear from the government is, it's going to be tough: We're going to have more regulations. We're going to have boot camps. We're going to have stricter discipline. We're going to have higher standards.

I think we need to talk about the really good young people in this province, who are by far the majority, and say, "What can we do to help you be successful, because our success is tied to your success?"

Students in this province face very real problems—not a problem getting into debt, not a problem that this bill really satisfies. We have a lack of equal opportunity across the province. People lack the ability to get the money to go to school.

We have seen the colleges respond to the cuts with a reduction in hours. That's a challenge for students because for them to be successful after graduation, to maintain the placement rates—and I appreciate the member from Northumberland noting that the job placement is about 94%. It varies at around 94%, 93% or 92%. Community colleges have always had an extremely high placement rate, but as you reduce the hours, you reduce the knowledge that students are able to acquire and you make them less marketable and less able to be successful.

Colleges and universities are being forced to have significant numbers of part-time faculty. Part-time faculty can be very good people doing an excellent job in the classroom, but when they are part-time, they com-

plete their teaching hours and they leave the building because, to make a living, almost invariably they need another job. When they're not in the building, they are not accessible to the students who need to ask questions. This bill does nothing to improve the ability of students to acquire that help.

We're seeing a loss of programs in Ontario, programs that ironically are in many cases ones that lead to extremely high employment rates. I have seen colleges cut programs that have a 100% placement rate. But the college programs are expensive ones. They are often in the technology or computer area and cost a lot of money for the college to offer, and so, in a need to survive, they will reduce the high-cost, though very successful, programs.

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There is another thing that causes fewer programs when you make the cost of post-secondary so expensive that students can't go. Colleges need a certain critical mass to offer a program. When there are a number of students who are fully qualified, have the ability and would be successful, but cannot afford to go to that college, the college may have to cut the program because they only have one half or one third the numbers they need to make the program viable. So the loss of financial ability for the students to finance it hurts every other potential student in that program.

We're seeing colleges go to larger classes. The college system, when it was first conceived, was based on the premise that there would be very practical applied courses and programs and they would have class sizes in the 20-to-30 range. We're now seeing colleges offer classes of 100 or 200 people. What does that mean to the students? Students who are very good will survive whether they're in a class of 30 or a class of 200, but students with special needs will have a major, major struggle to survive in a class where questions can't be asked because of the sheer number of students.

They also force adult returnees to have a very difficult time. I taught a lot of adult students, and in general, when you started in September, the adult students were the lowest performing in the class. They may have been out of school for two years, 10 years or 20 years. By the end of September or early October, they were pretty well caught up to the rest of the class. By November, they were excelling. But they were able to do that because they had the ability to get some time with the teacher; they had some time to get extra help. Larger classes preclude that.

This government has made no end of announcements about money going into colleges' capital systems, capital money that will build new classrooms and new buildings. I fear that instead of having the old empty classrooms that some of the colleges are experiencing, we're going to have new empty classrooms without the operating funds. The capital is nice, but I can assure you the funds to hire faculty and assistants and make the program run are equally or more important, and we need some operating grants.

In the Legislature, we tend to live in a bit of an artificial world. We don't know what it's like to be in a family that is not able to buy food the following week, let alone pay tuition. Within the last week, the Minister of Community and Social Services has imposed regulations on daycares. I met some daycare operators who say they have a significant number of students who have returned to post-secondary, but now with the new regulations, the government will provide subsidy only from a half-hour before the students start school to a half-hour after. It is not possible for that student to get from the college or university to the daycare facility in half an hour. I suggest it couldn't happen in Toronto and it can't happen in rural Ontario. So these students who are trying to better themselves and are trying to get a good job are losing their daycare subsidy.

I've spoken to some students who have said their spouse is employed and so the province has said, "We will not fund daycare for your children if your spouse is home." That, at first simple glance, seems to make sense, but the reality is that in many cases the spouse is working night shift, has worked from midnight to eight, and gets home as the other person is going off to school. The province now says that person should stay up all day and look after the children, when in fact, if they're going to work and be productive, they're tied up for the day.

We're seeing students forced to take part-time jobs. That may appeal to the capitalist side of people, but students who are doing part-time jobs are sometimes or often forced to miss classes, are forced to work when they should be doing assignments, are forced to skip out and do things to keep the job because they need the money.

Adults returning to post-secondary have a particular challenge that is not being helped with OSAP. One of the realities of OSAP that I hope this bill addresses is that many students return in September and don't know until November whether in fact they're going to get an OSAP loan, and so they've chosen to gamble. For some good people, they're not prepared to gamble their family food or their family house in order to get ahead, because they've got to put their families ahead of themselves. Hopefully, in this streamlining process, students will know before they start.

The cuts in funding from this province have done immeasurable harm to the post-secondary system, which this bill does not begin to address or to solve. There is not a recognition by this government of the real cost of going back for education and, similarly, not an assessment of the real benefits to the entire province when people either go to post-secondary or return to school to complete their studies. This bill just doesn't help remove the significant number of barriers that exist.

I have said before and will continue to say that we value good health care in Ontario. But good health care requires a good education system, and we have seen this government downgrade and destroy our post-secondary system.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I'm very pleased to join this debate and to ask the gov-

ernment, first of all, why it took them so long to come up with this bill. I know that from a student's perspective it's very difficult at times and very hard for them to deal with two completely different systems: the Canada student loan system and the Ontario student loan system. We support this bill. We think it should be as easy as possible for students to deal with their loan situation.

Unfortunately, this bill doesn't deal with the real issues that are happening in post-secondary education, as has already been stated here earlier this afternoon. Why doesn't it deal with loans to part-time students? They were eliminated by your government. We are basically telling part-time students, "If you want to study, don't rely on us. If you want to better yourself and become more competitive in this economy, you've got to do it on your own. There's no help or assistance out there for you."

The millennium fund: you may recall that the federal government made lots of money available to give to students who had earned the scholarships that were handed out with the millennium fund. What did this government do? It clawed back that money in exactly the same way it clawed back the child tax credit to poor families who rely on social assistance.

How about those students who are on social assistance? We've all had them in our constituency offices, people who really want to better themselves and realize that the only way they're going to do it is by furthering their education. At one time, they used to be eligible for OSAP loans. What the government in effect did was claw back their social assistance and say, "If you want to study, you've got to take a loan that you've got to pay back," whereas if they didn't study, they would be given social assistance payments. It didn't make any sense whatsoever to people. We made it tougher on people to go back to school than not return to school and simply stay on social assistance.

I always like to deal with the government's own statistics. I know that people out there have probably heard on many occasions from many different sides that the amount of money available for post-secondary education has dramatically decreased. People are probably saying, "That may be Liberal propaganda. That may be opposition propaganda." So I would like to quote some of the sections contained in a study, *Portals and Pathways*, that has recently been released. It is the government's own study, in which it refers to its own financial figures as far as what has been made available to post-secondary education.

It's very interesting to note that in constant 2000 dollars terms, over the last 10 years the provincial grants to post-secondary institutions have decreased by some \$600 million, whereas tuition, on the other hand, has more than doubled. It has gone from \$624 million within the university system to \$1.305 billion. In other words, tuition fees have gone up by over 100% over the last 10 years, whereas provincial grants have been reduced by over \$600 million.

This is borne out again when you look at the annual tuition that is charged for the average university arts

degree program. Back in 1991 the cost per year was \$1,639. What is it today? It is \$3,951, an increase of well over 100%. On the other hand, the university operating grants—in other words, the money that's being given to the universities on a day-to-day and year-to-year basis—have decreased from \$6,100 per student to \$5,200 per student.

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I could go on and on citing these figures and giving examples as to what has happened to the college system, but the bottom line is that over the last five to six years this government has dramatically decreased funding for post-secondary education. So it's no wonder that students through their tuition fees, and universities and colleges through their fundraising efforts, have had to make up the difference.

I think it's an absolute shame, in a province that has been regarded by the United Nations as having the best quality of life, that we are making it more and more difficult for youngsters such as our pages, by the time they reach university and college age, to get to college and university.

