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Thursday 10 May 2001

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Jeudi 10 mai 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 10 May 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 10 mai 2001

*The House met at 1004.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO NATURAL
HERITAGE ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001
SUR LE PATRIMOINE NATUREL
DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Gilchrist moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 17, An Act to ensure responsible and acceptable development and to protect the natural heritage of the Province of Ontario / Projet de loi 17, Loi visant à assurer l'aménagement judicieux et acceptable du territoire et à protéger le patrimoine naturel de la province de l'Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson) According to the standing orders, you have 10 minutes to make your presentation.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Thank you very much. This act is a comprehensive vision of how we can better balance the development needs and the environmental requirements in the province of Ontario. It follows on a crusade that I guess began in earnest on Rouge Park Day, July 20, 1999, when as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing I indicated that I was sympathetic to the appeal to apply a minister's zoning order to the entire Oak Ridges moraine, pending a review of the opportunities to determine which portions of the moraine are worthy of long-term environmental protection.

There were some interesting developments that followed on that announcement, and I won't dwell on them in this House, except to say that a developer who had a vested interest decided that something other than the normal legislative process was the way to change government policy. To say that it has backfired would be an understatement.

The good news is that what had been a very well kept secret, the Oak Ridges moraine and what it meant to the quality of life, not just in Toronto but in communities running 160 kilometres in both directions east and west of the city, is now known to literally millions of people in Ontario. The group, the long-term stewards of the campaign to save the Oak Ridges moraine, typically

would have 30 or 40 people showing up to meetings. We saw those numbers swell to 3,000 people showing up at Richmond Hill council and equal numbers indicating their displeasure with certain planning decisions that were made by York region as well.

To their credit, we saw the politicians in Richmond Hill reverse their previous approvals and side with the environmentalists, and perhaps go beyond what was asked of them, determining that it was more appropriate to try and find a balance than simply to allow the paving over of one of the most environmentally sensitive portions of this land form.

We then saw York region follow a similar tack and, again, to their credit, actually write a cheque to help support the folks who are fighting the good fight at the Ontario Municipal Board.

I also want to pay credit to the city of Toronto politicians who, when denied standing at the Ontario Municipal Board, wrote a cheque in the amount of a million dollars to ensure that the most up-to-date science and best experts could be applied to the determination, before the Ontario Municipal Board, of the merits of a specific case in Richmond Hill.

I don't want to dwell, though, on that one planning issue, because the Oak Ridges moraine is far broader than that. As I mentioned, it runs for 160 kilometres, from the Niagara Escarpment out to Northumberland. It is the source of the headwaters of 31 different rivers and streams. It is the home of untold species of fish, flora and fauna and, I think more than anything else, it affords us an opportunity to create a greenbelt, a pause, in the unfettered growth of the city of Toronto. It is a shame that what had stood as the greenbelt at Steeles Avenue was eliminated by a previous government. In his wisdom, Bill Davis, back in the early 1970s, had foreseen the need to encourage urban intensification and discourage urban sprawl, the very issue that faces us here today.

1010

I want it clearly on the record that I am not opposed to development. I am not ignorant of the fact that as long as the federal government is allowing a quarter of a million new people to come into our country every year, and 70% of them make the wise decision to move to the greater Toronto area, obviously there will have to be accommodation built for them. That has spurred an awful lot of the growth we have seen over the last 20 years in the Toronto region.

But, having said that, there has ceased to be the kind of balance that once existed. My bill, starting with the

protections on the moraine, seeks to restore that balance. Any area that the Ministry of Natural Resources determines to be an area of natural and scientific interest—a wetland, a bog, the headwaters of a river—should be protected from any development for all time. This is not a quick fix. This is not something that's politically expedient. This is setting forth a vision of what we think our province should look like 50, 100, 500 years from now.

I am immensely grateful and proud that the cabinet and our government have dedicated more land to parkland in this province than any government in any jurisdiction in the history of the world. In our own community we have created, in the form of the Rouge park, the world's largest park in an urban setting. It is a colossal achievement and, according to Glenn De Baeremaeker, the president of Save the Rouge Valley System and one of the long-time champions of the need to protect the Rouge, the government has deeded over, at today's value, over \$1 billion worth of land in the creation of that park. The crusade will continue. But this struck me as highly ironic: having made the \$1-billion investment, having protected from the headwaters right down to Lake Ontario one of the largest rivers in the province and one of the most significant in the GTA, it made no sense to then lose the source of those waters to rampant development.

Clearly, the people who have made the decision to move to the Toronto area have done so recognizing the myriad of features we are blessed with. One of those is certainly having the greenest major city in the world. It is critically important that we build on our past successes in defending the environment and make a bold statement of what can be done on the Oak Ridges moraine, to find that balance on the lands that are environmentally significant. They must be protected for all time. Even on the other lands—tablelands, scrub land that isn't good for growing much more than houses on—we still need to make sure that the density and the development applications that are brought forward are done in a way that is very sensitive to the greater environmental needs in that region.

I don't want to leave aside the fact that my bill, though, goes well beyond the Oak Ridges moraine. Section 4 of the act requires that there be a plan applied within 120 days, a long-term vision on the Oak Ridges moraine. The only change I made in this bill from the one I tabled in the last session is that in the lead-up, in that first 120 days, any development application that's outstanding will be submitted to a very critical and scientific appraisal, and the merits of natural and scientific interests will be applied. But after the 120 days, there will be an absolute plan that will protect the entire moraine.

The bill also amends the Conservation Land Act by prohibiting any authority—any municipality or anyone else—from permitting development on any other area of natural or scientific interest or on any wetlands in southern Ontario with an area greater than two hectares.

I want it clearly on the record: some of my colleagues have told me that in their municipality they've had a

problem with the definition of areas of natural and scientific interest, and I want it very clearly understood that I would expect the MNR to define those standards to the point that all reasonable people agree on what does or does not qualify as an ANSI before this bill is applied.

Sections 6 and 7 of the bill allow for new development charges in areas of growth to pay for parkland acquisition. But on the flip side, in those parts of our province where development has already occurred once, an old factory existed and has since been torn down, no municipality would be allowed to put up a barrier to redevelopment of brownfield sites by applying development charges again. The streets are there, the schools are there, the sidewalks are there; there is no compelling argument to penalize those folks who would try and redevelop what are otherwise idle lands.

There are a number of other incidental changes that are made to the Ontario Municipal Board Act.

The Planning Act is also changed so that, again turning back the clock to a previous government, politicians will once again be accountable for the major planning decisions in Ontario. You would be able to make an appeal to cabinet if you disagreed with the results of an OMB hearing—only on significant issues. We clearly understand that we don't expect the cabinet to be deciding minor severances. But on the big issues facing the future of the environment in Ontario, finding that balance between development and growth and the protection of our communities and our environment, we believe it is appropriate for politicians to be accountable. This bill restores that accountability. This bill restores that protection.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on this bill. I encouraged the member to bring it forward, having seen his last bill, because I thought his last bill was a good step forward on the moraine. I must say I was surprised, because I had been led to believe that the bill was essentially the same as the one Mr Gilchrist introduced a year ago.

There's one very dramatic change in the bill. Last year when Mr Gilchrist introduced his bill, the basic theme of it was the freeze on development on the Oak Ridges moraine. The lead paragraph on his last bill was that the bill, if passed, would have a one-year freeze: "This bill is a comprehensive bill designed to freeze all new development on the moraine." In the questions and answers: "If passed, it calls for an immediate freeze on all development."

The centrepiece of the last bill was a freeze on development, pending the development of a plan. There's quite a fundamental change in this bill today. It does not call for that freeze any longer. I find that unfortunate, because I assumed when Mr Gilchrist introduced his bill last year that that was fundamental to it: in order to get the proper planning done on the moraine, there needed to be a freeze on development. The bill today has changed very dramatically and that freeze no longer applies. It says, "Development on the moraine must consider whether the areas of land and water affected by the

development are areas of natural and scientific interest as defined in the Conservation Land Act."

I gather that the government wanted this bill changed so that it wouldn't interfere with development on the moraine, but it fairly fundamentally changes the bill. While there's much in the bill to commend it, the centrepiece of it, which was, "Let's stop approving development on the moraine until we get a comprehensive plan," is gone.

I salute those people involved in the moraine. I was very much involved in the Rouge park. There was a community group that really did the work. They exist till this day. It happened that we were in government—the Liberal Party was in government in the late 1980s—and we had the opportunity to listen to the save-the-Rouge group, and I remember very well the day that David Peterson announced the establishment of the Rouge park. It was a proud day for Ontario. It was in 1990 that he announced the largest urban park, and today that lives on. It proved to me that a community group like the save-the-Rouge group, in this case save-the-Oak-Ridges-moraine group, can achieve much with truth on their side and hard work.

While I certainly will be supporting this bill, I must say to the member how surprised I was, when I'd been told the bill was the same, to find that the centrepiece is gone. The thing that a year ago he was most proud of, which was the freeze on development, is no longer there. I don't know the reason for the change, but it's quite fundamental. I think those who are fighting for the Oak Ridges moraine will recognize that what they thought was coming forward from the member has changed quite fundamentally.

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As I say, last year I read Mr Gilchrist's release carefully and said I was supportive of it. As soon as I found that he might have a chance to reintroduce it, I thought I'd be supportive of it again. Then, as I examined it, I found that what was the most important part of the bill last year—the freeze to force a comprehensive plan development—gone, disappeared. I understand the pressure that might come and the reasons for that but, as I say, it surprised me.

My colleague Mr Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, has a well-thought-out bill on the Oak Ridges moraine that would dramatically advance the Oak Ridges moraine. Ms Churley from the NDP also has a bill that would advance it. This is our opportunity to save a precious resource in the province of Ontario. Mr Gilchrist's bill, substantially watered down, is a step forward. Mr Colle's and Ms Churley's bills would be a really substantive step forward.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I'm pleased to stand today to speak on Bill 17, An Act to ensure responsible and acceptable development and to protect the natural heritage of the province of Ontario. I thank the member for Scarborough East for bringing forth this private member's bill which draws attention to this very significant area of our province.

The province has initiated, with former Minister of Municipal Affairs Tony Clement and current Minister of Municipal Affairs Hodgson, the Smart Growth initiative in our province. I'd like to make a few points on Smart Growth and then talk a little about the moraine that affects my riding.

If we want to talk about protecting green spaces, I think we should talk about protecting them in a province-wide solution as well. That's why we have initiated Smart Growth. Municipalities across Ontario are faced with growth pressures. We see that in almost every urban area of the province, particularly those that have a significant amount of sewer and water capacity. What we need to do is give municipalities the tools to help them plan their growth very smartly and wisely.

For example, our brownfield proposal will allow for the redevelopment of abandoned sites that right now are just eyesores in their communities. I think that's a very significant move forward. Developers and municipalities in the province will be able to work together to redevelop these sites in a safe, responsible and productive manner. More importantly, it will ease the pressure of development on our natural green spaces, which is exactly what all the opposition parties support.

Growth is not going away. The challenge is to deal with it smartly, respecting the need for development and the need to preserve our green spaces, not just for the Oak Ridges moraine but for the entire province.

I'd like to speak a little on a moraine in my riding that has not really become contentious but is an area of great importance to the residents, particularly the area of Oro-Medonte. The Oro moraine is between the city of Orillia and the city of Barrie. It's about 20 miles long and roughly eight to 10 miles wide in different areas. There is a huge resource of gravel and aggregate in this particular area, and we see pressures on a continual basis by the gravel operators, aggregate producers, wanting to take more and more applications for the removal of aggregate.

As well, it's an area that has tremendous growth pressures from both the city of Barrie and the city of Orillia, because it's an area of the province that many people are moving to. They're moving out of the GTA. They want to move into an area they can basically retire to. They want to build in these beautiful areas. You've seen areas such as Hardwood Hills, Horseshoe Valley and the Oro hills. There's tremendous pressure in those areas. As well, we are having a lot of pressures from people who want to develop golf courses in these areas.

All these pressures involve the removal of groundwater and/or aggregate. I've met a lot, over the last year and a half, with people in the area who have a strong concern about protection, the same as the people in the Oak Ridges moraine would like to see the protection of that.

Earlier this spring, I hosted a one-day symposium. I had a number of speakers come in to speak on the value of the moraine. We had people from OMAFRA and people from conservation authorities. We sat around together and took a proactive approach on what types of

changes would have to be made to protect this very valuable asset in Simcoe county. There's certainly a concern that too much water is being removed. Different speakers talked about plans they had to work with the Minister of the Environment to see additional rules or regulations that would monitor more closely the amount of water that is removed.

I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words this morning. I thank Mr Gilchrist for bringing forth this bill. I think it is something that deserves a lot of debate, on any moraine across the province or any significant area we have in the province. I know the general feeling of people in Ontario is that we want to have a clean, safe environment and a province that is able to develop properly over many generations.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I applaud the member for bringing this bill forward. I told him when he introduced it the last time that I would support this bill. As my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt said, we are disappointed that the bill has been weakened dramatically. As you know, I have introduced three bills asking for the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine.

Fundamentally, Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals believe there should be an immediate freeze on all development on the moraine until a plan is put in place. That is the fundamental difference; that's what my bill has. Then there would be a protective commission, essentially mirroring the Niagara Escarpment Commission, which has been a great success. I know that in this bill—it's interesting, and I applaud him for it—the member has put in a planning board that would be protective.