The one thing we admired about our system over the last 30 or 40 years was the fact that anyone who had the ability to go to college or university would not be denied the opportunity of doing that for economic reasons. But that's no longer the case. We had a survey that was just released yesterday, which shows that 70% of parents out there are concerned about their children not being able to attend university and college—70% of parents. This is the Ipsos-Reid survey, which was released yesterday. The main reason they don't think their children will be able to attend—a full 80% of that 70% say they can't afford it or don't expect to be able to afford it. That is a startling indictment of this government. We have money for tax cuts—and we all like tax cuts; who wouldn't like to pay less taxes?—but we don't have enough money to ensure that our students who are qualified to go to university and college are able to do so.

I know that my friends on the other side will try to put a different spin on it, but these are the facts: more than two out of three parents out there feel that a time will come when their qualified students, their children, will not be able to go to university.

The other thing that is very interesting about that study is that 64%—roughly two out of three Ontarians out there—want increased provincial funding for universities and colleges even if it may mean cancelling tax cuts or reduced spending in other areas. I really believe this is one area where this survey clearly indicates that the public is way ahead of this government.

The public, the parents of Ontario students out there realize that in order for their children to compete in this globally competitive world, it will be necessary for them to get the highest possible education that each one can achieve. They realize it. The question we on this side of the House come back to over and over is, why doesn't the government get it? Why doesn't the government get the notion that an investment in education is an invest-

ment for all of us? It will benefit not only those individuals getting the education, but it will also benefit our economy. This government doesn't seem to get that.

When we are ranked 59th of the 60 North American jurisdictions as far as funding for public education is concerned, that is just horrible. I don't want Ontario to be compared with Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas or many of the other states.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Where Mike plays golf.

Mr Gerretsen: That's another issue.

The final issue that I very quickly want to address, and one I addressed yesterday to the minister, deals with the double-cohort situation. I know the minister will say, "Well, yes, we've made some capital money available for more student residences in our colleges and universities in Ontario." The bottom line is that in another two years, an additional 90,000 students—those students who are currently in grades 10 and 11—will be seeking those positions in universities and colleges, doubling the number of applicants in any other year.

The question I placed to the minister yesterday and that the people—particularly the parents of those grades 10 and 11 children—want to know is: will there be a place for my son or daughter, based on the same qualifications they need today, in our university and college system two years from now? So far this government hasn't done anything other than put up some capital money for some new residences. But how about the operating money? I challenge this government to ensure—everybody's nodding yes on the other side, but I hope you will deal with this problem in tomorrow's budget.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): It's not a problem.

Mr Gerretsen: "It's not a problem," he says. It may not be a problem for you if you don't have a son or daughter in grade 10 or 11, but it's a major problem and a major concern to those parents who have children in those grades.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): In response, Mr Speaker, and letting you and other folks know that the member from Hamilton West is going to be speaking to this bill in just a couple of minutes—he's got a nine-year-old daughter, Kayla. He knows what it means for a parent to be anticipating a bright youngster like Kayla, like the kids of any of the people here, like so many kids across Ontario, like the kids of folks who live in my neighbourhood and in the communities I'm proud to represent down in Niagara, kids from hard-working families, bright kids—kids who I say should have a right, an absolute right, in the province of Ontario, as prosperous as it is, to receive a post-secondary education.

Think of it: there shouldn't be a kid in this province who, if they're interested in it, if they're capable of it, if they're motivated to do it, should have university or college doors slammed in their face. That's what this government is doing, and quite frankly, I haven't heard

anything from my Liberal counterparts to suggest they believe any differently.

We New Democrats believe that every young person should, as a right, be able to pursue post-secondary education. And that's why we New Democrats believe it's a good investment, a financially smart investment, a prudent investment to invest in colleges and universities in a way this government, the Tories, certainly hasn't done. They've dragged funding, stolen funding, from universities and colleges, upping tuitions by what, 60%, Mr Marchese?

Mr Marchese: Sixty per cent.

Mr Kormos: In the mere six years they've been in power, tuition fees have gone up 60%, closing the door, slamming the door in the faces of bright young kids across this province, the children of hard-working women and men who are not going to be able to go to college or university, as they have a right to, because this government's policies favour only the wealthiest.

Mr Gill: In response to my friend from the third party, I'm surprised he didn't say they endorse free education, that they endorse no fees at all, which I think came out yesterday. Maybe it'll come out again. We certainly believe that everybody should pay a fair share of their tuition. We want to ensure that every student who wants to and is capable of going to university should have the means to go to university.

One of the things the member from Kingston and the Islands talked about was the double cohort. This has been discussed for a long time. As I said before, my own daughter is in that double cohort, and I'm quite assured that there's going to be enough funding. We've already put more than a billion dollars into infrastructure to make sure there are enough classrooms. We put \$103 million in the operating grants to make sure there is going to be faculty when those kids go to university in 2003.

Our government takes and makes tough decisions and carries them through. In 1969, when I was going through grade 13, I remember that they talked about, "Well, grade 13 should be eliminated." Every year, the governments kept postponing and postponing because that was a tough decision, whereas the whole world had gone ahead. Everywhere else in the world, high school is up to grade 12. Nobody was able to, wanted to, make tough decisions. This is a government that makes tough decisions, carries them through and makes sure the funding is available for those kids who are eligible, who want to go to higher education. I'm very happy that we have the institutions, the University of Toronto, University of Waterloo and many others at that level.

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Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I want to compliment my colleagues from Prince Edward-Hastings and Kingston and the Islands for their important remarks which dealt with so many of the problems that we are seeing out there that this government is simply not dealing with.

One of the realities of the most recent study which is really quite alarming is the fact that children of working

families whose combined income is less than \$60,000 are finding it almost impossible now to access post-secondary education, particularly in the medical school field. I received a letter from Bruce Sutton, chief executive officer of the Nipigon District Memorial Hospital, with an extraordinary level of concern about the fact that many of the students who want to access medical school education are simply not able to do it, particularly those from rural areas.

The fact is that the government has certainly frozen for many, many years now—10 years—the amount you can access in terms of your student loans. The other side of that coin, of course, is that as you increase the loans available, your debts are going to increase as well. It's a real tragedy that working families cannot afford to send their children for post-secondary education. The government just doesn't seem to get the point. They put forward a bill that I'm pretty sure we're going to support, but it doesn't deal with the major issues that are out there.

My colleague from Kingston and the Islands, when he dealt with the double-cohort issue, which is obviously one that's of extreme concern, also got to a very important point that I want to reiterate and I spoke about it yesterday myself: the operating funds that are going to our universities and colleges are absolutely falling incredibly behind. Confederation College in Thunder Bay, an extraordinary institution that has graduated 20,000 students over the last 30 years, has had \$17 million taken from its operating budget since 1994. They're dealing with a \$1.7-million deficit now. They may have to increase tuition fees, cancel some programs and lay off some staff.

The fact this government has to recognize is that they can't simply put forward a bill like this without recognizing there are many, many other issues they need to deal with that we very much want them to get to.

Mr Marchese: Just to add quickly to this debate, the Missing Pieces II study done by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives ranks Ontario 10th among Canada's provinces in operating funding for colleges and universities. The study also ranks Ontario ninth in public funding for post-secondary education. And in North America, Ontario now ranks second-last in funding for colleges and universities. We are not investing in our post-secondary educational system. We are at the bottom of the barrel. We are last, literally. We are not making the investments in the human capital that we say we need to invest in to be able to compete with other jurisdictions in Canada and in North America. I don't understand why we wouldn't be spending in those areas that even governments agree are critically important.

They say universities and colleges are important, but they're not adding the dollars. Even their own task force says that the government must urgently invest \$500 million more in the next four years. Their own task force, which I'm sure they didn't believe would come back with such a recommendation, says they have to put back money. You took \$2 billion in cumulative funds—operating funds—out of the college and university system. Not only are you not investing; you're taking away.

We argue as a solution not just a freeze; we're arguing that we need to get rid of tuition fees altogether and do it in a fashion similar to the way in which we provide our health care system, which is universally accessible to rich and poor alike, because there are social benefits, psychological benefits and economic benefits to making sure that it's universally accessible to all. We advocate that like the health care system, universities and colleges be free to everyone, because the benefits are clearly evident to everyone in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston and the Islands has two minutes to respond.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me say first of all that I totally agree with the member for Niagara Centre that everyone who is capable should have the right to attend university and college. But I would just like to remind him that they ran on that platform of no tuition back in 1990 and then over the next five years increased tuition fees for the students by 60%, so I don't believe they've got any credibility at all on this issue.

With respect to my friend opposite, he makes it a big deal that \$103 million has now been invested into our system. You are still short some \$700 million according to the council of universities and colleges—over \$500 million in the university system and \$270 million in the college system.

On the elimination of grade 13, do you not realize that all you have really done is taken a year for which students did not pay tuition, for which parents basically paid through their property and income taxes in the secondary school system, and you've simply transferred that from grade 13 to first-year university? That's all you've done. The universities are talking now about a general four-year degree program. We will still end up with the same number of years between secondary education and post-secondary education for somebody to get a degree. The big difference is that now the students are paying for that grade 13 year whereas before they weren't.

Why don't you own up to that? Why don't you say to the people of Ontario, "We think we shouldn't invest any more in education than we are right now. If people want it, they have to pay for it"?

That is the wrong way to go if you want to invest in our future, if you want to invest in the youngsters we've got here in the House today as pages. The only way we will be competitive is if we have good, publicly funded health care and education systems, and you're doing everything to destroy that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the bill. Let me say at the outset that there's really nothing too extraordinary about this bill. In fact, we have an amendment we'll be proposing, and if the NDP amendment is adopted, we won't have any problem supporting the bill. But given that the Liberals are onside and that nobody is really doing a whole lot in here today—it's pretty quiet—the fact of the matter is that those who have labelled this a

minor housekeeping bill and just tinkering are pretty accurate.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Well, our amendment would be much more than that, of course, but the bill itself really is not going to change much. If anything, I suppose it provides some kind of political tool, an attempt to deflect from the real issues, and the real issues are what you've been hearing this afternoon from members who were talking, especially speaking from experience in their own communities.

I've got to tell you right at the outset that what I can't understand for the life of me is, given the importance this government places on how people perceive their management of the economy and their management of those things that support an economy that continues to work for the people of Ontario, why would you allow our universities to fall to a shameful level, second-last in per capita funding in all of North America? Where is the common sense in doing that, given that outside of our geography, both our relationship to the United States and the geography of Canada itself in terms of our natural infrastructure—the waterways, the land that allows us to grow wheat and support cattle and herds, and the fish—all those things are a product of geography that's just luck on the part of Canada?

On top of that, what has really given us the standard of living we're so proud of, one that, I say again as I have said many times in this House, has had Canada chosen, I believe it's six times, by the United Nations as the best place in the world to live, one of the key ingredients on top of our natural geographical advantages, is our education system, the education level and the added value that Ontario workers bring to productivity.

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Given that key essential component in having a viable economy, why do you allow the universities to fall the way they have? The only answer I can come up with when I look through the material—and it's hard to believe a government would think this way, but I can't see any other answer, nothing else makes sense. What it's telling me is that as you look at the number of students from middle-, modest- and low-income families who are not applying to university where their given reason is the debt load they would have to carry because their family can't just cut a cheque and say, "There you go, don't worry about it," that situation is OK with you and that you've determined somehow that there's going to be enough educated people from the ranks of those who are lucky enough to be in a family where they can cut those cheques, so therefore you seem to think that will provide you with the high value added that we will need from our collective workforce in Ontario in the future. But even that doesn't seem to work, because I don't think it's enough people. Our value-added benefits are not just at the level of the engineers, the doctors, the lawyers, and the other professionals we produce, notwithstanding that they are among the best the world can produce; it's the knowledge and skills of the average worker that give us the distinct advantage.

A personal experience: I can recall when I was the president of local 525 UAW in Hamilton. We had a plant, Allen Industries, that at one time employed almost 1,500 people. They produced—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: No, not the candy ones. They produced car interiors. In the early 1980s they shut that down and they moved to Mexico because the corporation was enticed by the fact that they could pay Mexican workers something less than \$1 a day to perform the same work that was performed in Hamilton at Allen Industries.

I don't know what happened in the long run, but in the short term that plant didn't work, and at the end of the day the company acknowledged, certainly privately, that the Mexican workforce did not have the same skill level as the Ontario workers, as in this case the ones in Hamilton.

There is more than ample evidence that value-added, and in this case knowledge, education—tied with opportunity and other things but that's the key component—is what gives us one of our key competitive advantages. For once it's a competitive advantage that doesn't have one worker taking two bucks an hour less than somebody else to do the job. The competitiveness is based on value added, and at the end of the day everybody wins.

The whole system, the whole notion, of a skilled workforce providing us with that key competitive advantage starts to disintegrate, it crumbles from underneath, when you don't fund all of the primary, secondary, and, in the case of the bill we're talking about today, the post-secondary education systems. Where is the business sense in doing that?

With the new boundary ridings, I now have both McMaster University and Mohawk College within my riding. I consider myself very lucky, because they are truly jewels in the education system of Ontario, and we're very proud of both institutions in Hamilton.

I've raised this before and I want to raise it again in this context: your underfunding of the post-secondary education system not only does the damage that I've just outlined, but it also is pitting one part of the community against another, as we've seen over and over again. I've mentioned the cases here and I'm going to raise them again.

We had the situation of regional council being pitted against the Hamilton Street Railway bus drivers. Why? The whole thing was caused because municipal council didn't have the dollars they needed to adequately sit down and negotiate and respond to the very legitimate demands that the bus drivers were making. So we got into a real long strike, and day after day in the paper and on TV and on the radio, we heard one Hamiltonian going after another Hamiltonian. It breaks my heart to see that happening, because I know you caused it, yet we're having to fight in Hamilton—and when I say Hamilton, I know it's happening in other communities. I see my colleague from Kingston nodding his head. These things are happening right across the province as you sit back

here and say, "We're the tax cutters. We're saving all the money." Meanwhile, all the damage is happening in our communities.

Specifically to this issue, we had another strike not that long ago in Hamilton: MUSA, a newly formed union representing the support workers at McMaster University. The fight in the media, again, was between the management at the university and the union. But the invisible player behind the scene is you, this government. There were absolutely legitimate demands on the table on the part of the union. They could show you case after case of comparatives at other universities where they were underpaid, and also underpaid relative to the work that other people were doing.

The university is facing underfunding. Let me give you an example to talk about that part directly. I just want to read from an article published by Dr Henry Jacek, who is a professor at McMaster University, but for the purposes of my point, he is also president of the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. This is what he said, in part, in response to your privatization of universities: "It means that for-profit business can now set up shop in Ontario and bestow a university degree. It means access to a public university for qualified students is threatened. It means that public monies will make their way into private ventures. It means that another level of bureaucracy, the quality assessment board, whose composition will include members from the private sector, will determine what constitutes a university education. And it means that students, already facing staggering debt loads under the public system, will be saddled with even greater debt loads if forced to look at private alternatives."

Mr Harvey Weingarten, who is McMaster University's provost and vice-president of academics, said this about freezing of tuition in terms of the implications for them. I'm going to put it in a different context, but that's the context the quote was made in, and it's this: "A freeze means that certain programs that students are asking for we would not be able to provide," he said. "It means that upgrades of equipment, laboratory supplies, hiring new faculty, we simply couldn't do it. We have an obligation to provide Ontario students with the best-quality education we can and the levels of funding now are challenging our ability to do that."

Talk about an explosive mixture. Then, in that fiscal straitjacket—what other word is there?—that management faces groups of their employees who put legitimate demands on the table. What are they supposed to do? But then that's not your problem, is it? Because you just stand back and say, "It's the board of governors at the university that are ultimately responsible. We don't make those decisions." But, damn it, when you don't give the funding that's necessary to provide the service, how can you not be at fault?

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That's why I opened my comments with not understanding at all what this government's doing. With most of the mean-spirited things you do, at least one can see

the motivation and understand it. You may disagree, but at least you understand the why. I don't understand this one. It seems to me that you ought to be announcing record levels of investment in all of our education system, but specifically in post-secondary education, because of the difference it makes to the quality of life overall. I bring you back to that again. Everything we do is supposed to be about that quality of life, not that the quality of life has to adapt to whatever you decide is the vision of this province we all have to live in.

By the way, McMaster has announced a 2% increase every year for the next five years. They have made their announcement. Everything we've heard today and all the numbers we've talked about today are only going to get worse. The trend line is worse, worse, worse. Why? Is that just the price we have to pay for you to make your announcement tomorrow about further tax cuts? That's the only thing left. You know it's wrong. You know it's doing damage. Your friends are taken care of because they can afford it anyway, so what the heck, if this is one of the things you have to live with to put your tax cut in place, then so be it.