Again, as far as the bill goes, we are supportive. We'd like to see any initiative, Mr Speaker, because, as you know, up to this point, this government in its seventh year has done nothing but allow sprawl on the moraine. That's why we feel immediate protection is necessary.

If you look across the Oak Ridges moraine, there are threatened developments that are going to destroy this ecological masterpiece from Orangeville to Caledon East, Bolton, King township, Snowball, Richmond Hill, Lake Wilcox, Aurora, Queensville, Vandorf, Gormley, Muselman Lake, Ballantrae, Stouffville, Gan Eden, Goodwood and Haldimand township. From east to west across this beautiful bioregion, there is a threat of uncontrolled development. Mr Speaker, you can have development, but don't have it where there's prime farmland that is being paved over or where there are ecologically sensitive wetlands, nature preserves or water recharge areas.

On Monday, I guess, I went to a hearing of the Ontario Municipal Board, where one, lone person is taking on 10 development lawyers who are trying to pave over and develop the East Aurora wetlands complex. Ironically enough, that one person, David Tomlinson, is there by himself because the Ministry of Natural Resources will not enforce its own law that requires a 120-metre setback from a wetland. The developer wants to build houses right on the wetland and destroy this wetland. That's why we need a freeze. Up at the OMB right now, as we speak, there is no provincial ministry official helping David

Tomlinson, the local resident. That's why we need this freeze immediately.

1030

Look what's happening right now in the Duffins Creek area, Boxgrove. You're going to hear a lot more about Boxgrove in the weeks to come. That's by Brock Road and Duffins Creek on the edge of the Rouge River. Right now, this government, through the Ontario Realty Corp, is selling off prime agricultural land and selling off environmentally sensitive lands to developers as we speak. That should be frozen and halted immediately. The federal government donated hundreds of acres of land to extend the Rouge Valley Park. This government has two massive tracts of land near Boxgrove—the north Pickering lands, the agricultural preserve lands—that they are readying for development. That's why we need the freeze and we need the protections immediately.

This bill will take too long, because we've seen the record of the government, which essentially has looked the other way. In fact, Karen Clark of the Canadian Environmental Law Association categorically states, "This government has made 20 surgical hits that took all the legislative protection that would have saved the Oak Ridges moraine from the Planning Act, from the Environmental Assessment Act and from the Environmental Protection Act." That's what this government did. It basically, over the last six years, has surgically decimated protection for the moraine and other sensitive environmental lands like it. So its record is horrific.

It has changed the Planning Act, where developers or municipal councils don't even have to obey provincial planning law. All they have to do is basically look at it. There is no enforcement where developers have to even—they've weakened the provincial planning laws dramatically, as the Canadian Environmental Law Association has said.

That's why we have the threat to the moraine, because we have a government that's allowed the OMB to be the de facto planning arm of government. As you know, Mr Speaker, some people call it the Ontario development board. It just develops lands on sensitive areas, where lawyers and consultants are making a fortune at the expense of local residents. That's what this government has allowed. It has allowed the OMB to do its planning for it. That's why in Richmond Hill we are there at the OMB. That's why in Aurora we're at the OMB. In Uxbridge we're at the OMB. In King City, wherever you go, the OMB is doing the government's work. The OMB should not be doing the government's work. In fact, if you really want to do something significant, you would basically disallow private developers from extending urban boundaries into the Oak Ridges moraine and not allow them to appeal that to the OMB and not overrule the citizens and local councils. Instead, they are trying to extend urban boundaries all across the GTA, and they pay their big lawyers and consultants and they win at the OMB every time.

That's what would stop this development on the precious Oak Ridges moraine, but the government has sat

on its hands for six years now, going into seven, and has done nothing but basically promote sprawl. That's why in my bill and on the Liberal side, we have said that not only do we have to put in a freeze to protect this wonderful masterpiece from Cobourg to Caledon, but we should promote this area. Sometimes we're in too much of a hurry to stop and smell the roses, but if you go through the area, as I have, on foot, on bicycle, by car, by canoe, you can see there are beautiful places that need promotion from this government. Put it in the tourist guidebooks. Enhance ecotourism; enhance small business in the moraine. That's why the Liberals and my bill promote that.

For instance, you can go trout fishing in Duffins Creek. Promote that. You can walk the Ganaraska Trail. You can walk the Ganaraska forest. You can walk the Oak Ridges moraine trail. You can go through the Bruce Trail and see beautiful Port Perry on the edge of the moraine, a wonderful small community, or Uxbridge, which is being threatened by this government, which has a huge development threatening it. Beautiful Goodwood: visit the Secord Pet Cemetery in Goodwood, which is an amazing little niche there in the middle of the Goodwood forest. Visit the Pine Farms orchard in King City, where you can pick apples with your children. Stop and pick the apples in King City.

One of the most beautiful spots, I think, in southern Ontario is Belfountain. Belfountain is an amazing little village which houses the Caledon Ski Club. It is a spectacular spot on the moraine. I encourage people to walk up there, hike up there, ski in the wintertime. This government should be promoting these areas, should be protecting them and not allowing gravel pits across the moraine, not allowing roads to cut through this beautiful area.

This area, the Oak Ridges moraine, is not distant from us. We are all connected. Whether you live, as I live, at the bottom of the Don River or whether you live at the mouth of the Don, the source of the Humber or on the shores of Lake Ontario, the Oak Ridges moraine connects us all. That's why whether you live in Toronto or whether you live in Tottenham, this protection will save us all and save a legacy for our children, not only water but wildlife, and stop this promotion of sprawl for sprawl's sake.

Let growth take place, but let it take place within the rules. Right now, if you go from stem to stern, whether you go to Box Grove or whether you go to Belfountain, there are no provincial rules to protect farmland; there are no provincial rules to protect these beautiful parts of this province. That's why overwhelmingly people have told me they support my bill, they support my efforts, and they want this government to do something. So the true test of this bill will be whether this government gets this bill and puts it into some dark hole or whether it will put a freeze on development, and whether or not this government will enforce its own provincial laws.

We've been told before and we were promised last time that Ms Churley's bill and my bill would go

together with a government bill—a private member's bill—to protect the moraine. If these three bills go together to committee in this session, then we'll know the government wants to do something. But if this bill does not go together with our two bills, then we know the government is playing games with the moraine.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Well, well, well. We have a new bill here from Mr Gilchrist today on saving the Oak Ridges moraine. It's called the Ontario Natural Heritage Act, 2001.

You know, I'm happy to see it here. I'm happy to see he's presented another bill today. I am, Mr Gilchrist, and my party will be supporting you on this bill today, as we have in the past, and as you have, I acknowledge in this House, supported Shelley Martel's and my bill on the Oak Ridges moraine, as well as Mr Colle's.

But I have to tell you, through the Speaker, Mr Gilchrist, that I was given the impression there weren't changes to your bill. Now, I know you're downplaying the changes and in your mind you feel that they're not significant, but you have to understand that I feel the changes that you have made to this bill from the last bill are tremendously significant. I would imagine that although the save-the-Oak-Ridges-moraine groups out there will support the bill as well, because something's better than nothing—we need to get something on the books here and happening—the fact is that you took out main component, I believe, of your previous bill, which was the same as with Mr Colle's bill and my bill and Shelley Martel's bill: to freeze development on the Oak Ridges moraine. I wasn't happy about other pieces of your previous bill and this bill; I don't think it goes nearly far enough. But one of the strongest components in the bill was to freeze the development until we sort all this out. That is so critical, because all the time, every day, as we are here debating these issues over the past couple of years, what is happening in the Oak Ridges moraine? Development continues to go ahead. There's OMB hearing after OMB hearing. It's all taking place on a piecemeal basis where citizens' groups, people without money, are being forced to raise money that is impossible for them to raise, whereas the developers have all kinds of money to prove their case. They can go before this OMB, which, as we've seen by now, is pro-development, and make their case. I admit that there has been at least one, I believe, fairly good decision, but on the whole, this is the wrong way to go about planning such an environmentally sensitive area.

So of course we have to ask why this main component has been taken out of the bill. I know Mr Gilchrist will say, "Well, no, it's just been changed a little bit," even though the bill does not freeze portions of the moraine that are not areas of natural and scientific interest. Those are the only pieces now that he's talking about being frozen. It would permanently freeze development on the portions of the Oak Ridges moraine and other places in the province that are designated as "areas of natural and

scientific interest as defined in section 1 of the Conservation Land Act.” That’s fine, but that’s just a small portion of the Oak Ridges moraine. In the meantime, development continues to happen. The proposals continue to come in.

1040

Let me tell you a little bit more about Mr Gilchrist’s bill today. It would use the Oak Ridges moraine strategy, which was developed by the Ministry of Natural Resources under the NDP government and was completed in 1994. That was the basis for the Oak Ridges moraine plan. There was massive consultation on this and, yes, we spent a fair amount of money on it as well because we thought it was important to get this right. The public was invited to make submissions and then additional existing studies were commissioned that were relevant to the moraine plan, and a development plan, under the Ontario Planning and Development Act, would be required to be submitted to cabinet within one year of the passage of the bill.

This is what you have to understand: in Mr Gilchrist’s bill, in consultation with the public—they would be invited to make submissions for existing studies on top of the existing studies that were done under our government after massive consultation. I admit that a bit more work needed to be done here, which is another reason we needed the freeze. After a plan was developed under the Ontario Planning and Development Act, that would be submitted to cabinet within one year of passage of the bill. Then cabinet would be able to—get this—pass the plan, amend it or drop it altogether. That’s the reality of this bill.

Section 5 of the bill would prohibit any authority from allowing development on an area of natural and scientific interest, or on any other wetland with an area greater than two hectares, throughout the province. This would amount to a pretty broad prohibition. For example, the NDP legislation prohibits development on significant wetlands.

Let’s see what else. The bill allows the municipality to impose development charges for parks, and prohibits a municipality from imposing development charges for proposals to redevelop commercial and industrial lands, unless the development charges are permitted by regulation. So there are some good pieces in the bill. Put that together and it’s fairly progressive.

It limits OMB members to nine years on the board. I’m fine with that. It says that any appeal of an official plan amendment or zoning bylaw must be heard by a panel of at least two board members. I think that’s a good idea.

I want to go into section 10 a little bit. It allows cabinet to overturn an OMB decision on an official plan or a zoning bylaw. This of course speaks to the growing frustration with the undemocratic nature of this particular board. I have mixed feelings about this. It was our government that took away the right to appeal to cabinet, and we did it for a couple of reasons. One was that if you have a really good, green Planning Act, then you don’t

really need to have appeals to a cabinet. The rules we brought in were so comprehensive under the green Planning Act. That was the act that required municipalities, the province and the OMB to make decisions in a manner “consistent with” the provincial policy statement. What this government did, among other things, was they completely gutted the green Planning Act and made it more pro-development than it was before we changed it to be greener. It went back in time, pre-NDP time.

They changed the wording to say that they just had to have “regard for” the provincial planning statements. That’s easy. You pick it up, take a look at it—“Yep, yep. Well, we had regard for this. Yes, we did. We looked at it and we rejected it, but we had regard for it.” If it says it has to be “consistent with,” there is no option. There are all kinds of other components of the green Planning Act, which was a result, may I remind people, of the Sewell commission. It went out across the province over about two years, consulting widely—broad consensus: green Planning Act. There were some disagreements, but it was a good act.

So if you’ve got a really strong Planning Act where the rules are very clear and the tools that municipalities and the OMB have are workable, but they have to work those tools within very consistent and strong planning rules, then you’ve got to question whether or not appeals should be made to cabinet.

Having been a cabinet member at one time and chairing the legislation and regulations committee, I got to see all the regulations and legislation that came through. We reviewed them first before we went to cabinet. I know that Mr Gilchrist agreed that not all kinds of small development appeals should go before the cabinet, but they used to, and the bigger ones as well. What our government did on a couple of occasions, when there were issues around environmentally sensitive land—we did it and there was quite a lot of controversy—in Grey-Owen Sound we declared a provincial interest since we couldn’t get the municipality to do what needed to be done to freeze the development, to make everything stop until we worked out the best planning procedure for that area.

That is something that still can be done, which could be done in this case. Just like that they could declare a provincial interest and freeze development on the Oak Ridges moraine. That option was there, still is there, and we used it a couple of times. It makes people mad. The municipality—Mr Murdoch wasn’t happy, but it was of significant interest that it had to be done.

Very complicated planning decisions would come before cabinet on an appeal, and we found we didn’t have the expertise or the time to take a really good look, as members of the then OMB—it’s a different kettle of fish altogether—at that time spent days, sometimes weeks, sometimes months looking at an issue and having the benefit of all of the scientific background and information. For cabinet to sit down and try to examine and make a decision as to whether something should be overturned or the OMB ruling upheld is not an easy thing

to do. So what it meant essentially was that it would turn into a political issue.