As we are beginning to find out, that's what gave us Walkerton, in part. What's your excuse going to be in terms of the education Walkerton we are looking at now that's going to explode over the next few years? What's your explanation going to be, when we are telling you now that that's where we're heading?

Believe me, this is not just the opposition. There was a poll. It has probably been referenced before, but I'm going to underscore the message. There was an Ipsos-Reid poll published on May 7 that was commissioned by OPSEU, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, CUPE and the Canadian Federation of Students that showed two thirds of Ontarians are concerned about access to post-secondary education, and 80% said they won't be able to pay the high tuition fees charged under a Conservative government.

My friend from Kingston and the Islands mentioned earlier that we don't have a lot of credibility on this issue. I want to put on the record that, contrary to his throwaway line, the fact of the matter is that in the midst of the deepest recession since the Depression of the 1930s, we spent, as a government, almost twice as much money on capital funding as you are now, coming out of the biggest economic boom and the greatest bull market North America has ever seen.

You may say that's the wrong thing to do. We can have that debate about whether you should do that during a recession or not. But I'll tell you something: there was an assurance on the part of our government that the competitive advantage we got from having the kind of high-quality education system and the universal accessibility that we had was maintained and was there for the students of that era. They're benefiting from that now, if you think about the years that have gone by. Quite frankly, prior to that, all of us Ontarians are benefiting from the dividends we received from the investment of previous Tory governments that initially set up the whole

system of public universities and public community colleges. You've got us going in the opposite direction.

Not only that, but in the midst of a recession, the key thing people need is a job. You talk about jobs. You talk a great story. That's sure easy to do when the economy is booming. What'll be interesting over the next couple of years is to see how you treat job creation when we're in tough times, because if the levels of funding that we had put in place with the universities had just been maintained, we wouldn't be in the jackpot we're in now.

Read the submissions made by the various organizations that care about our university and college system and ask yourselves, as individual members, how can this be helping Ontario? Because in the absence of that, we have to assume that you just don't care whether everybody who deserves an opportunity to a post-secondary education gets one or not.

If it was just sad, that would be bad enough, but it's worse than that. It's not just a sad situation; you're talking about people's future. You're talking directly about the quality of life of the next generation of families, because we know that people who have a university education will make a lot more money out in the workforce, and also the overall benefit to our Ontario economy, where we all benefit from what someone else does. If I've got a co-worker who's off in some part of the economy being productive and giving a competitive advantage that no one else in the world has, based primarily on their education, I'm going to benefit from that and they're going to benefit if I'm adding the same in the work that I do.

That may not be your big, fancy macroeconomics, but let me tell you, that's economics in the community, on the streets where we live, and the economics of sitting at the kitchen table and saying, "What are we going to do about providing for our kids' future?" That didn't used to be the kind of crisis it is, and the bill you have on the floor today is going to do nothing to mitigate that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions or comments? The member for Bramalea-Malton-Gore-Springdale.

Mr Gill: Mr Speaker, I know the riding name is a little difficult and most people get thrown off. Even in the riding sometimes they ask me. If I'm travelling across the country, I just say, "Toronto airport? Yes, that's my riding." I'm very happy to have Toronto airport in my riding, because the GTA is spending about \$4.5 billion right now, and we're going to build a new power plant at a cost of \$1 billion Canadian, and there's going to be a new hospital in my riding. So I'm very happy.

It's fair that I remind the viewers at home and the members here of the name of this bill, because just now the speaker from Hamilton West was all over the place except to really zero in on this bill. This is Bill 19, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act.

One of the things I'm very happy that the member opposite from Hamilton West spoke about is, "Six years in a row Canada has been ranked as the number one

country in which to live, work and raise a family.” I’ve said it before: Ontario certainly has led Canada, and in terms of growth, Ontario has led not only Canada but all the G7 countries.

At the same time, the speaker from Hamilton West said, “Kids are having a hard time going to university.” That is not the case. In fact, enrolment has gone up, the number of applications has gone up and we are going to be increasing the number of students going to medical school by, I believe, 40 additional, whereas the NDP in their time had cut the enrolment in the medical program by 10%. So we are bringing in a lot of good measures to make sure that facilities and teachers are available for the students.

Mr Gerretsen: I think the last member better check his facts, because I’m looking at the government’s own document, Portals and Pathways, and at the number of people who are actually enrolled in universities and colleges. It’s identical to what it was in 1995-96. It’s marginally different, I grant you that, by about 3,000, on 432,000. So the number of people who are going to colleges and universities has not gone up during that period of time.

But the point that the member from Hamilton was making—and he can speak for himself as well, much better than I can—is that even during the booming economy over the last five years, why didn’t you take some of that money and rather than put it into corporate tax cuts, put it back into the university system?

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I realize full well that back in 1995 we had a major problem in this province. We had a \$12-billion annual deficit; it had to be wrestled to the ground and some drastic steps may have had to be taken. But it was not necessary to start giving people tax cuts on an annual basis before the deficit was wrestled to the ground. Why you wouldn’t have put some of that much-needed money back into the university and college system, where we now rank 59th out of 60 in North America and last, 10th out of 10 in Canada, is absolutely inexcusable.

If you believe in investment, sir, then surely to goodness the first thing we should be investing in is the young people in this province. That’s what this is all about. Your bill does absolutely nothing for that at all. It doesn’t deal with that issue at all, and that’s what it ought to be dealing with.

Mr Marchese: I’m happy to support my colleague from Hamilton West with 20 minutes of rational and passionate opposition to what this government has been doing for the last six years—rational and passionate opposition, which is what the public expects of us here on this side and we give it as best we can.

My colleague said that in North America Ontario ranks second-last in funding for colleges and universities. How do you people do it? With what kind of pride do you tell the public that you are second-last in your funding of colleges and universities in North America? That takes a lot of hubris, I’ve got to tell you, to be able to stand up and say, “We are proud to be second-last in North America.”

I’ve got to tell the member for that big, long riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton—

Mr Gill: Springdale.

Mr Marchese: —and Springdale, I missed that. It’s huge, I know. The Ipsos-Reid study that was released yesterday—this is a polling firm that you people are very familiar with—has shown that over 70% of the public, including 53% of your PC supporters, are saying they fear that young people are not going to make it to university, even if they are well qualified.

They’re willing to give up the tax cut in order to make sure that you put in the investment you’ve got to put in there. Four out of five people are worried, including 70% of those polled who are not parents. They are worried that these young people are not going to make it.

If they’re not going to make it in a good economic environment, as my colleague from Hamilton West was saying, when are you people going to invest? If not now, when? You haven’t done anything in good economic times. If the bad times come, when are you people going to invest? Your own study says you’ve got to invest over \$500 million. When will you do that?

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I am very pleased to speak today on Bill 19, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act. We seem to be getting off on tangents, but this act simply permits students, both college and university, to make one application rather than two to obtain their student loans.

This fits in with our government’s intention to cut out red tape and I think it’s very important. In Cambridge riding is sited Conestoga College which, year after year, has been rated number one in various fields in the province of Ontario and I am very proud to represent that riding.

We also have a group of interested citizens—they call themselves the Cambridge Consortium—who are working very hard to attempt to bring part of a university to Cambridge, which we certainly need, and we have a great site. The Cambridge Consortium has been working closely with the University of Waterloo, in particular their school of architecture, which is a world-recognized school of architecture, having a branch, by the way, in Rome, Italy.

There is an excellent site in Cambridge right on the Grand River, being a heritage river, very close to downtown Cambridge, which is available at no cost to the university. The city fathers have gotten behind the project, and I am working with our government in order to obtain funding for a project of that kind.

University students: I remember that far back, although it was a long time ago, and the less running around we can have these kids do and the more studying they do, the better off they’ll be.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Christopherson: I want to thank the members from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale; Kingston and the Islands; Trinity-Spadina; and Cambridge.

Dealing with the first speaker first, it was interesting that the member accused me of not zeroing in on the bill,

which really is curious since I said at the outset I didn't think it warranted the attention it was getting here because it was a minor bill and what's really important is funding, and that's what I spoke to. I would also point out to you that his colleague the member from Cambridge started his comments by saying how we'd gotten off topic and were not dealing with the bill directly and then, after that, he promptly moved off Bill 19 and talked about his riding, which is a perfectly legitimate thing to do, but it does rather undermine your argument that I've committed some horrible sin here by talking about something other than the actual words contained in Bill 19.

I might also point out to my friend from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale that when he makes reference to the 10% cut, it is factually correct. What he of course leaves out is the fact that that initiative was led by the then Tory federal government and supported by all of the provinces and all of the governments representing all of the parties. They got it wrong, no question about that, but don't leave the impression that somehow we were out of step and did something extraordinarily silly, because it was the entire nation that moved in that direction, and that was wrong. What you have done to correct it is next to nothing, but that's a different issue.

I want to say to the member from Kingston and the Islands—when he was talking, he was making reference to my comments about fewer students—that there was a study released talking about McMaster University which showed there were 5.22% fewer students from median incomes of \$50,000 or less in 1998. How is that benefiting Ontarians and our children? That was the question. None of you addressed it, by the way.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm pleased to rise in support of this legislation because it helps students get financial help to go to college or university, and that's good for all Ontarians.

Accessibility is important. Our government's election platform, the Blueprint, promised that "every willing and qualified Ontario student will continue to be able to attend college or university." Harmonizing the federal and provincial loan programs under a single provider with improved measures for debt relief is a step forward for Ontario students. But while we have devoted much time in this debate to ensuring access for students, I feel it is also important for us to talk about excellence and quality in our post-secondary system. Helping students pay tuition is important, but so is ensuring that students get value and quality for their tuition dollar. That's why I'd like to take a few minutes to discuss our government's focus on encouraging excellence in Ontario's colleges and universities.

I'd first like to speak about facilities renewal. New buildings and programs are an important part of our government's commitment to post-secondary education and training, but ensuring that existing facilities are well maintained and used is also important. That's why our government has taken steps to improve quality by

investing in maintenance and renovations for college and university buildings.

Individual colleges and universities are responsible for ensuring that their facilities are maintained in good repair and that they provide a safe environment for faculty, staff and students. They are also responsible for ensuring their facilities are accessible by the physically challenged and are energy-efficient.

The facilities renewal program is a ongoing program intended to assist institutions in meeting these obligations. Institutions are able to select projects that meet program guidelines according to their own needs. This may include deferred maintenance items such as major building system upgrades, roof repairs, heating and ventilating system upgrades, mechanical and electrical system upgrades and building envelope repairs or projects within existing space that support the anticipated increase in students who will be seeking post-secondary education in the coming years.

1700

Last year the government made a \$95-million investment in the facilities renewal program, a 35% increase from the previous years and the largest in-year investment in the program since its inception in 1986. We will continue to work with institutions to ensure that maintenance and facilities renewal remains a priority.

Next I would like to speak about technology and innovation. Excellence also means that students have the opportunity to study new and emerging disciplines and have up-to-date facilities and equipment. That's why I'm proud of our government's achievements to improve education in modern and high-technology disciplines that are in demand by students and employers, initiatives like the \$500-million strategic skills investment program that encourages industry, educators and community partners to work with government to address skill and knowledge shortages in our education institutions.

This initiative has improved Ontario's capacity to compete in the modern economy, from improving practices in old industries like forestry and mining to promoting entirely new fields like advanced ceramics and nanotechnology. In emerging fields, modernization and excellence go hand in hand and our government has made a significant commitment to ensuring Ontario's colleges and universities are ready to compete today and in the future.

To further support excellence in science and high technology, we introduced the access to opportunities program, called ATOP, which will invest up to \$228 million to increase the number of opportunities students have to study in these high-demand fields. With contributions from private sector partners, this investment could reach \$346 million by the end of this year. Overall, this funding will create spaces for 23,000 new students at Ontario colleges and universities and is a substantial response to the high demand for these programs.

In my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, I was very pleased to be part of the introduction of this to Georgian College. As you know, Georgian College serves a

number of areas in Simcoe county, not just the city of Barrie but also into the district of Muskoka and the county of Dufferin in terms of its campuses. The type of facility that is being provided at Georgian College in the automotive institute through the funding through ATOP is seeing the campus increasing tremendously in terms of opportunities for higher education, but also in the opportunities for students. So we're very pleased that program came to Georgian College.

We should not forget the importance of research activities to post-secondary education. Research funding helps to keep the best faculty and students working in Ontario, as well as producing benefits for the economy. For these reasons, the province of Ontario has been an active supporter of university and college-based research. Through the Ontario research and development challenge fund, \$550 million is being invested over 10 years to support leading edge research in our province. The Ontario government also established the Ontario research performance fund, also called RPF, to help Ontario's universities, colleges and research institutions cover the indirect costs of provincially funded scientific and technological research. These expenses include technology transfer offices, libraries, computer networks, administration, heat, electrical power and others associated with high-tech R&D. This fund provides \$30 million annually to colleges, universities and research institutes for this purpose.

I want to speak next on performance indicators and performance funding. My colleague spoke earlier to the importance of publishing key performance indicators and basing operating funding on the performance of institutions. While it was noted that these initiatives are important to improve the accountability of institutions to students and taxpayers, they are also important tools to improve the quality of post-secondary education in our province. Institutions should be free to innovate but should also be accountable for the results. I believe that publishing KPIs and tying funding to performance are important ways to improve the quality of university and college education in our province. I would say proudly, as the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, that the record of Georgian College in terms of their placement of their graduates is in excess of 90%. That's a tremendous record that they should be proud of and that the province would be proud of.

I'd like to speak next on quality improvement plans. While others have spoken of our government's requirement that institutions which have chosen to raise tuition fees set aside 30% of their increased revenue for student aid, I would like to point out that the remaining 70% must be used to improve the quality of our academic programs. When we say "quality," we mean things like smaller class sizes, better access to faculty for undergraduates, more research opportunities and better equipment and facilities. To ensure transparency, universities are required to publish a quality improvement plan that will demonstrate how these increased revenues will be used. This plan must be available to students, faculty and

staff to ensure that all members of the institution's community are informed.

To ensure accountability within one year of a tuition increase, institutions must report to their communities and the government on the actual uses of this increased revenue. Our government has not only restored the traditional balance between contributions from students, government and institutions, but we have taken concrete steps to ensure that students see the benefits of any tuition increases.

I'd like to speak next on SuperBuild. It is especially important that we keep post-secondary education accessible at this particular time when we are expecting an increase in enrolment. The Ontario government has been moving forward with a comprehensive plan to prepare Ontario's post-secondary institutions for the double cohort. The double cohort refers to the graduating class of the year 2003, when the first students to complete the new four-year secondary school program will be graduating at the same time as the last students to finish the old five-year program. It is estimated that enrolments in the year 2005-06 may increase by about 88,000 over the year 1998-99.

The government's plan includes many initiatives to expand physical capacity at post-secondary institutions, increase efficiencies in funding, provide financial support to students and ensure students have the information they need to make informed decisions. Our SuperBuild initiative, for example, will see an investment by the government and its partners of \$1.8 billion in campuses across Ontario to meet the projected increase in demand for spaces in Ontario colleges and universities. This commitment to renew and expand colleges and universities will create 73,000 new student places. The province has announced 59 new capital projects, and funding for modernization and renewal of existing college and university campuses. This recent SuperBuild initiative is the single largest capital investment in post-secondary institutions in 30 years.

While we focus on how to keep college and university education accessible, it is important that we not lose sight of the importance of quality. Our initiatives in research are working to keep the best minds working in Ontario, producing innovation and passing their knowledge on to students. Through the SuperBuild initiative, we have undertaken the largest expansion in Ontario's colleges and universities in more than 30 years. With key performance indicators and performance-based funding, we are ensuring that students can make informed decisions and that institutions have increased incentives to deliver quality programs and services.

The bill deals with a number of matters that I've spoken about in terms of the amendments to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act.

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As we know, in dealing with this, the accessibility issue is a major focus. The proposed legislation would give the Ontario government flexibility to consider a range of options for financing and administration of

student loans in the future. That is very important, as we've stated in our Blueprint from the previous election, in terms of making education attainable for students throughout the province who are qualified to go to school.