That is why I have concerns. On the one hand I think it's a good idea, particularly considering the makeup of the OMB now and some of the decisions that have been made. But on the other hand, given what we know about this government and its attitude toward development and the amount of money they have taken from developers for election campaigns, I would be really concerned if the OMB made some good decisions on the Oak Ridges moraine, and in one case they already have, to my knowledge: what if some good decisions are made and the developers don't like it and they go to this government, cabinet, which is pro-development, which received a lot of money from these developers, and not on the basis of scientific fact? It is really difficult—I would say impossible, having been there—for a cabinet to take the time, for staff to take the time, to examine the relevant issues to make these really monumental decisions to overturn a decision which in some cases took months and months of hearings to come to a conclusion, and it can also be dangerous.

I have mixed feelings about it and I think a discussion around that would be part of committee hearings. I think there need to be changes made to the OMB. I also think there need to be changes made to the Planning Act again.

My bill, that I just reintroduced, is before us again. It's the same bill that Shelley Martel—it was on the floor in the last session here, and of course died when the House prorogued. That bill had been sent to the general government committee for hearings and it could never get on. Mr Gilchrist has a different opinion than I do as to why it didn't get on. We both expressed those opinions publicly. I know, we all know, that the government did not want that bill to go to committee. They made a mistake in letting it go to general government, but it went to general government, and Mr Gilchrist says, "There are all these other bills before it and that's why they couldn't put it on." But the reality is that they kept it off the agenda because they didn't want it to go out to public hearings.

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In summary, I want to say something here and I want to say it very clearly. What I don't want to see here today—I know that the Liberals and my party are going to support this bill. What I don't want to see from the government members today is what they did with my Safe Drinking Water Act; that is, they supported the bill—I was very pleased about it, a very important bill, particularly given what's happening in the Oak Ridges moraine in terms of protecting our water and what happened in Walkerton—and then sent it to what's called the committee of the whole. It never happens; we all know that. It's kissing it goodbye. It's over; it's gone; it's never going to see the light of day again.

I don't want to see that happen here today. I hope very much—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Well, help us. Work together with us.

Ms Churley: Oh, well, you can work the numbers out, can you?

I believe that may be the cynical move that will be made today, and I urge all of the Tory members—people will see through it this time. They're on to you, and you won't get away with it.

The question here today is, is this bill strong enough? The answer is no. If the question is whether we support it, the answer is yes. Yes, because it does do some good things and it gives us an opportunity to get it out to committee with my bill and Mr Colle's bill. Our bills have been debated here before. Yours has. Now it's watered down, but it has been debated.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Well, it is watered down. It is. It's really too bad. But let's put them all out to committee. Let's do that and have a comprehensive discussion, not only on saving the Oak Ridges moraine but on a green Planning Act in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to rise today in support of Bill 17 from the member for Scarborough East. It's called An Act to ensure responsible and acceptable development and to protect the natural heritage of the Province of Ontario.

Ontario's planning process provides the tools needed for the protection of the Oak Ridges moraine. Anyone who has any familiarity with the municipal process—and I was on council for two terms—understands that it's not a phenomenon where the provincial government is promoting sprawl. It's a fact that communities look after their own planning process and the growth in the population which is occurring, and there are a number of reasons.

Being from the riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, I can tell you the city of Barrie, the town of Innisfil, Bradford and West Gwillimbury are growing. The reason they are growing is because of the population that's increasing, and also because they are attractive places to reside. One factor obviously for people is the price of the housing.

Certainly there are rules out there. The provincial government has rules; the municipal governments have rules.

What Mr Gilchrist is trying to accomplish is a balance. We're committed to the environmental integrity of the Oak Ridges moraine. This is reflected in the 1996 policy statement of the province and the 1991 Oak Ridges moraine guidelines. We believe, as a province, that the guidelines, policy and legislation already in place for our land use planning system provide the necessary protection. We're committed to the principle that municipal decision-making provides the appropriate local solutions in matters of land use planning. That's the way it has been for many, many years.

For the member opposite to speak about how things are in other areas and how their communities are being threatened—it's for the communities to look at those situations in terms of how they want to plan their communities. We don't need to be dictated to by rich landowners from Toronto in terms of what they want

outside of Toronto. It's a province-wide solution, and everyone should be a part of it.

I want to deal with the bill in itself. I think many of the people here viewing this saw the movie Forrest Gump and the statement by Tom Hanks where he's saying, "Life is like a box of chocolates." Mr Gilchrist's bill here, from a planning perspective, is, "Planning is like a box of chocolates." There are a number of things here that he's put out, and I think we have to look at it because they significantly bring more of a balance to how municipalities can deal with planning.

One of them is the changes that we're looking at from the Development Charges Act. This is very important for a community like the city of Barrie or the town of Innisfil. We are going to be removing the restriction on parkland acquisition as one of the municipal services for which the municipality can charge, and in its place make the acquisition of parkland mandatory. This is very fundamental in terms of preserving parkland and recreation within the community. The municipality will be able to deal with this from a Development Charges Act perspective.

Also, the Planning Act is going to be amended to restore the ability for citizens to appeal OMB—Ontario Municipal Board—decisions on significant planning matters, such as official plan amendments and rezoning applications, to the cabinet. This would provide the opportunity for cabinet to overturn or at least order a re-hearing on decisions which were clearly not reflective of the public sentiment.

That's what I think the member from Toronto opposite was concerned about in terms of the power that the OMB does have. He's right. They have tremendous power in terms of the processes for official plan amendments and rezoning applications. Those can be appealed to the Ontario Municipal Board. Those are decisions made by the councils, but they're appealable and they become quite litigious, and sometimes they don't reflect what the public wants. This is a lever that Mr Gilchrist is putting in place to allow that public sentiment to come clearly through this process.

One other measure he's looking at is that the Planning Act would also be amended to add a three-year moratorium to all significant planning applications from the day the municipality adopts a new official plan. For the viewing audience, an official plan for a municipality is how that community wants to plan: certain areas they want to be commercial, certain areas they want to be industrial, certain areas they want to be residential, certain areas they want to be institutional, and certain areas they want to be environmentally protected. That's their blueprint for how they want their community to be.

Currently, every municipality is required to update its official plan every five years, but after spending millions of dollars on that planning exercise, a developer who disagrees with some aspect of the plan can apply for a change literally the day the plan is adopted. There's a lot of work, as the member from Simcoe North can attest in terms of the town of Oro-Medonte, that goes into that

planning. Why? Because that's how the community sentiment, from their elected representatives, wants that community to be. It is a very significant document.

This bill would ensure that official plans, once adopted, would carry much greater weight than is the case today, because the Planning Act would be amended to add a three-year moratorium that provides stability to the planning process. As I've said, every five years that official plan document has to be reviewed. So I think the bill puts a very good balance with respect to the municipal rights and the provincial perspective in terms of making sure the planning process remains responsive to growth but also brings decisions back to the public in terms of the municipal role.

I'm going to stop speaking at this point; I know other members want to speak. But I think this is a good start and Mr Gilchrist should be commended for the hard work.

Mr O'Toole: It is my pleasure to respectfully comment on Bill 17 by Mr Gilchrist from Scarborough East. I commend him for bringing forward what I consider an important initiative. I think the government and all sides should support it.

I also want to comment that the Honourable Frank Klees, the minister, has spoken widely in support of the moraine.

I know people on all sides of the House, not just in my riding of Durham, are very concerned. This is quite a comprehensive private member's bill, as the members present would know. I just want to read the preamble statement. It explains most of it.

"The bill deems the Oak Ridges moraine to be a development planning area under the Ontario Planning and Development Act, 1994, and requires the minister to cause a development plan for the Oak Ridges moraine to be prepared. The minister is required to submit the proposed development plan to the Lieutenant Governor in Council for approval within one year of royal assent."

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It goes on to define quite clearly that "The minister is required to compile a list of studies or documents prepared by ... the government ... that updates or completes information gathered on the Oak Ridges moraine."

I think the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford has covered many of the prescriptive measures to ensure there's orderly, balanced planning in a very sensitive area.

Recognizing that a great part of this is in my riding of Durham, I also want to address the mayors in the area who need to be recognized and are supportive of this initiative, it's my understanding. That would be Mayor Gerri-Lynn O'Connor of Uxbridge; Mayor Doug Moffatt of Port Perry; Nancy Diamond, the mayor of the city of Oshawa; John Mutton of Clarington and Regional Chair Roger Anderson.

This has been a significant issue with respect to perhaps the Gan Eden project most importantly. What we're looking for is fair and reasonable uses of land. In fact, in a very few minutes, in the details of the bill it defines the

Oak Ridges moraine and, I would say, a similar characterization to the Niagara Escarpment. There's one section I would like to be on record. Under the development control portion, which is under section 5 of the bill, it says with respect to wetlands in southern Ontario that it would somehow develop a permit with respect to wetlands. That is a significant issue. I think there needs be further discussion.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough East has two minutes to reply.

Mr Gilchrist: I sincerely want to thank my colleagues from all three parties for their comments in response to Bill 17. I must say to both Mr Phillips and Ms Churley that I certainly understand the politics involved here. I'm glad to see that their response was a far less partisan approach than one might normally see in this Legislature on bills. But to suggest that this bill is watered down is a gross misstatement. In fact, unlike other bills that shall remain nameless but tabled by the other side, my bill makes it very clear that it is not at some point in the future that there must be a plan. Within 120 days there must be a plan that protects the whole moraine, and so the suggestion that there is no longer a freeze or that somehow that's relevant—the real fact is that anything that is environmentally defensible, scientifically defensible as worthy of protection, even in that first 120 days, will be protected.

I want to thank as well Minister Witmer, who went on the record last week as saying that our government does support the protection of the moraine and that we're going to consult. I look forward to being part of that consultation.

I want to thank folks like Jim Robb and his colleagues, who are from the Friends of the Rouge Watershed, who are with us here today—groups like that which have taken a stand in defending not just the Rouge but areas like the Rouge throughout the whole Oak Ridges moraine and the watersheds up there.

The province has led by example: 3,350 acres, a huge portion of that on the moraine, has been dedicated to the Rouge park. I'm confident we're going to keep adding land. In fact, I hope we get even more land in Markham added to the Rouge park, and I've made that appeal to Minister Tsubouchi and to his colleagues.

The bottom line here: it's not about politics, it's about protecting the environment. All members in this House have a vested interest. All of us should take our roles as stewards of Ontario's natural heritage very seriously. I'm sure you do, and I look forward to your support when this bill comes for a vote.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm not certain that I heard the member for Eglinton-Lawrence accurately, but I wish at this point to simply state that I for one disapprove of his comments with regard to the Ontario Municipal Board, but more importantly, I make this point and I draw it to the attention of his leader whom I know will be—

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

Mr Guzzo: Oh, I apologize.

WORKFARE

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I move that in the opinion of this House the Ministry of Community and Social Services must fulfill the Blueprint commitment to move forward with the expansion of the Ontario work-for-welfare initiative by having every ministry, government agency, board and commission take a number of workfare placements. As promised during the 1999 campaign, the work-for-welfare system should also be expanded by encouraging municipalities to undertake more workfare programs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Maves has 10 minutes to make his presentation.

Mr Maves: I move this resolution today because one of the most important successes of this government since 1995 has been moving people from welfare to work. I remember in 1995, when I was deciding to run for office, that one of the most embarrassing things, I would say one of the saddest things about Ontario, this rich, great province, the economic engine of Canada for so many years, was that we had 1.3 million people on welfare. It was costing Ontario taxpayers about \$7 billion a year. Ontario had the highest number of people per capita on welfare in Canada. Approximately one in 12 people was on welfare. So we as a party then undertook in the 1995 campaign to do substantial reform of the welfare system.

It was a system whose original intent was to help people who maybe had lost employment, had been on unemployment insurance for a certain amount of time and still hadn't been able to find employment, who found their benefits exhausted and were now falling into welfare. The intent of the system was a measure of last resort. It always should have been a system that when you fell into this safety net—it really should have been a trampoline—it gave a little bit; it cushioned your fall and made you spring back up into the workforce. Over time, over the years, that was not at all what the system had become. The system had become a trap, a net in the sense that no one, once they got in the net, was getting out. That shocking figure of one in 12 people on welfare demonstrates that clearly.

We did a variety of things when we came into office and we campaigned quite clearly on them. We campaigned that at the time, in 1995, we had the richest welfare benefits of any province in Canada, actually about 35% higher than in any province in Canada. We campaigned on the fact that we were going to reduce those levels so that they were much more commensurate with working wage levels. But our welfare benefits, I must say, after we did those reductions, are still quite high: about 25% higher than the provincial average for single employable people; 13% higher for single parents and 10% higher for couples with children. So Ontario welfare benefits right now are still the most generous in the world. Also, we moved some people who are disabled and long-term-disabled who were going to be on welfare

or had been on welfare for several years. We said we would move them out of the welfare system and have their own system, and that's now known as the Ontario disability support program, ODSP. Those benefits are about 50% higher than the benefits paid to similar folks elsewhere in Canada. So it must be known that that was one of the changes we made.

The other one that we actively campaigned on was workfare. The people of Ontario were way ahead of the political pundits and the political elite here in Toronto who said you couldn't do workfare. The people of Ontario were way ahead of the politicians on this one and were demanding it. In fact, any kind of polling we did subsequently probably would show that 75% to 80% of the people of Ontario supported the idea of workfare, that someone on social assistance should go out and do some work in community agencies, perhaps a not-for-profit facility like a boys and girls club or a long-term-care facility, to volunteer, to do some work in there, maybe go into an agency and acquire some computer skills and so on. A vast majority, 75% to 80%, of the public of Ontario supported this, but governments never moved in that direction. We did.