The opportunities that are given to our young students are very important. As I commented, coming from the riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, we're not blessed with a university but we are blessed with a college that is trying to attain a certain status in terms of the programs that can be offered. That allows the students who live within my riding, and not only my riding but Simcoe county, an opportunity to reside at home if they want to get a higher education or to be within commuting distance. We don't have the benefits of other locations where they have universities and colleges together. So the focus that we're putting in place here in terms of ensuring quality and excellence in education permeates right through to my riding in terms of what Georgian College is trying to accomplish with the programs they provide. I commented on one, which is the Canadian Automotive Institute. They've also entered into an initiative in terms of law enforcement with the Ontario Provincial Police Association, in terms of beefing up their program; of dealing also with airline technology; nursing, beside our Royal Victoria Hospital; and a number of initiatives that are very focused on not only giving the skills necessary to obtain real employment when they graduate, but skills that are needed in the various fields: education, health care and the emerging high-tech economy.

It's important that these initiatives that we're looking at and the other initiatives that we've taken in terms of degree-granting status benefit communities that are not blessed, if you want to put it that way, in terms of having a university or having the type of programs that have been put in place in the past. We're still in the embryonic stage of developing a college that will provide opportunities for a growing population, and it has enhanced the educational opportunities for the areas in Simcoe county, and also in the district of Muskoka in terms of providing quality education and perhaps allowing the students, if they want those programs, to be able to reside within the community or to be within commuting distance. Obviously, that has a tremendous and significant impact on the cost of their education.

That's something we take very seriously in Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and throughout Simcoe county and the district of Muskoka: providing a quality education and opportunities that are within reaching distance for those students. When I was going to university, we had to go to a university in another community. I was fortunate to be able to go to McMaster University to get my post-secondary education. I benefited significantly from not only the community but from that particular university. That's something I hope to have within my own riding some day. We may not be of university status, but we may be of the same type of status that they have given Ryerson: a technical school that can give high-quality education, with the degrees that come with that.

In closing, I just want to say that I support this bill. There obviously are reasons why this legislation had to be brought into place in terms of the loan harmonization between the federal government and the provincial government, but also measures that we have taken to make sure that not only is there accessibility, but also there is quality education and reinvestment in our post-secondary education institutions, be it at a college, a university or a research level in terms of our SuperBuild fund, the ATOP and also the research funding that you find in the initiatives this government has taken. These are billion-dollar initiatives when you combine them all together and significant investment in facility renewal, the likes of which haven't been seen since 1986.

I'd like to close on that note and I look forward to the debate that follows.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions, comments?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I want to thank the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford for his communiqué or his business plan or the reannouncement. The point I want to make here about announcements is that we've heard time and time again from this government all kinds of announcements. I'd like him to step up to the plate for my riding, because they've announced something like 60 long-term care beds and not one has been built yet. We want to alert the public to this announcement phase that we're going through. Somewhere, at some type of mandate down the line, we're going to hear something, because all we hear is, "Put the spin on it and we'll see what happens."

Overall, this is a necessary piece of legislation, necessary because the banks are getting out of the business of loaning to students. Why? Two major reasons: number one, the default, because students can't find jobs that are well paying enough to pay those loans off; and, number two, they don't make a profit at it. So what's the government going to do? In this very piece of legislation we've got the answer: "The bill will allow the Minister of Finance to assign, transfer or sell student loans.... The Lieutenant Governor in Council," which means it doesn't have to come to this House, has got the ability "to further prescribe terms of agreements regarding student loans and the assignment, transfer or sale"—sell, sell—"of student loans." Somebody is going to be making some money on these kids' backs after they get the money to go to university.

I liken this to the farm situation, where banks in the past gave farmers money, money, money, money, and all of a sudden the interest rates went up and they couldn't pay so they took the farms away from them. What are they going to do, take their degrees back from them?

University tuition fees are 45% higher than they were in 1995-96. University tuition fees make up 40% of what the operating funds are—40%, obscene. Statistics Canada reports that there's a growing gap between the participation rates of students in higher-income families and those who are in lower-income families. It's a game for the rich, and it's going to strike out the students in—

Mr Christopherson: I want to respond to a couple of the comments made by the member for Barrie-Simcoe-

Bradford. The first thing is, it's interesting that he's a graduate of McMaster University. I appreciated your saying the nice things you did about the university and that you benefited from being in the community too. We pride ourselves in a lot of graduates feeling that way.

But my question to you is this, and maybe you can comment on this in your two-minute response: given that funding now is less per student than it was in 1995-96—in fact, \$1,300 less per student is being spent on universities now than when you took power from us in 1995—given that that's a 17% reduction in the money being spent on a per student basis, don't you think today's university students are entitled to the same level of quality university education that you benefited from? You went on to become a lawyer. I suspect you did very well.

Mr Kormos: He still does.

Mr Christopherson: You went on to find your way here. That's right, he's still a lawyer, still practising while he's in the backbenches for that matter. Don't we know that? So you're doing quite well at the public trough, aren't you? What I want to know is, why is it OK for you to take your benefits from that system, but it's not good enough to make sure the money is there to give students of this generation the same opportunity that you had and that you took?

1720

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's a pleasure once again to respond to the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, who I have a lot of respect for. He certainly made some very good points. I think one of the things I tried to address in my remarks, which was much of what Mr Tascona was saying, is that the whole issue of KPIs—the key performance indicators—are an important measurement for students and parents before they make the choice of what school, what program and what is the probable success rate. You would know that they're always looking at graduate satisfaction, employer satisfaction and current student satisfaction. I might say that the remarks have been quite high with respect to the indicators themselves. I'm sure they vary by program, but at the university level there are employment rates after six months and then after two years. It's good to see that there is a high success rate with respect to jobs.

A lot of my constituents have asked over the past some time about the whole issue of the double cohort, two years graduating at once. I think it's important for the record that together with our partners, we've invested \$1.8 billion, the largest post-secondary capital expansion in over 30 years. This is going to create 73,000 new student spaces across the province. By the way, we've also increased the operating grant by \$103 million, up to \$2.4 billion.

I certainly think the government is addressing the double cohort issue and that capital expansion, the \$1.8 billion. I know that Durham College and University Centre in my riding of Durham, and president Gary Polonsky and the board, are very impressed with the amount of money they received under the umbrella of

SuperBuild. We're creating opportunities for students, but students still have tough decisions to make. I am certainly confident that the expansion of giving a degree from a post-secondary institution is something we've been working hard for, and that's opportunities for students where I live and work and represent.

Mr Agostino: I just want to debate a couple of minutes with regard to what has been said today and the last couple of days in this House with regard to this particular bill. We talked about some of the changes that have occurred and some of my colleagues have talked about what I think is the most disturbing pattern. What is happening in Ontario in the last five or six years has been clearly a move away from what has generally been accepted as the ability for people to attend post-secondary education, university or college in this province, regardless of income level. That's always been what the dream of this province and this country has been all about. I think all of us have spoken in this room about the dream of most parents—immigrant parents, parents of kids born in this country. It's the opportunity for their kids to do better than they have, to have a better lifestyle, a better way of life, to be able to take care of their family in a better way. That's always been the dream I think we've had in this province and I think it's been a dream that most of us have benefited from. Frankly, I think everybody in this Legislature has benefited from it and millions of Ontarians over the years.

Sadly, what we're seeing from this government is a throwback now to the good old days where university became a playground for the rich, where the only way you could access university, particularly higher-learning—doctors, lawyers, engineering professions—was if your family came from a lot of money. Frankly, most Ontarians are not in that situation. I think it is dangerous what is happening. I think the tuition, the deregulation this government has brought about, the increase in tuition fees this government's brought about, has really made it very, very difficult. Maybe this government thinks they're all wrong, but 70% of Ontarians believe that their kids can't access post-secondary education because of the financial aspect, not because they don't have the smarts or the willingness to work hard or the ability to do it, but because of their financial situation. I think that's a very sad statement for the year 2001 in the province of Ontario, where we're making the universities in this province simply a playground for wealthy people.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Tascona: I certainly appreciate the comments from all the members. I'm still proud to have gone to McMaster University, despite the comments from the member from Hamilton. I'll say to the member from Brant, commenting about the default rates, I would comment that the default rates have significantly decreased across the system. Certainly as I understand, in universities it's 7.1% and in colleges it's slightly higher. The government has taken a number of initiatives to help decrease the default rates. They are too numerous to mention, but I'll just comment on two: providing Ontario

student opportunity grants so that no student incurs more than \$7,000 of debt per year of study, and credit screening for new loan applicants. Those are a couple of measures.

The member from Hamilton West comments about funding. I have to say that the government has significantly increased the funding for post-secondary education for colleges and universities, and they've significantly increased the funding for operating grants for research and facilities renewal.

The opportunities for young students today are tremendous. I was with the member for Bramalea-Gore in Malton at an event where young students were being provided scholarships for tremendous academic achievement, and I was very proud to be there. I was there that day as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education.

The member from Durham is always on point, focusing on the double cohort, and certainly that matter is well in hand.

I can't really pick up on what the member from Hamilton East was talking about exactly, but I'll say this: the member from Hamilton Centre was more on point than he was, but neither one was correct.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Ms Di Cocco: I'll be sharing my time with the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

I'm pleased, first of all, to speak on this bill to harmonize OSAP with Canadian loans. We support the bill because it will simplify life for students and families who need to have these matters simplified, in my estimation. I am pleased to note that this will enable students to borrow money with greater ease for post-secondary education. And that's my point: it's taken six years for the government to address a very simple step that will allow students to access OSAP with greater ease, but again, this bill is just going to make it easier to incur debt.

What's important for me is to take a look at the accessibility issue of post-secondary education. The argument that is at the crux of the matter is not the simplification—this bill addresses one aspect—but the larger aspect for me is when I consistently hear myths.

I heard it the other day in one of the questions. Mike Harris was talking about medical students who have loans and he said very blatantly, "These loans are around \$28,000 on average," but in fact the figure is \$75,000 in average debt. Of course, Mike Harris certainly doesn't want to confuse this debate with facts. "We'll throw out these numbers, but we don't want to talk about the facts."

As Dr Bountrogianni, the member from Hamilton Mountain, clarified, the \$28,000 figure quoted by Mike Harris is not the average debt, but it is the amount of the loan that students can get from OSAP. The actual debt, again, is an average of \$75,000. I want the people in Ontario to know that, because it's important that we speak to facts and not to myths.

What this bill doesn't do, though, is reinstate OSAP to the part-time students that this government cut. Part-time students more and more enter the system because they're working. Adults are changing their careers so they want to go back to school, and oftentimes we don't have OSAP for part-time students.

Does this bill reinstate extra loan forgiveness that was cut? No, it doesn't. Does this bill restore the spirit of the Canadian millennium fund, which was supposed to be over and above what the provincial government gave to students? No, it doesn't.

1730

You have not kept up your part of the bargain. There is no partnership with the forgiveness loan; you just give the federal portion of that millennium fund. So when you talk about partnership, you're not in that equation at all.

Post-secondary education, education in general, in my view—I certainly know that Dalton McGuinty understands this, and the Liberal caucus position is that the best tool we have to provide opportunity to children of working families and to people from all demographic financial statuses is post-secondary education. The current policies of the Harris Tories are putting huge obstacles to accessibility to post-secondary education. That is a fact.

Tuition has increased by 60%. As the larger student population has increased, there has been a decrease of 39% in funding with respect to community colleges. We're increasing population, we're increasing students and we are providing fewer dollars per student in this province. Over the past five years, the amount of loan assistance has been increased, but when you consider the number of students, per student there has actually been a decrease.

All evidence toward future economic well-being in this province points to the development of a highly skilled, well-educated workforce. Every industrial country on this globe knows this and understands that the future for sustained prosperity is our human capital. That is where we have sustainability in economic development. That's where we compete on this global marketplace, because that's what we have. Harris and his Tory colleagues appear to have missed this point.

There has been an ideological obsession to giving tax cuts, even if it means adding billions of dollars to the debt and destabilizing education. That's what we have seen in this province. We can talk about a bill that is harmonizing OSAP, but the real discussion with regard to education is the mistakes that have been made by policy that has destabilized education.

There are no forward-moving ideas about development of the highly educated, highly skilled workforce that is needed if we're going to compete in the global marketplace. We cannot compete with the types of policies—they'll certainly have immediate reaction. Someone who receives \$200 can certainly have, if you want, a benefit, but it's only a short-term benefit. Government is supposed to have a vision for long-term economic prosperity, not short-term. Unfortunately, in my view, the

policies of the Harris government are only short-term. They're only quick fixes. Even those are not well managed.

It amazes me that the Harris government is so blind to the value and the return on investment in primary, secondary and post-secondary education. My vision of the Harris government is this driver who's blindfolded in a car, just driving, who doesn't have any idea where they're going when it comes to education. They've missed the point. They talk about tax cuts. The rhetoric is very good, but the action certainly speaks to me of a blind driver going down the highway. You can imagine the chaos that that would create and has been created, in my view.

Let's reiterate what my colleague from Hamilton Mountain said: the simple harmonization certainly is insufficient to address the oncoming crises in post-secondary education. What always amazes me in this House is the capacity for Harris and his colleagues to put their head in the sand and selectively ignore their own task force recommendations stating the need for increased funding in post-secondary education. It's in your own *Portals and Pathways: A Review of Post-secondary Education in Ontario*, February 2001. According to the report, we are at a crossroads and the projected revenue gap threatens the very survival of Ontario post-secondary institutions.

And you're right. Institutions are aging, and the deferred maintenance costs stand at \$900 million in universities and \$300 million in colleges. These are the figures from your own task force. I want to remind the Tory members that these are deferred maintenance costs and not new buildings. We haven't even addressed that.

When you want to talk about poor management, it is incumbent on me to conclude that the Harris government cannot manage because they have not even yet given to the universities and colleges this year's budget. They haven't provided to them the dollars for universities and colleges to conduct their daily operations. They're sitting there operating—still teaching; they have no other alternatives. But the Harris government is sitting here—we are now in May. What kind of managers would not provide the funding or even give an indication to that sector of what they must spend, or have to spend?

I want to give time to my colleague, and I certainly want to state that, to me, when you talk about good management, you cannot manage any sector if you do not understand the value of supporting that sector in every area: primary, secondary and post-secondary. It has been, if you want to call it, the character of this government to discount education in this province, and post-secondary is also a part of being discounted.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 19 this afternoon. I would like to commend my colleague the member from Sarnia-Lambton, who I believe, as she always does, has made some very salient points on the bill at hand.

I would like to speak this afternoon from my perspective as a mother with four teenagers. One is in the post-secondary setting. We have two youngsters who will be, together, entering post-secondary institutions the year after next. Our daughter is in grade 8, so we have a few years to wait before she enters that.

So I am keenly aware when we talk about, first of all, the importance of encouraging young people to gain post-secondary training in order that they will be able to be successful and contribute in a meaningful way to the economy of our province and that they can be happy in their lives and in their workplace and in their communities. I know first-hand of that experience in nurturing that within families and communities.

The concern I have, though, is that Bill 19, sadly—it's an important bill, but there is much more that I believe this government needs to do to repair the legacy it has created for the children in the province of Ontario. I'm very disturbed by the fact that the average student debt in the province has doubled under the watch of this government.

1740

I look at the students who are seated before you, Mr Speaker, this afternoon. We have the blessing of these wonderful young people assisting us here on a daily basis. I look at them and I can't tell you how badly I feel about what we do in this House, about what it will mean for them. What it means for the young people here today is that, when they graduate, chances are their debt will be significantly higher. How unfortunate that is.

Also, when we consider the policies of the government, the debt in the province of Ontario has increased by 25% under the watch of Mike Harris. For the young men and women who are seated before the Speaker, that is a burden they will carry. It will be their responsibility to look after that debt.

It's sad we have to explain to these young people that one of the big reasons they're going to be carrying that load is so this government can provide tax cuts to corporations in the province. While you have perhaps experienced some period of uncertainty in your school—there may have been job actions in your school community; there are a variety of other situations in the province that would affect your family—the debt you will be paying off when you are working in the province will be the debt that was accrued to pay for tax cuts. Those debts were not incurred so that you would pay less for your education, so that you could get a job and help carry and pay for the burden you will have, sadly, but what you will be paying off will be money Mike Harris borrowed to pay for corporate tax cuts.

I wish I could stand in the Legislature this afternoon and bring the young people who assist us in this Legislature a happier message, but sadly that is the reality.