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We introduced workfare and we asked the municipalities and the regional governments that deliver social assistance to implement workfare. Honestly, they were pretty slow on the uptake. That was largely because the idea of workfare was blocked by unions like CUPE that represent a lot of workers in the municipal sector. They were pretty slow on the uptake.

We did have some early successes, but it was some reforms that Minister Baird brought in in 1999 that prodded the municipalities: "Look, we'll set a target for you for a number of people who are on social assistance, who are in Ontario Works, who have to be in a community placement, a workfare placement. For every person that you are below that target, there is going to be a financial penalty, and for every person above that target there's a reward for the municipality." That was \$1,000 per placement.

In the first year of that program a lot of municipalities—I remember, even my own—were very far below the target where they should have had workfare placements. Once we brought in the program, in the very first year—last year I remember we were 46 out of 47 delivery agents in Ontario. That's where we ranked. We only had 22% of our welfare recipients in placements who were supposed to be in placements. At the time I did a press release and I said, "We have to do better. We've got to find more placements," because where municipalities were finding placements for people in Ontario Works in workfare placements, they were then moving into jobs. It was an extremely successful program.

I remember Minister Baird had binders of letters this thick in his office from people who said, "I didn't like workfare. I was on social assistance. I didn't appreciate you telling me that I had to go out and do some community work or get into a workfare placement. But once I

did it, it was terrific. It was the best thing that ever happened to me. I'm now working full-time. I feel better. I've got more contacts. I've got a full-time job." Great stories.

Places that were fulfilling the number of workfare placements that the minister had set a target for, that were placing people in full-time jobs and meeting these workfare placements, were getting money, \$1,000 per person above those placements.

In Niagara we were only at 22%. At the time, in my region there were a lot of people who said, "Don't pick on us. We're actually putting people in jobs, and placements aren't important." I said, "You know, you can do both." There were lots of other municipalities that were doing both successfully. Durham was doing very well. I think York was doing very well. Owen Sound was doing very well in both. I said, "You can do both."

Last year they only had 220 placements. In lighting a little fire under them, in establishing this reward system where they could achieve income for their municipality if they met their target, they have redoubled their efforts and now, this year, they're going to finish well above their target. They've gone from 200 placements to 1,300 or 1,400 placements. So it works, and it is a great system that has had great success.

We set targets for our own Ontario public service. In my opinion, those targets were quite modest. The targets for 2000-01 for the whole OPS were 750. Now we've overachieved those targets, with 1,077 placements in 2000-01. Some ministries, such as natural resources, made 706% of their target; Management Board Secretariat made 157%; Community and Social Services made 143%. But some failed to make their targets, and I insist to you that these are modest targets. For instance, education has a target of only 17 and they failed to meet that; they are at eight. Health and long-term care, a giant ministry: 113 placements was their target and they were at only 25.

This resolution asks the members of the Legislature to support and push now on the OPS and its boards, agencies and commissions to continue, to redouble their efforts like some of the municipalities did, to find placements for people, because placements lead to jobs.

Off the top of my head, the Niagara Parks Commission, for example, a commission of the Ministry of Tourism: I've talked to them several times and they are anxious now to get 25 or 30 placements within the Niagara Parks Commission. There are other parks commissions under the ministry that should be doing the same.

Long-term-care facilities: we're opening up 20,000 new long-term-care beds in Ontario. There are some municipalities which have worked with the long-term-care facilities and gotten people placements in those facilities. We can do hundreds and hundreds more in those types of placements.

Hospitals: there are all kinds of volunteer activities that go on in hospitals right now. It's a wonderful place

for placements, and that's where the Ministry of Health should be looking.

Education: as I said, they only have a target of 17, but they should really be looking at partnering with the school boards in finding all kinds of different placements, even things like lunch monitoring and recess monitoring and so on—

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Further debate?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): It's truly stunning to hear the member for Niagara Falls, six years after the government slashed social assistance rates by 22.7%, stand up here and talk about the generosity of the government in terms of the benefits that the most vulnerable people receive when we know about the extraordinary increase in terms of shelter costs, of home heating oil costs, of a variety of costs—food costs, which are extraordinary—and to have him stand up and still begin his speech with those remarks.

Let me begin with remarks by Andrew Mitchell, who was commenting on the budget yesterday. He's program director with the Community Social Planning Council of Toronto. He said in his response, "In his speech the minister said it was their duty as a government to help the most vulnerable, but his definition of vulnerable was conspicuous by its exclusion of people on social assistance." Indeed that's true. "A single mother with one child in Toronto is facing a rental market where the average rent is \$979, but she is still receiving the same \$511 for rent that she received in 1995." What more could be said about the difficulties?

Here we have a resolution that's absolutely unnecessary. We know the minister has made it very, very clear what he wants to do in terms of workfare, but what we don't have is an actual, real discussion related to workfare, whether it works and whether it actually is helpful to people. There's no real reason for this resolution, and I'd ask, what is the government afraid of? Why don't they shine the light on the dark corners of their phony workfare plan? The fact is, it is that. There is no proof, there is no accountability that it works, and there's no real sense of responsibility from this government.

The government refuses to acknowledge the truth on how workfare is actually working, and whether it is or not, or how its Ontario Works programs are affecting individuals and families in great need. When it comes to a meaningful evaluation of Ontario Works or workfare, all we get is a monthly body count. That's what they gauge everything on, a monthly body count, how many people they've kicked off welfare. There are no outcome evaluation studies, no thoughtful discussion or debate, no real attempt to measure the impact. It's the least you would expect from a government. There's only government spin.

The worst thing about the government's reforms to the welfare system has been its constant bombardment of misconceptions and ugly stereotypes about people on social assistance. If there's a shot to be made that will

further stigmatize the poor in our province, this government will do it.

Remember the Premier's comments that he thought pregnant single mothers should be denied a nutritional allowance because they'd spend it all drinking beer? An unbelievably offensive thing to say, something that I may say some municipalities at least dealt with by finding a way to provide those funds themselves.

How about former Minister Tsubouchi's comments about welfare recipients being able to live on this absolutely meagre diet and telling them to go and scour for dented cans of tuna? How about the current minister's implication that all welfare recipients are drug addicts? How can we forget the image of the minister himself scouring through a box of syringes and pouring them on the table?

This government has waged a constant battle against the poorest citizens of our province. If there has been any consistency in their policies, it has been that they have been punitive, vindictive, mean-spirited and designed ultimately to simply kick people off the system.

Look at the lack of adequacy in the welfare rates. Where is the cost-of-living adjustment? It should be at least there for people on social assistance. After six years at the reduced rate, the least they could do is a cost-of-living adjustment when we know the costs have increased extraordinarily. People are desperate. They're trying to rebuild their lives, but they're doing it without the resources to survive, and each individual story is so alarming.

What about the national child tax benefit? Why the clawback? The government simply claws back about \$140 million out of the hands of our poorest children.

What about the loss of children's educational funds in order to qualify for welfare?

What about the imposition of liens on those few property owners who may be forced to go on social assistance but actually have property? They put liens on their property in order to qualify for welfare.

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What about the cuts in support to the STEP program?

There's example after example. Behind every phony spin this government puts on their policy, there's an individual story of a personal struggle to survive and to live with dignity.

We never hear from this government about the woman in Sarnia, for example, who at the age of 54 was forced on to Ontario Works and into workfare because her husband became too sick to work and support her; or the mother in Barrie who remains stuck on welfare because the government will not provide her with the support she needs to care for her multi-disabled son, a disgraceful story; or, quite frankly, the workfare client in my riding, and there are many of them, who is struggling to simply make it to his workplace because the price of gasoline is so high. He lives 60 kilometres outside of Thunder Bay and has to go in every day, and it's a real struggle. The fact is, the supplement for his transportation is simply unbelievably inadequate.

We don't hear about how more families are relying on food banks. We don't hear that from this government at all, or how people are sort of disappearing off the system, never to be found again. Even when they pull their statistics, they won't acknowledge the fact that they are basing their statistics on the people they can find. There's a whole bunch of people they simply can't find. The fact is that there are hundreds of thousands of children going without proper nutritional needs being met. Those are the realities. We heard nothing about that in yesterday's budget.

Certainly I am voting against this resolution today. It does not do anything in any possible way to alleviate the situation. If I thought for one second that the government truly wanted to help people find the dignity of moving from welfare to work—as my colleague Ted McMeekin put it to me when we were talking about it, you have to have the right look in your eyes. The government members do not have the right look in their eyes. They spin the words out there, but it's still always based on the fact that people are somehow taking advantage of the system. There's no kindness or clarity or real belief. They don't have the right look in their eyes. They don't really, really care.

If indeed one felt that way, you'd do so. There are so many things they need to do if they really want to take this seriously. Look at proper daycare support. Look at proper tuition assistance. Look at counselling service that may be needed for people who are on social assistance. Certainly look at a decent living allowance for the people who are on social assistance.

The fact is, the government is afraid to shine light into the dark corners of this program. I have called, on behalf of my leader, Dalton McGuinty, for a social audit of Ontario Works—a responsible request, I believe, and something you'd think the government would be interested in doing. The fact is, they haven't done it. We have got to continue to press for that. Certainly, everybody who really, really cares about the massive changes that this government has gone through would call for that.

Let me also, if I may, read a lit bit, as I wrap up my remarks, from a constituent of mine, or certainly somebody from Thunder Bay, who wrote a letter to the editor. This is from Kim Woodbeck, just so that the member can perhaps understand the situation from her eyes. This is what she says:

"Applying for and being on welfare is one of the most degrading things that anyone ever has to do. It is made this way by the powers that be. It is not just a matter of answering a 'few' questions, and then picking up a mega-cheque.... There are a massive amount of questions to answer; every aspect of your life is scrutinized. About the only thing that you are not asked is the frequency of your sex life and your toilet habits, but at the rate that things are going this can't be far behind."

Pretty frightening words. The fact is, we've watched these massive changes in the system. We watch the government continue to stigmatize the poorest people in

our province. This is a resolution that does not deserve support from this House. This is a government that should be looking at their Ontario Works policy in a far greater fashion. I will not be supporting this resolution, and I trust that most people in this House will not be supporting it as well.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Let me begin by saying that it won't come as a surprise to anyone that New Democrats will not be supporting this resolution, because it seeks to expand what is really a flawed and punitive program into other workplaces with absolutely no guarantee that welfare is indeed leading to long-term, gainful employment for welfare recipients and no guarantee that the public sector and the private sector, because the government has extended welfare to the private sector, aren't in fact getting rid of, shedding, full-time employees in order to cash in on free labour of welfare recipients. There is no support for those parents who actually need adequate child care as part and parcel of taking on their placement. Finally, there is no guarantee, after the bribes that the government set out for municipalities, that this year municipalities are not going to be hit with a huge cost directly as a result of the call centres that this government has set up for Ontario Works.

Let me deal with each of these points in turn.

First, with respect to there being no guarantee that welfare is leading to gainful employment, I remember my former colleague from Algoma, Bud Wildman, standing in this House just after welfare had been implemented in Algoma to point out that the first welfare project in Algoma was one where welfare recipients were painting picnic tables during the summer. There is nothing long-term about that placement; it's not going to lead to long-term, gainful employment. The question is, how many other placements like that exist that welfare recipients are having to deal with?

I remember one of the first and probably very embarrassing—I use that word very specifically—welfare projects in my own community, in the same summer as the government was trying to ram through legislation to forbid welfare recipients from being part of trade unions. That project was re-greening work that used to be done by summer students, funded through the federal government and the former UIC. Those summer students would be put all around our community. They would be up on the rocks in our community spreading lime to try and deal with some of the acid in the soil, so that we could actually recapture some of the soil to grow something in our community. This is the legacy left us from two mining companies that used to roast their ore outdoors.

That was a federal program for 18-year-olds that had its funding from the federal government cut off, and the municipality then stuck welfare recipients into it—nothing gainful about that employment, nothing long-term about that employment. It was a quick fix to throw people into when some other money from some other level of government got cut off, and it was embarrassing.

I think it's interesting that the government so cleverly ties its workfare numbers into its numbers of how many people are coming off the social assistance rolls. Wouldn't it be interesting if the government actually tracked and made public what is really happening to those who are coming off the welfare rolls? Because I don't think workfare has much to do with those changes in numbers. I'd be interested in knowing how many of those people who left the welfare rolls actually left the province, or how many of those people who left the welfare rolls are actually now living in homeless shelters—whole families crowded into motels down on Kingston Road here in Toronto. I'd like the government to track how many of those people who left the welfare rolls are single moms with kids who actually returned to an abusive relationship because the money they were getting on social assistance was not enough to support their families.

It would be very interesting if the government undertook such tracking, because I think we would clearly see that many people leaving the welfare rolls are finding themselves in the three situations I just outlined, and that workfare has nothing—or very little—to do with people leaving the welfare rolls. It's interesting that that government is not making public that kind of tracking. I suspect they don't want to, because they would rather have people assume that people leaving welfare are actually benefiting from workfare, when there's no guarantee whatsoever that that's happening.