In my opinion, with this bill, while it does address an important piece of business that needs to happen so that students in the province will be able to continue accessing funds so they can attend post-secondary institutions, this government has missed an opportunity to bring

forward some progressive legislation that would enable families, that would assist people like the young people who are here helping us in the Legislature so that the burden they will have when they graduate will be less.

We know that in the province there are many families who, for a variety of reasons, must avail themselves of some social services, whether it be subsidized daycare, disability payments or welfare payments. Before these people might be able to access those very necessary services if mom and dad find themselves in some difficulty or in need, or mom or dad depending on who the caregiver might be, and find themselves in that situation, should they have the good fortune, or their children may have the good fortune, of being beneficiaries in an estate—for example, if grandma or grandpa died and left the children some money to set aside for their university or college education—the Tory government is saying to those families, “You know those savings the kids have? Before we will give you dollars to live on, you have to cash in those savings.”

So the opportunity for the young people to access post-secondary education and perhaps not have to look forward to as much debt at the end of their time in college or university is virtually wiped away, because Mike Harris is saying, “No, we want those savings. They’re the kids’ savings? It doesn’t matter. We want them. We don’t want to be seen to give anyone a hand up who has any savings in the bank. That’s just not going to happen.”

Who is really penalized? It’s the children. I think it’s a heartless law. I think that now, under Bill 19, the government has an opportunity to do the right thing: to provide an opportunity and a hope within families that may not be financially blessed, but yet there’s the hope there that their youngsters, their children, will be able to access an education that will be a key to their success.

There’s an article in the Toronto Sun this week that speaks directly to this point: 79% of parents who were surveyed in a study believe they will not be able to afford the education their children will require in order to be successful in their lives. When I say “successful,” I don’t necessarily mean they’re going to make a lot of money, but that they will be able to attain jobs where they can be happy, where they can go to work every day and contribute to their communities, our economy and their families in a meaningful way. It’s a concern across the province, and the media are trying to bring the focus and attention of the government to the fact that a lot of people are now very worried that their children will not be able to access what is so very key and so very integral to what will be their success in the future.

I’m sorry the government has not taken the opportunity to do something meaningful for the children of this province.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I appreciate the opportunity to respond to the member. She spent a fair bit of time talking essentially about the level of student indebtedness and the way in which the fear of

that will stop many families from pursuing that opportunity for their own children, or how many young people themselves who don’t wish to bring that kind of debt burden on their families will make that choice. There really is a whole group in society that we risk seeing cut out of access to post-secondary education. The member is right: this bill does not address those very facts.

This bill comes about as a result of the kind of massive increases in tuition that we’ve seen in the last little while and the increase in student indebtedness out there as it is. It really is as a result of financial institutions—banks and others—saying, “We’re no longer prepared to take the risk on student loans.” These growing numbers, as they get larger, have become an issue of risk assessment for the banks. So the federal government took steps, and now the provincial government is taking corresponding steps—it is understandable. But I have to say there are a couple of parts of the legislation that give me concern.

The member is right: there’s a lot it doesn’t address. But let’s focus on what it does address: the fact that the minister can enter into agreements regarding student loan arrangements and that the minister—ministerial powers—will be able to assign, transfer or sell student loans. I worry about that possibility for the further privatization or reprivatization of student debt, and at what cost, at what interest cost, and to whom? Are we talking back to financial institutions at an extraordinary premium in order to finance the risk that’s there? It’s not clear. I really do believe this is a question of public discussion. There should be public policy. It shouldn’t be left to ministerial order behind closed doors.

I think there are areas of this bill that perhaps we should look to amend to ensure there is more transparency and openness to the process.

Mr Gill: It is a pleasure to join in the debate with the members from Sarnia-Lambton, Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington—that’s almost as long a riding name as mine, which is Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale—and of course Beaches-East York.

Mr Tilson: Can you say that again?

Mr Gill: Yes. It’s worth repeating, I guess, but we’ll get right down to the debate and carry on.

One of the things we just talked about, which I think the member from Beaches-East York mentioned, was the risk these banks were taking. That is actually incorrect. These loans have always been guaranteed by the government, and even under the new arrangement they will continue to be guaranteed by the government.

Basically what happened was that on May 4, 1999, the federal minister, Mr Pettigrew, and Minister Johnson signed the harmonization agreement whereby the provincial government would be providing these loans. There are a few points that even then they realized how beneficial it’s going to be to the students, one of them being that it will eliminate duplication and overlap with the student completing only one set of forms. It seems like a small point, but nonetheless it gives easier accessibility to the students. It also says it will sig-

nificantly increase the interest relief period for student loan borrowers in Ontario. Basically what it does is that instead of having 18 months of loan interest relief, if somebody is trouble—they're having difficulty—this will extend it to 30 months. I think it's a good bill.

1750

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I'd like to thank the members for Sarnia-Lambton and Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington for their comments today, and I'd like to add a few brief comments to what they've said.

I think we acknowledge that this legislation is needed. The banks have withdrawn their support of students in this province and obviously we, along with the government, have to provide for something to fill that gap. But let's look at the practical side of this. As has been mentioned over and over again today, tuition fees have increased in the neighbourhood of 45% since 1995, and we can go on however much we want about providing this assistance for students, but the basic problem is that post-secondary education in this province simply costs too much for many students today who look to have a higher education.

I can think back to the late 1980s and early 1990s when Joan's and my children, Nancy and David, went to university. They worked at part-time jobs and they provided funding for their own education, but, as well, we as a family had to contribute. We were a family of average means, and it was very difficult for us. I can remember one figure that I kept track of. I had in a ledger that we spent over \$50,000 on their education. Today it's even much greater than that, so we have to get to the basic problem, and that is to make education affordable for all our young people.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Christopherson: I'm pleased to rise and comment on the remarks of the members for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington and Sarnia-Lambton. Both of them, to one degree or another, talked about or at least made reference to the underfunding of universities.

Let's take a look at what the picture is in terms of the numbers. I know we have the member for Durham stand up and just read out numbers and say, "This is how much money we are spending, and isn't it a glorious amount?" But, quite frankly, if you aren't referencing or comparing it to something, it doesn't mean anything. The fact of the matter is that in terms of capital investment, your average

per year has been \$39,884,000 during the biggest economic boom in North American history. Ours, during the depths of a recession, recognizing the importance, was \$79,626,000 in operating expenditures. If you don't do it on a per student basis, you're not really comparing apples to apples. When you compare it on a per student basis, it's \$1,300 per student, 17% less than when they took power in 1995.

I want to also point out that their operating grants have been cut by \$255 million, for a cumulative loss of \$2 billion. On top of that we've got 60% increases in tuition, and you want the public of Ontario to believe that you care about our university system? No capital funding, no operating funding and tuition fees are going through the ceiling. No wonder students and families are terrified out there about their futures.

Ms Di Cocco: First of all, I want to state that the Ontario Liberals see education as a key component to sustainable prosperity. That means investment and accessibility to post-secondary education. I don't know how many times we have to say this: the key to sustainable prosperity, to good economic policy in this province, is investment in education and in post-secondary education.

One of the most interesting aspects of the report *Portals and Pathways: A Review of Post-Secondary Education in Ontario*—this was a government task force—is the strong recommendation for increased funding in post-secondary education. Assessing the adequacy of government funding didn't fall within the mandate of this task force, yet a significant portion of the report is dedicated to the very topic.

Again, I will say that we're at a crossroads. The finding states that Ontario's post-secondary institutions are both cost-effective and innovative, efficient and fiscally responsible. However, as the task force stated, we are at a crossroads: "The projected revenue gap threatens the very survival of Ontario's post-secondary education."

Please remember, it seems to me that your cabinet offices can more than double in their costs, but when it comes to our post-secondary education, they are being starved.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
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Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
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Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
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Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
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Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
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Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Loisirs	Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)
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Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales		
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)		
Haliburton-Victoria-Brock	Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
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Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
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Northumberland	Galt, Doug (PC)	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip, deputy government House leader / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement, leader parlementaire adjoint	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
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Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Trinity-Spadina	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
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Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Windsor West / -Ouest	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Windsor-St Clair	Duncan, Dwight (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	York Centre / -Centre	Kwinter, Monte (L)
Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	York North / -Nord	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York West / -Ouest	Sergio, Mario (L)
		Vaughan-King-Aurora	Vacant

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

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

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