Wouldn't it be interesting as well if the government actually broke down the workfare programs and made public the following categories of workfare: the number of individuals who are actually involved in resumé writing; the number of individuals in workfare now who are actually involved in upgrading; the number of individuals who are in actual placements in our community; and finally, how many individuals in real placements actually got hired for full-time permanent work?

That would be a far more concrete and realistic evaluation of workfare, because I continue to believe that the bulk of people involved in workfare right now are in two categories: (1) in upgrading—they are not in work placements at all—and (2) in work placements but not placements that are going to lead to full-time permanent jobs, which is what the government claims this program was all about.

I didn't hear the parliamentary assistant talk about any of those categories. How many people actually involved in workfare now are in any of those categories? As I said earlier, I continue to believe the majority of people aren't on their way to full-time, permanent work. They're stuck somewhere in upgrading or they're stuck in a placement that will not lead to full-time work, like some of the placements I referred to earlier.

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A second concern is that there is no guarantee whatsoever that those private and public sector employers are not shedding or laying off or getting rid of their permanent employees in order to get free labour

from workfare clients. I listened last Thursday to the minister and his comments on mandatory drug and literacy testing, which was an appalling statement. He spoke of the government exceeding its target for workfare in the public sector by about 300 placements. I wonder if the minister is prepared to table in this House those positions that those workfare recipients are assuming at this time, because I suspect that if we had a chance along with OPSEU to take a look at those positions, we would find that many of those positions had had permanent, long-term employees who were laid off by this government when they were so busy getting rid of people in order to have money for the tax cuts, and that those positions are now being replaced by people on workfare.

I thought it was interesting that the parliamentary assistant talked about the Ministry of Natural Resources exceeding their target by 706%. Isn't it interesting that it's the Ministry of Natural Resources that so exceeded its workfare targets that had the biggest cut in staff under this government since this government was elected? The biggest cut in staff was at the Ministry of Natural Resources. Isn't it so convenient, such a coincidence, that it's the same ministry that has the highest level of workfare recipients? How many of those workfare recipients are taking jobs from people laid off by this government so this government could have savings for its tax cut?

I say that because we got a call as well last Wednesday from North Bay, from a public servant, to let us know that just the day before, people in her unit were asked to welcome a new employee who was a workfare recipient. Isn't it interesting that that new workfare recipient was taking the position of a staff person who had had permanent, full-time employment in that ministry and who was laid off two years ago by this government? That's what I am convinced is happening in our workplaces, that we have many people losing full-time employment because it's cheaper for the government, and it's certainly cheaper for the private sector, to get the free labour of workfare recipients. That is what's happening.

What's worse is that, because of this resolution the PA is promoting here today, the government sends a clear message to the private sector that it's OK to shed your employees, to get rid of them, to lay them off and replace them with workfare recipients. There's a real incentive for employers in the private sector to do that because they're not paying the wage costs for those individuals. As those individuals continue to receive their social assistance, there is virtually no cost to employers in the private sector to have them in their workplace. So what you set up is a really vicious cycle of workfare recipients being brought in, working for a period of time in a private sector place of employment, and being let go so the employer can turn around and start it all again.

That employer benefits from having free labour and driving his or her wage costs down. That's insidious, and that's the kind of program we have in place, because there's nothing to guarantee that's not happening. In fact the government, by replacing permanent staff in the

public sector, sends a message to the private sector that it's OK to do just that. I think that's exactly what they are doing.

Our third concern deals with child care, because there is a huge lack of support for parents who need child care if they have to participate in placements. We know, because KPMG did a study for this government in 1998, that the government would need to make a massive investment in child care to make workfare work. The reality is that between 1995 and 1998, this government cut regulated child care by 15%. The government is spending \$43 less per child per regulated space than they were in 1995. The government has also downloaded 20% of all the costs of child care on to municipalities. We know that any spaces that were created in the community came from full-fee-paying parents, not because this government was doing anything constructive, because this government was in the process of cutting child care through that whole period.

This leads to two problems in our communities with respect to workfare. You've got two pots of money that a municipality can access to deal with child care. You have a pot for subsidized spaces to help low-wage working parents who are trying to remain at work but need help with child care to do that. This government has capped its contributions to subsidies for working parents in our communities who need subsidized child care. You've got the scenario that the city of Toronto, for the third year in a row, has set aside \$3 million in its budget to try to reduce its subsidized spaces and this government refuses to do its 80%, so the waiting list in Toronto has now grown from 13,000 to 14,500.

You've got a second pot of money for child care. The government established about \$65 million for spaces for workfare recipients to access regulated child care. The problem is that when municipalities can't find any more of that \$65 million for an Ontario Works client, because that pot is so small, then the municipality turns to its other pot of subsidized money, the pot that's supposed to be for low-wage working parents who need some assistance in order to keep working and have their kids in child care.

You've got the scenario now where in many municipalities workfare recipients are going to the top of the subsidized waiting list ahead of other working parents who have been sitting, waiting for child care. There is nothing fair about that. The reason municipalities do this is because the government penalizes municipalities if they don't reach their target with respect to workfare placements. They are now in the process of doing whatever they can to get whomever they can into whatever kind of placement they can so they'll not be penalized by this government and lose money. The municipalities have been forced into this position of pitting OW clients against low-wage working families who have been on a waiting list for a subsidized space for a long time. There's nothing right about that.

In Welland my colleague Mr Kormos and I heard from a woman who was on a waiting list—600 people on the

waiting list for a subsidized space in Niagara. We had a young woman, Marnie McLean, who was working in a nursing home, not making very much money. She needed a subsidized space to ensure her kids had a safe place to go before and after school. Marnie McLean and other families in Niagara were clearly told, "If you were an Ontario Works client, you'd be at the top of the list like that and you'd probably get a subsidized space." Marnie McLean is not an OW client. She's a hard-working woman trying to look after her two kids by herself on \$300 a week.

Marnie McLean had to quit her job because she couldn't get access to a subsidized space. She would like to go on workfare, but now she's penalized because she quit her job so she can't even get that for three months. That's how ridiculous the system is. That's because this government did nothing to make sure there would be adequate child care. Nothing in the government's announcement last week, as they talked about extending workfare, talked about increased funding for welfare either.

We don't support this resolution. This whole thing has been flawed. It is punitive, and there's no guarantee people are getting real live jobs.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton): I'm very pleased to be able to speak on the resolution of the member from Niagara Falls. The thrust of the resolution is to expand workfare placements in the public sector.

For the viewing public, I want to take a look at the principles of Ontario Works, the actual name of the workfare program which was first announced in 1995. It's an active employment program. It provides employment assistance to help people find and keep a job. While they are taking steps toward employment, they are also eligible for financial assistance. The costs of Ontario Works are shared by the province and municipalities.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is responsible for setting policy and providing the majority of funding. Forty-seven municipalities and the DSSABs actually deliver the program. The caseworkers are municipal staff, and the clients work with municipalities, not the province. Municipalities are legally obligated to protect the clients' privacy. The ministry has regional offices to support municipalities in their delivery of the program and to ensure ministry accountability.

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The Ontario Works focus is on employment, not just on giving people cheques. Caseworkers are expected to help participants find work, and Ontario Works places expectations on people that they will help themselves. Participation in at least one employment activity is mandatory. Participants agree in a contract, called a participation agreement, to the employment activities they need to help find a job, and the program rules ensure there are consequences if people don't take the steps they agreed to in their participation agreement.

Obviously the focus is on finding a job. In terms of the province's economic growth since 1995, there has been

the creation of in excess of 822,000 net new jobs. We've had tremendous economic growth. It only makes sense that what we try to do through Ontario Works is allow people to get a job and participate.

This particular resolution is focused on the public sector, to increase the opportunity for community placements, to increase the opportunity to get experience and, the end objective, to get a job. Ontario Works provides a flexible range of practical services and supports to help participants while they're actively looking for a job. Community placements help participants build connections to the job market by providing them with current practical work experience, updated new job skills, improved confidence in their abilities, up-to-date job references and contact with potential future employers. The purpose of the employment placements is to move Ontario Works participants into jobs as quickly as possible.

Employment placement services include hiring assistance, follow-up human resources services to keep people employed, support for employers who provide on-the-job training and job coaching. Through the employment placements, participants are hired by the employer and placed directly on the employer's payroll, and participants receive the going wage for that position.

As a part of the program, Ontario Works takes the fundamental principle that everyone in the program can eventually become employed, that no one is permanently unemployable. Ontario Works is about helping people find the shortest route to employment, although the route will vary for different people. Ontario Works provides a generous range of supports backed up by a \$180-million investment in employment assistance funding.

How do the community placements work? Only non-profit agencies can sponsor community placements. Community placements are with agencies that need extra help, ie, new projects, special events providing new services to agency clients. Community placements cannot displace paid work. Participants are matched to placements based on their ability, training needs and personal interests.

The emphasis is on community placements, and they are a key component of Ontario Works. You can't get a job without experience, and you can't get experience without a job: that's the vicious cycle. Placements are invaluable for people who have been out of the workforce for a long time, people with no work experience and people with multiple employment barriers. Placements give people a chance to learn skills, build their confidence, get real work experience and make contacts. Placements also give participants a chance to give something back to the community while they're receiving assistance. The feedback from participants, agencies and communities on the benefits of placements has been very positive.

In order to speed up the development of new placements, in November 1999 the province implemented the welfare-to-work action plan, which set targets for municipalities starting from 15% of the caseload in a

placement for the year 1999-2000 and rising to 30% in the year 2001-02; provided increased funding for municipalities that exceeded the targets—\$1,000 for each placement over the target for each of the three years—warned the funding would be reduced for municipalities that did not meet the targets, and introduced the innovation fund for new placement projects. The province is building on its success, actively promoting and marketing best practices and sharing successful strategies with the municipalities.

I have explained the focus of Ontario Works. The purpose of the resolution is to expand those placements in the municipalities and the public sector. What this is saying is that the commitment of this government, through the Ministry of Community and Social Services, with the expansion of the Ontario work-for-welfare initiative, is having every ministry and government agency, board and commission take a number of workfare placements. As promised during the last election, the work-for-welfare system should also be expanded by encouraging municipalities to undertake more workfare programs. So the principles of providing assistance to get a job and of making sure of the process in terms of community placements, which is the key focus of the program, are something this resolution is dealing with. I support that.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm pleased to join the debate here today. What we see here today is part of an ongoing plan by this government, and not only from when they got elected. As we go back historically to look at the Mike Harris record in this area and we look at the Premier, then leader of the third party, six months or a year before the election, we all remember vividly the scene of parading this woman out in front of a media studio and saying she would be better off today in Ontario if she quit her \$40,000-a-year job and went on welfare.

They paraded this, front-page news all over the province, except the premise was wrong. You will remember that a day later every reputable commission of social services in Ontario said, "This is all wrong. Mr Harris has his facts wrong. This is inaccurate. It's not the case." That sort of set the tone for this government's obsession with attacking the poor in Ontario.

The first thing they did when they took office was to cut benefits by 21%. These folks who were living high on the hog on welfare were way too wealthy in Mike Harris's Ontario, "so we're going to cut their benefits by 21%." Then they proceeded to bring in workfare, which is nothing more than a public relations scam by the government of Ontario. Frankly, what workfare had was the same programs the municipalities were running all along. The provisions of being kicked off welfare if you didn't co-operate were already in the welfare act for 20 years in this province.

It became a nice, chest-pounding, Republican, public relations affair by the government of Ontario, saying, "Look how tough we're getting. We can prove it. Mike Harris can be so tough. If you rip off the welfare system,

if you're on welfare, if you just happen to be poor, we're going to nail you to the wall. But if you're a corporation in this province or if you're a business and you rip off Revenue Canada or you rip off the GST or PST, you know what? It's OK. It's a problem, but don't worry about it. We'll overlook that."

The double standard was applied right from the beginning. We had the snitch line. We had the 21%. We said, "You're overpaid." Then we said to welfare recipients, "You're all frauds and so we're going to bring in a snitch line." Then we said, "Not only are you all overpaid frauds, you're also all lazy, so we're going to bring in workfare and force you to do this." Then, beyond that, we said, "Not only are you overpaid, a fraud and lazy, you're all addicted to drugs."

I remember what I believe to be the most disgraceful performance in a press conference by a minister in the province of Ontario when the minister rolled out a box of syringes at a press conference with a backdrop of someone behind him shooting up to suggest to Ontarians that, if you're on welfare, you spend your money on drugs and you spend your money on shooting up your arm. What a disgraceful, embarrassing moment in the history of this province, condoned by the Premier, condoned by the cabinet and condoned by the backbenchers.

1150

People smile. I think what you did was disgraceful. It was a disgrace to every Ontarian that you believe you represent welfare recipients by bringing out a box of syringes and saying, "You're all addicted to drugs." That is the history of this province, without one study or shred of evidence to ever suggest that welfare recipients have any more addiction problems than anyone else in the general population. But that's the mindset of this government, and frankly that's the mindset that drives this resolution that's in front of us today.

Now we're going to expand this into the public sector. Now we're going to replace professionals, high-paid, well-trained individuals, with free labour for the government of Ontario, for the ministries. We're now going to say, as the government continues to cut back, "We can make up for it? We'll just put these welfare recipients to work for a while on the theory that it's going to help them."

These same welfare recipients, as other members have suggested, once they get into the job force, can't get daycare. I had two constituents in my office last week, two single women, who started a job and realized they could not access safe daycare for their kids. The jobs don't pay a lot of money. They can't afford to pay daycare, and if they want to line up to get subsidized, affordable, safe daycare in Hamilton, good luck. "Wait a year or two and maybe we'll get around to you."

If this government were really concerned about helping the needy, they would have addressed the daycare issue, and they would have addressed the housing issue and the crisis in this province. But do you know what? That doesn't get you those cheap, sleazy, political points that beating up on the poor does. It's just push that

button. You're down in the polls. "What do we do? Well, let's see. Let's beat up on welfare recipients this week. That'll help us a little bit in the polls. That's a good, hot button. Our polling told us that. Our focus group told us that. Gee, we're down in the polls again. Let's go after the teachers next week because that's another good, hot button."

Instead of playing hot-button politics with people whose only crime is being poor, you should look at some real alternatives and real programs. You cut benefits six years ago. In the greatest economic boom this province has seen, this government did not have the courage to put a hand out and help welfare recipients, to say, "We cut you all by 21%, but we think that was unreasonable and unfair. We're going to make up a little bit of it, at least deal with the inflation level." No, in six years you missed a golden opportunity there. In six years you have not touched those benefits you cut by 21%. In six years you've not introduced one new meaningful program to help people on welfare. In six years you've not added one new daycare space to help people get off welfare and into the workforce. Once they're out working, they're out of luck. That is not welfare reform.

This government doesn't care. It's that simple. Yesterday's budget showed that. This government couldn't care less about the needy and the poor in this province. They're a great button to exploit. They're great people to kick and beat up. Mike Harris pounds his chest. He's such a tough guy when he takes on welfare recipients. But he rolls over every time the corporate friends come out for a handout.

It's OK if you're looking for a grant to run your golf tournament and make money. That's OK, because Mike Harris is there. If you're a corporation that benefited by \$2.2 billion in yesterday's budget, that's OK, because that's Mike Harris's friends. But if you happen to be poor and needy or a single mum or are out of work in this province, you don't get a hand up; you get the back of the hand from this Premier and this cabinet.

It is nothing more than another mean-spirited, nasty, unnecessary attack by a mean-spirited, nasty government that doesn't understand the plight of the poor, doesn't care about the poor in Ontario, and seeks only to exploit and use poor people in this province. You should be ashamed of yourselves for what you have done. It is a disgraceful mark in the history of the province, what you have done to people on welfare in the last six years in Ontario.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I'm pleased to be speaking on this resolution this morning. I want to begin by responding to the member from Hamilton East. I'm actually very proud of what this government has done, very proud that this government is helping welfare recipients find jobs and gain dignity.

I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls and congratulate him for bringing this resolution forward. As parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services, I believe this is definitely an area where we should be moving forward. The member from Nickel

Belt, in her comments, referred to the member for Niagara Falls as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services. He is in fact now the parliamentary assistant to health. I'm filling his shoes in community and social services, and he's done an excellent job in that ministry. I think that's part of the reason he brought forward this resolution at this point in time, because he was in the ministry. He saw the benefits of this program.

In 1995, 1.3 million Ontarians were on welfare. That is more than one out of every 10 people. I believe no one wants to be on welfare. Some who are ineligible take advantage of welfare benefits, but the majority of people, I believe, want to find a job.

Welfare should be a bridge to get over a difficult period of time in one's life to be able to find a job in the future. We feel that we need to give the recipients the tools they need to escape the welfare trap. They need to regain the confidence and the dignity that having a job brings to most people.

We believe in Ontarians, we believe in the confidence of Ontarians, and we believe in giving people a hand up. I would ask, what is standing between recipients of social assistance and a job? There are several things that are standing in between. As a government, we want to assist recipients in moving into a job. Some of the initiatives brought forward by our minister are putting together literacy and numeracy skills programs, because it's important that people learn the tools needed in order to gain employment.

It's important that people are not dependent on alcohol or drugs so that when they find a job they will be able to retain it and be successful and gain confidence and dignity. They also need up-to-date skills, training for skills that are needed today in the jobs that are available for them today. This resolution from the member for Niagara Falls is an excellent place to start.

In 1995, the Common Sense Revolution contained a commitment to revolutionizing the way welfare operates in Ontario. Our Blueprint in 1999 reaffirmed our commitment to a system of social assistance that emphasizes skills and ensures that welfare is a temporary state between periods of employment.

We recognize it's hard to get a job without having up-to-date skills. We recognize it's hard to get a job without references. So helping people into jobs will gain them the necessary skills they need and gain them the references they need. It's hard to find a job if you don't have confidence in yourself. For those on welfare, working in workfare will gain the confidence they need to be able to continue to keep a job.

I want to talk about some of the successes in York region. My riding, Thornhill, is in York region. York region placements were almost three times the minimum provincial target. With the incentive program of \$1,000 per placement above the target, York region was granted \$962,000 to reinvest in valuable community services. I'm proud of the work that is done in York region. Between April 1, 2000, and January 31, 2001, a period of only 10

months, the target of 47,778 placements had already been achieved. Over 578,000 people have left the welfare rolls since 1995.

I want to quote a *Globe and Mail* article by John Ibbitson that talks about the opposition's view. Ibbitson said, "The Liberals and NDP can claim to their heart's content that the Tories are heartless and cruel, but they can't deny that under their governments, welfare caseloads exploded, while the programs they created to wean people off state dependency utterly failed."

"The Tories, by cutting back benefits and forcing recipients to make at least a credible stab at finding a job, have halved the rolls in six years. Does anyone believe either of the other two parties would have done better?"

On this side of the House, we don't believe that they would have been able to accomplish half as much as this government has accomplished.

On behalf of the Minister of Community and Social Services, as his PA, I would like to say that we firmly support this resolution. It's consistent with our Blueprint and I will be pleased to vote in favour of it.

1200

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I just want to add a few words on this debate and say to my colleagues across the way, when I listen to their debate and to their arguments about why they don't support welfare, I am absolutely baffled, particularly by the Liberals who, as I recall, in one of their election campaigns referred to welfare under the title, "Mandatory Opportunity: maybe we will support it, maybe we won't." What I find so interesting is that both the Liberals and the NDP, when it comes to talking about welfare and helping those most in need in this province, absolutely give up.

We all hire summer students; we take on interns; we do everything we can to give people opportunities for workplace experience. There is absolutely no substitute for this anywhere. I am absolutely baffled that you would speak against the idea of giving people most in need an opportunity to benefit themselves and to better themselves and their families. I can't imagine you're going to speak against this.

The Acting Speaker: The mover of the motion has two minutes to reply.

Mr Maves: I thank everyone in the Legislature today for participating in the debate. I'm still astonished, after all the success this program has had to date and the welfare reforms we've brought in to date have had, that the opposition is still opposed to it. The opposition is proud of their record of putting 1.3 million Ontarians on to the welfare rolls. We're proud that we've moved 580,000 people from welfare to work.

Workfare is an opportunity. There are all kinds of programs. For instance, one program has an employment initiative and partnership with a local training agency and private sector employers in the hospitality industry. Participants take a four-week training course, which involves one week of classroom training at the Ontario Works office, one week of technical training on-site at a

hotel in small groups, the third week involves technical training at the individual hotels by experienced house-keeping staff, and in the fourth week employment starts. The pilot program has involved 20 Ontario Works participants thus far. Participants have completed the first week of training. The consortium has a commitment to employ the participants who successfully complete the training. The starting wages are \$9.26.

The point is, folks, that every workfare placement, as the member from Guelph said, is an opportunity. Opening up a larger number of placements is increasing the number of opportunities for people on welfare. Why the Liberals and the NDP want to continue to deny opportunities to people on welfare is beyond the understanding of most Ontarians. Their position on this is purely political, and has been from the beginning. They're putting partisan politics above the best interests of those Ontarians who most need the hand up. That is offered by workfare and community placement. We refuse to do that and we continue to move forward with more placements in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The time provided for private members' business has expired.

**ONTARIO NATURAL
HERITAGE ACT, 2001**
LOI DE 2001
SUR LE PATRIMOINE NATUREL
DE L'ONTARIO

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will deal first with ballot item number 5 standing in the name of Mr Gilchrist.

Mr Gilchrist has moved second reading of Bill 17. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. It is carried.

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

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I didn't hear what you said. I apologize.

The Acting Speaker: I said that pursuant to standing order 96, the bill stands referred to the committee of the whole.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Any member that—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth will take—

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: No. The member for Toronto-Danforth will withdraw those remarks.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): What remarks? We just went through a hoax this morning. He won't send it to a committee.

Interjection: When it goes to committee of the whole, nothing will happen anyway.

The Acting Speaker: Member for Kingston and the Islands, come to order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Oak Ridges will come to order.

I do not intend to—

Mr Colle: A point of order?

The Acting Speaker: No. When there are two of us standing, one of us is out of order, and it's not me.

I want you to be very sure about this: I am going to start naming members right away. I have asked, and I'll give the member for Toronto-Danforth one more opportunity to withdraw the remarks.

Ms Churley: I certainly will not withdraw those remarks. He is a fraud. This was a hoax this morning.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Toronto-Danforth, Mrs Churley, is named.

Ms Churley was escorted from the chamber.

Mr Colle: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: by moving this morning's proceeding to committee of the whole, the government has basically perpetrated a fraud on this Legislature. They have not allowed us to debate this bill. They are perpetrating a hoax.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Bring yourselves to order.

First of all, that is not a point of order. I am here only at your insistence, and I go by the standing orders. The standing orders are quite clear.

The second point is that only the person who moved the bill could make a motion to put it into some other committee.

Mr Colle: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to move unanimous consent that this bill proceed through second and third readings. By unanimous consent you could—

The Acting Speaker: I think the member is asking for unanimous consent, rather than moving it. Is there consent? There is not consent.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Colle: It's a phony bill. It's a hoax. You're a fraud.

The Acting Speaker: I would ask the member for Eglinton-Lawrence to withdraw those remarks.

Mr Colle: I will not withdraw that. This has been the second time that members perpetrated a fraud—

The Acting Speaker: I name the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, Mr Colle.

Mr Colle was escorted from the chamber.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier, when the request was made for this to go to committee of the whole, was there not a request for a vote on that, or at least a voice vote to report to committee of the whole? I don't think that occurred.

The Acting Speaker: That is not a point of order, but because there seems to be a bit of problem, I would like to explain that standing order 96 says that is what will happen.

WORKFARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 6, standing in the name of Mr Maves. Mr Maves has moved private member's notice of motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1211 to 1216.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Sterling, Norman W.
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Turnbull, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wilson, Jim
Guzzo, Garry J.	O'Toole, John	Wood, Bob
Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.	Young, David

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Levac, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Marchese, Rosario
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Martel, Shelley
Boyer, Claudette	Hampton, Howard	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Kormos, Peter	Phillips, Gerry
Cordiano, Joseph	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Di Cocco, Caroline	Lankin, Frances	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 33; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

All matters relating to private members' business having been completed, I do now leave the chair and the House resumes at 1:30.

The House recessed from 1219 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HUMBER RIVER REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): In 1997, the Harris government decided to close North-

western General Hospital in my riding, but when they closed it, they forgot to make certain that the health care services in my community were still protected.

Since 1997, my community of York South-Weston has been feeling the effects of that hospital closure. We are in a crisis situation. We are a severely underserviced area in terms of health care. Not only do we lack health services in general, but our Humber River Regional Hospital has the dubious distinction of being on critical bypass more than any other Toronto area hospital. More than anywhere else in this city, the people of my riding are without local emergency services. This cannot continue. Something has to be done. Health care services in York South-Weston have been ignored for far too long.

Recently, the Humber River Regional Hospital put forward a proposal to restructure health services in my community. The centrepiece of their proposal is the building of a new superhospital. This proposal is still being investigated and discussed.

I will support any plan that restores the health services our community desperately needs, but let me be very clear. I will not support a plan that leads to the further reduction in services in my community or a plan that starves our community of the health care services it needs now.

I will also not support a process that restructures Humber River Regional Hospital without community input. Humber River Regional Hospital is a community hospital. Our community deserves better than this and they deserve to have a say.

JUDICIAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I rise before you today to speak about a subject that is of deep concern to my constituents of Scarborough Centre and myself, and it's that concern of criminal justice.

On Tuesday, April 18, 2000, I introduced a controversial private member's bill that was called the Judicial Accountability Act. The bill required local justices to keep records of their sentences for the Attorney General to present to this House. The bill also outlined that the Legislature may recommend to the Governor in Council of Canada as to who should be appointed to the Supreme Court of Canada.

Politicians need to be held accountable, but we're not the only ones who effect change in the lives of the people of Ontario. The legal community must understand that they too need to be held accountable for the decisions they make.

In an article in the *Globe and Mail* on Wednesday, April 18, 2001, Attorney General David Young stated, "There are a lot of things that we do well in terms of law and order." I agree with his observation. The Mike Harris government has done much to protect all Ontarians, but we must not be afraid of making changes to help protect our neighbourhoods in Scarborough Centre and all across the province, unlike Dalton McGuinty and his federal cousins in Ottawa who continue to flip-flop and waffle

on important law-and-order issues. Quite frankly, in my opinion, the Liberals just don't get it.

BUDGET

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Although yesterday's budget succeeded in maintaining the ongoing corporate love affair between Mike Harris and his very select group of wealthy friends, it was a slap in the face for northerners.

Once again, this government has turned its back on the people living north of Parry Sound. Once again, Mike Harris refuses to increase the northern health travel grant and treat northern cancer patients like southern cancer patients. Once again, there was no mention of increased funding for capital construction or equipment costs for northern hospitals, like the Sudbury Regional Hospital. Once again, there is no commitment to an economic diversification strategy for northern Ontario.

But most shocking in yesterday's budget was the reality that this government has not funded the northern medical school by one cent, but they had \$60 million for a new university in Durham. Most frightening is the fact that the government has not committed one penny to physician recruitment and retention strategies in northern Ontario.

Perhaps Mike Harris should talk to the 40,000 people in Sudbury who do not have a doctor, perhaps he should talk to the 40,000 in Thunder Bay who don't have a family doctor or perhaps he should talk to the 8,000 in his own riding of North Bay who don't have a doctor before he jumps in bed with his rich corporate friends and gives them grotesque tax breaks that are 25% lower than anywhere else in the United States.

The reality is that this is a payback for Harris's wealthy corporate friends and a slap in the face to people living in northern Ontario.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): At a time when people are expecting facts and plain talk in health care, the opposition Liberals are offering spin and numbers that are not only fuzzy but downright laughable and irresponsible. Last week the member for Parkdale-High Park suggested that most of the improvements in health care over the last few years have been paid for by—guess who?—the federal government.

First of all, as every Ontarian now knows, Ontario pays for 86% of its health care costs; the federal Liberals just 14 cents out of each dollar. Any extra dollar coming from Ottawa over the past few years has been not only new money but a partial restoration of the transfers the Chrétien Liberals have slashed in the first place. Giving the federal Liberals credit for health care funding is like giving an arsonist credit for coming back to the fire with a bucket of water. Let's not forget that those dollars never would have come back to the people of Ontario,

were it not for the continued and persistent demands of Mike Harris and his caucus.

Unfortunately, the opposition Liberals did not support Premier Harris in his attempts to restore funding. The opposition Liberals claim that they are not joined at the hip with the federal Liberals, just cousins. The citizens of our province can count on this government for responsibility and accountability. Surely the opposition can be responsible in providing some accuracy in the facts they present to the public.

HERB CARNEGIE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'd like to say a few words about an outstanding Canadian, Herb Carnegie. I was pleased, along with over 1,000 people, to attend a ceremony where the North York Centennial Centre was renamed the Herbert H. Carnegie Centennial Centre. Herb, in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s was an outstanding hockey player here in Canada, as you would probably be aware, Mr Speaker.

Many who played with him believed he clearly should have been in the NHL. But he is black. There were many around at that time who felt that the reason he didn't make it to the NHL was because of his colour. In spite of that, he went on to be an extremely successful business person. He started, I think, Canada's first hockey school. He was senior champ in golf a couple of times for Canada. But his most important contribution perhaps was that he started something called Future Aces, which is a program that ensures a code of positive values for young people. He has raised well over \$200,000 to provide funding for them.

He is a terrific role model for all of us but he is someone who I believe should be in the hall of fame. There is a program underway now to encourage the hall of fame to accept him, and I would encourage all of us to support that. Those who would like to, can get the petitions from the community partnerships at 416-395-6475. This is an outstanding Canadian. I think all of us would be proud to have him in the Hockey Hall of Fame.

OAK RIDGES MORAINE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Today members clearly witnessed how little this Conservative government cares about protecting the Oak Ridges moraine. In private members' hour this morning, members debated Bill 79, a bill put forward by the Conservative member for Scarborough East. While not nearly as strong as our NDP Bill 29, which freezes development on the Oak Ridges moraine until a policy statement is in place to deal with planning, and amend the Planning Act to allow for greater protection of natural areas in Ontario, my colleague Marilyn Churley, MPP for Toronto-Danforth, spoke in favour of Mr Gilchrist's bill in the hope that it would pass second reading and be sent to a legislative committee for full public hearings on this matter.

This bill is not going to a legislative committee after all and there won't be full public hearings. The member for Scarborough East, Mr Gilchrist, is directly responsible for that. When it was time for him to ask for his bill to be sent to a legislative committee for full hearings and a full review, the member instead specifically chose to send his bill to committee of the whole, where it will never be seen, called or dealt with again.

The member for Scarborough East had it in his power to have his bill dealt with. His decision to deep-six his own bill must clearly be seen as a betrayal of all those people who care about the Oak Ridges moraine and were led to believe the member was serious in trying to protect it. To all those who care about the moraine, I hope you understand how fully you have been betrayed. This government and the member for Scarborough East do not care one whit about protecting the Oak Ridges moraine. We saw proof of that this morning.

1340

LARISSA VINGILIS-JAREMKO

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): I rise today to explain an accomplishment of one of my constituents. Her name is Larissa Vingilis-Jaremkko, and she is a student at Sir Wilfrid Laurier school in London.

She has been awarded the outstanding award from the TD Canada Trust Scholarship for Outstanding Community Leadership. She is one of 20 Canadians to have been awarded such an honour in 2001, and one of only seven high school students from Ontario who have won this award. On Tuesday, May 8, she was in Ottawa to accept this honour, a scholarship with a value of up to \$50,000.

I am proud to stand in the Legislature today to recognize this outstanding achievement and congratulate Larissa for her extraordinary efforts. She is a role model for her peers. She has certainly displayed leadership to her classmates, friends and teachers.

It is important that we all recognize the efforts of young teenagers, as they will form the future of this great province. It is also important to recognize the generous donation on behalf of TD Canada Trust in offering these scholarships to students across Canada.

I am proud to have a future leader in my riding receive this prestigious award. I know that in Ontario the Harris government is creating the conditions for people to succeed. I am proud to stand in the Legislature today to tell of this success story.

I ask that all members of the Legislature join me in congratulating Larissa Vingilis-Jaremkko on her significant achievement.

BUDGET

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I have in my hand the 2001 Ontario provincial budget. Rarely if ever in my experience have I had a public document that was so much about conferring private benefit. That in this year of sharply reduced economic

growth this province, this government, is about to, under these circumstances of lower growth and reduced revenues, confer a multi-billion-dollar corporate tax benefit so that our corporate tax rate will be lower than Mississippi and Alabama is unbelievable to me. Particularly when the people of the Ottawa Valley tell me that what they want is more public investment in home care, in their hospitals, in upgrades to their water and sewage treatment facilities, it is, to me at least as a long-time member of this Legislature, an example of government with simply wrong-headed priorities.

I see in the budget that we're going to privatize the ownership of the Province of Ontario Savings Office—no surprise, I suppose, since two years we privatized the confidential records of that provincially owned bank.

But my biggest concern is the truly revolutionary departure in this budget about funding private schools. The member from Waterloo North and I particularly, with our friend from Thunder Bay, know precisely how incredibly dangerous and radical is this policy. And if there's anybody in this House who thinks that this program and funding are anything like what is being suggested in this budget, you're dreaming in Technicolor. This is an enormously dangerous departure that, among other things, is going to have terrible impacts on the public school system and is going to cost vastly more money than the \$300 million you were talking about in yesterday's budget.

BATTLE OF THE ATLANTIC

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): This past weekend I was very honoured to attend a memorial service in Peterborough for the Battle of the Atlantic.

In 1939, Canada possessed only a few dozen Canadian-registered merchant ships, a single flotilla of destroyers and a single squadron of modern military flying boats. No one would have predicted that from this tiny beginning Canada's forces would go on to play a large and significant part in the Atlantic war, and that the Canadian merchant marine would carry cargoes around the world.

Bridging the Atlantic was the key to strategic supply, and it was in maintaining the Atlantic lifeline that Canadian naval and air personnel played an increasingly vital role.

To transport safely the vast amounts of goods and troops that were needed, ship movements had to be organized and controlled. In August 1939, Canadian-registered merchant ships and ships in Canadian ports passed from the control of their owners into the control of the Royal Canadian Navy, the RCN, which would determine routes and departures. Shipping on the more important and vulnerable routes was placed in convoy as the best means to regulate traffic and provide protection from both sea and air.

Escort work would remain the RCN's chief responsibility for the duration of the war. It was onerous and dangerous work, and Canadians shared in the worst

hardship experienced in the war at sea, the Battle of the Atlantic. Thank you, veterans, for your past and ongoing commitment to our country.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CREUTZFELDT-JAKOB DISEASE

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Yesterday I advised the Legislature about the potential Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease situation at Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital in Windsor. I can report to this House that ministry staff have been in contact with the medical officer of health of the Windsor-Essex county health unit, the CEO of Hotel-Dieu Grace Hospital and Health Canada.

We have learned from the hospital that some medical instruments are shared with three other institutions on a routine basis. These hospitals are the Windsor Regional Hospital, the London Health Sciences Centre and St Joseph's Health Centre in London. Upon hearing about this, I have directed ministry staff to work with the four hospitals now, and the health units in London and Windsor, to ensure that the hospitals carry out a risk assessment of the situation as it pertains to these shared medical instruments and respond appropriately.

We continue to work closely with the hospitals, the public health units and the federal government on this matter. A teleconference of all affected parties is scheduled for later this afternoon. An action plan will be developed at that time.

I am grateful to all MPPs we've been in contact with on this matter and to all the personnel who are providing their assistance in this matter as well.

I will continue to monitor the situation very closely, and I will provide the Legislature with regular updates.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I thank the minister for informing the House about this most recent development. I know that his ministry staff have been working with our local officials, and I want to pay tribute to those local officials—our medical officer of health and others—who have been doing an enormous task. It's a serious situation, but I understand the risks are minuscule and all levels of government are co-operating.

One thing I do want to say to the minister: it's also my understanding that there are some significant costs associated with this, and I know the ministry will look at those issues, not only the cost to Hotel-Dieu Grace but now to Windsor Regional, the London Health Sciences Centre and St Joseph's Health Centre in terms of their equipment and what may be needed in terms of equipment and also the additional costs associated with this on the operating side. This will continue to unfold.

My other understanding is that the sterilization process of the equipment itself tends to damage it, so it's difficult at this time to get an accurate assessment of all the costs

associated with this unfortunate situation. I know the minister is sensitive to those concerns, and I believe he will respond appropriately when it comes time to replace that equipment and to deal with the additional operating costs which I don't believe anybody could have anticipated.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I add my words of thanks to the minister for the ongoing monitoring and the timely updates, both from his staff, who have been in contact with us over the course of the morning, and here in the Legislature.

I was going to raise the issue of attendant costs for the institutions. That has been raised by my friend from the official opposition. I see the minister nodding in agreement that it is an issue the ministry will look at, and we'll expect there will be an appropriate response there.

1350

As an aside, Minister, I think one of the things that struck home for me when I heard the second part of this development today—the sharing of equipment among four regional hospitals from Windsor and London—was the fact that as we deal, not frequently but more frequently than used to be, with cases of rare diseases, the whole practice of the way we have driven hospitals to share various services—and equipment and equipment sterilization is just one of them—may be something we need to look at from the perspective of public health. I recognize there would be costs attendant on that, but I would ask the minister to take a look within the ministry if any policies have been set that guide hospitals in this, or whether it is something that has been driven at the local hospital level, often as a result of fiscal realities they face, which have just gotten a little worse with the hammer of legislation over them. I think it is an issue that from a reasonable perspective, looking at good public health policy, we might want to revisit as a province.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin, the member for Toronto-Danforth will know that she was named this morning. She is not allowed in the Legislature this afternoon as well. I would ask her to kindly leave the chamber.

Interjection.

The Speaker: No, I can't recognize you. You've already been thrown out this morning.

Interjection.

The Speaker: You'll be here alone if you're here tomorrow. Make it tomorrow. That would be great.

Ms Churley left the chamber.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question today is for the Minister of Education. I want to talk to you about your private school voucher program. In May 2000, you were asked about this kind of

proposal when it was first put forward by Stockwell Day. You said, and I quote—

Interjections.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I can understand that your colleagues are rather defensive today, but this is a very important issue and I'd ask you to address it. You said, "The \$300 million that it would cost would have to come from other programs or from taxpayers' pockets. There's no magic money tree."

We on this side of the House are curious, on behalf of working families. We want to know where you found this magic money tree, and, if none exists, can you tell us why you decided to take money that's badly needed to reduce class sizes, replace mouldy portables and buy textbooks—why have you taken money that could be used in those ways and instead decided to reward those who want to send their children to Upper Canada College?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Actually, I thought my colleagues were rather feisty today.

The honourable member is quite right: there is no magic money tree. What there is is management of our fiscal resources so we can put our money into priority areas like public education, like health care. That's where we've been putting our resources. We increased education spending again this year, over \$360 million, because we know those resources are needed in our classrooms.

Our commitment to the public education system is very clear. We are also very clear about making that system better, about setting higher standards, about helping our students meet those standards, about giving school boards the ability to use those resources to meet local priorities. That's what our commitment to public education is and will continue to be.

Mr McGuinty: That was wonderful, Madam Minister, and you delivered it very well and it was well rehearsed. But I want you to focus on the issue at hand. We're talking about taking money that is desperately needed in public education and sending it over to our private schools. We think that is wrong. We think we've got a responsibility to help remedy some of the problems that you, through your policies, have created in public education.

I ask you again: why is this a good thing for public education? Why is it a good idea for taxpayers to take their dollars and give them to parents who want to send their kids to Upper Canada College? Why is that in the interest of public education?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member likes to say he supports public education. Parents said we needed change in public education, we needed higher standards, we needed a better curriculum, we needed testing. Do you know what? The honourable member spoke and voted against every one of those improvements to public education. So I've got to tell you, his so-called commitment has to be questioned.

Secondly, neither I nor anybody else in my caucus has to rehearse any commitment to public education. We have made new investments in the classrooms. We have made new investment in the system. We continue to meet the commitments we said we would make.

One of the other things we think is very important is that we respect parental choice, something the honourable member tried to say he thought he was in support of—maybe, maybe not. We respect parental choice. If he wants to tell the Hindu families, the Jewish families, the Christian families and the Muslim families in his riding and the ridings of some of his other colleagues that he doesn't respect their parental choice, then let him do so.

Mr McGuinty: You can cloak this in whatever guise you so choose, but you've introduced vouchers into the province of Ontario. If you give taxpayer dollars to parents for them to send their kids to private schools, that's a voucher—pure, plain and simple.

I want you to speak to this issue very directly. You haven't answered this yet. I thought that at heart you were a defender of public education. I thought that at heart, when it came right down to it, you believed in public education, that you understood the value of public education to our working families. This makes it evident that you do not. But it's never too late. Tell us once again, because we're looking to understand this, why is it that vouchers that will enable parents to pay to send their kids to Upper Canada College are a good thing for Ontario's public education?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The biggest threat to public education in this province is people who believe that political protest can happen in our classrooms. Where was the honourable member and his members when teachers were on the picket line and parents were saying to those teachers, "Please go back into the classroom. Please stop disrupting my child's education"? They were out there encouraging those teachers to stay on the picket line, to delay in the disruption to education.

When the task force on extracurricular activities made a recommendation that one of the biggest problems in classrooms on extracurricular activities was the fact that some unions were advocating, were pressuring, were encouraging some of their members not to do extracurricular activities, I noticed the Liberal Party didn't seem to think that recommendation was an important recommendation for the unions and the government to accept.

We put on the table on Monday a very important compromise for the public education system to make sure we had extra remediation for our kids, to make sure we had extracurricular—

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

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask for unanimous consent to allow Mr Kwinter, the member for York Centre, to make a statement on whether all Liberals agree with—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Is there unanimous consent? I heard some noes.

New question.

Mr McGuinty: Clearly the members of the government have decided the best defence is to be offensive. The minister cannot defend the indefensible.

Minister, I know you're having difficulty grappling with this and defending it, but let's focus for a minute on the cost. You are telling us that this will cost \$300 million when fully implemented. Your own finance official told us yesterday that this number is based entirely on current private school enrolment.

Let's be honest. Your \$3,500 voucher will act as an incentive. That's how the markets work. I shouldn't have to tell you that. That means it's going to lead to a growing rate of enrolment in our private schools. That means that the \$300 million is clearly a very conservative estimate. We believe we're looking at close to half a billion dollars that is going to be the net cost of the new voucher program you've introduced in Ontario.

1400

Minister, why is it that at a time when we have no money for English as a second language, no money for special education, no money to take kids out of mouldy portables and put them into schools, no money for textbooks, you've got half a billion dollars for private schools in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: This is indeed a red-letter day. I've actually heard the honourable member have concern about public expenditure. This is a first.

The honourable member likes to think that he is in favour of public education, and yet every time we have put forward improvements, every time we have brought forward curriculum, high standards, testing, every time we did that he opposed that. When we sat there and increased money for special education, when we sat there and decreased the number of portables our children had to sit in because of the neglect of the system his government left, did he support that and did he encourage that? No. He went out and said that the new funding, those higher standards were somehow some attack on the system. When we put on the table a significant package of new initiatives, a significant compromise that can help restore extracurricular and remediation back in our schools, we don't hear the honourable member—

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

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Hon Mr Young: I was just wondering, if the member from Hamilton East is intent upon heckling throughout question period, perhaps he could regain his seat.

The Speaker: I thank the Attorney General. He controls the law outside of here; I control it in, and I will do it. I thank him very much.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. If he wants to argue with me, he will be named. I don't know if the Attorney General wants to be kicked out, but he will be if he continues to argue with me. I will look after it.

Supplementary. Sorry for the interruption. Leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I can appreciate why the government members are making every effort to bail out the minister. She is clearly very uncomfortable with this policy.

You want to take half a billion dollars and put it into private schools. I want to review the current state of affairs for you one more time. We have turmoil in our schools. We have stressed-out teachers. We've suffered from an absence of extracurricular activities, in some cases for over two years now. You have slashed English-as-a-second-language programs. You have slashed special education programs. You have slashed adult education programs. There are today in Ontario—and this is a matter that is very shameful, Minister—over 35,000 students waiting to be assessed for special education by board psychologists. That is the real state of affairs in public education. So I ask you again, why is it that you have half a billion dollars for private schools, but there's no money for pressing needs in public education?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member likes to inflate figures. Those are not the figures the finance minister put forward in his budget yesterday. But here are a few other figures for you, honourable member. What about the \$12.9 billion in public education spending that today is almost \$13.8 billion with our new enhancements? What about the over 360 million new dollars we've put into public education this year alone, more money boards can use for special education, more money they can use for ESL, more money they can use to decrease the number of portables?

We respect and believe the public education system is a foundation for this province. That's why we have increased—

The Speaker: Order. The member for Windsor-St Clair, please take the sign down. Sorry for the interruption. Minister of Education.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I know the honourable members across the way don't want to hear about the increase in investments we've put in the public education system, about the improvements we are making to the public education system, and about the fact that we respect parental choice, obviously something the honourable member has a little difficulty grasping.

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

Mr McGuinty: Minister, it's now up to you to explain to the people of Ontario why it was that shortly over a month ago you stood dead against this. You said, "No way, not now, not ever." That's your responsibility now, to explain that to the people of Ontario.

If you won't believe my figures, then I'll refer you to Annie Kidder and the People for Education and her most recent report. Based on her survey of parents right across the province, she tells us that 66% of schools reported

that students have to share textbooks. She tells us that, province-wide, parents are raising at least \$25 million a year now for things like classroom supplies, for things like computers, library books, textbooks. She tells us that 42% of schools reported fundraising for classroom supplies. She tells us that fundraising for library books was reported by 50% of schools.

I say to you again, Madam Minister, given the state of public education, given the damage that you have inflicted on public education, given the loss of confidence that you've inspired in public education in the minds of our parents, why is it that if you have half a billion dollars to spend, you can't put it in public education and instead you want to put it in private schools?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again, the honourable member likes to throw around figures, so let me throw around some figures. We have put into public education more than half a billion dollars. We've put over \$350 million into public education this year alone. I know he likes to ignore that.

The other thing he likes to conveniently ignore is that his own Liberal Party in Ottawa said that this kind of parental choice was fine. I didn't hear the honourable member standing up and disagreeing with that.

Secondly, funding independent schools is something that many provinces do. I haven't heard the honourable member stand up and disagree with them.

In this party and in this government, parental choice, giving parents the information they need to make intelligent decisions about schools, is something we believe in. We respect that. We've brought forward initiatives to increase parental voices and choices in the public system. We are respecting those who want to go into Montessori schools, Jewish schools, Hindu schools, Christian schools. Obviously, the honourable member does not respect—

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

New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Education, we now see where those buzzwords that Conservatives and Liberals use about choice in education lead us to. They lead us to vouchers for private education.

Minister, you're actually outdoing George Bush, who says that in the United States he will give a \$1,500 voucher for people who want to withdraw their children from public schools and put them in private schools. You're going to offer a \$3,500 voucher. So you're even going to outdo George Bush.

What is worse, this is money that our public schools desperately need. So I want you to tell people across Ontario how you justify taking \$3,500 per child out of public school funding and handing it over to parents as an enticement voucher to put their children into private schools. How do you justify that when you've already got problems in the public school system?

Hon Mrs Ecker: Unlike the NDP, we did not take money out of the public education system. We have been putting money into the public education system. Theirs is the party that brought in the social contract to take money

out of teachers' wages, to take money out of the school system. We have been increasing public education funding in this province because we believe it is a very important foundation both in terms of the economic prosperity for this province and the quality of life in this province. That's why we have put those commitments forward.

The budget is very clear. We have made new investments in public education. We're going to continue to make new investments in public education. No one is taking money from the public education system to do anything.

Mr Hampton: The Minister of Education knows that there are tens of thousands of students out there who cannot get the special education resources they need. You know that you've got thousands of classrooms out there where you do not have a full set of textbooks. You know that you've got school boards out there that are laying off music teachers, laying off phys-ed teachers, laying off full-time librarians. You know that you've got school boards out there that have no idea how they are going to find the budget to do all the things they need to do if they're going to deliver a quality education to their students.

They could have desperately used that \$300 million. Instead, you're going to use it as an enticement for parents who want to withdraw their children from the public schools and put them into private schools. That's what it boils down to, Minister. Your \$300 million is not something neutral. It will erode public schools. It will entice parents to take their children out of public schools and put them into private schools.

Minister, I'm asking you to do what the majority of people want in this province: put the \$300 million into the public school funding so parents can have the kind of quality education they want. That's the right thing to do. It's not too late. Back off. Will you do it?

1410

Hon Mrs Ecker: This government has already put more than \$300 million into the public education system this year because we believe in its importance, because there are members of this caucus who have children in the public system, who have grandchildren in the public system, who have wives and husbands and daughters and sons who are teachers in the public system. So for that member to sit here and say that somehow or other we are sitting here presiding over the demise of public education when we tried to bring back support workers into the schools in Toronto so that the public education system could continue, so those kids could have the education they deserve—who stood in this House and denied those children that opportunity? The honourable member's party. So much for his commitment to public education.

Mr Hampton: Minister, just so you know, our argument was that the problem is with your funding formula. The funding formula for public education is not adequate. That's why we see so many labour disputes. That's why we see so many teachers leaving Toronto. And that's why, in part, you see parents taking their

children out of public schools and putting them into private schools, and you're going to further that, worsen it; in fact, you're going to entice them to do it. That is what is so wrong about this, and that is what is so wrong about the buzzwords "choice in education" that you and the Liberals use so frequently.

But, Minister, I recognize we won't get anywhere with you in the House, so we're going to take this outside the Legislature and we're going to sponsor public forum after public forum to show you how wrong you are.

I just want to ask you one question: does it make you happy to know that the public education system is being underfunded and is being eroded from within while you give your well-off friends money so they can take their children and put them into private schools?

Hon Mrs Ecker: What makes me happy is to know that this party and this government, in 1995 and again in 1999, ran on a platform to strengthen and improve the public education system, to put more money in the classroom, to bring in higher standards, to have a more rigorous curriculum, to bring in testing for students, a comprehensive teacher testing program so that we could give parents the information they need to make intelligent decisions about how well their school is doing. This party campaigned and is delivering on a plan for education quality reform in the public education system that is going to reward those who do better, who improve, because that's what parents want and that's what children want. That is the commitment of this party, that is the commitment of this Minister of Education, and nothing we have done this week is taking away from that.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission has now approved your sell-off of the Bruce nuclear station to British Energy. That means there is one step to go in this process: the final business dealings.

Since last October, New Democrats have insisted that the Provincial Auditor ought to see this deal and ought to be able to tell us whether this is a good deal for the taxpayers and the hydro ratepayers of Ontario. Your government and your members of that committee have held that up. You've prevented the auditor from looking at this deal.

I'm asking you to be accountable to the taxpayers, finally, to live up to your words. Will you ensure that before this deal is finally done, the documents are turned over to the Provincial Auditor so that he can assure the people of Ontario that this is a good deal for taxpayers and a good deal for ratepayers, not just a good deal for your corporate friends? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I released this deal some eight or nine months ago, first to the CBC, who requested it. The auditor is welcome to have the deal. I understand he's saying he's phoning around.

It was your wife, the honourable Shelley Martel, who asked originally for the deal, and I released the deal, so I don't know what the honourable member is talking about.

Mr Hampton: I want to point out to the Minister of Energy that under this government's proposal, the Provincial Auditor will not be allowed to see the details of this deal until it is signed, sealed and delivered. In other words, your government has said you will not allow the Provincial Auditor to see it until it's a done deal.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): So much for accountability and transparency.

Mr Hampton: No transparency, no accountability to the taxpayers and the ratepayers of the province.

The Premier, when this deal was signed, said he didn't mind if it went before a committee and was examined in detail. What are you worried about now? Why won't you let the Provincial Auditor see the documents of this deal until after it is signed and completed and nothing can be done about it? What are you afraid of, Minister? Where's your accountability now?

Hon Mr Wilson: This is a terrific deal for the people of Ontario. The only ones I can find opposed to it are the New Democratic Party and supporters of the New Democratic Party. Even the Power Workers' Union and the other union of professional electrical engineers own 5% of this new company. So you're out of sync even with the labour movement, which took an equity position in Bruce. They're happy for the jobs.

I dare him to go up to the Bruce community and talk like this in the Bruce community, where hundreds of jobs have been saved, where \$437 million worth of British Energy/Bruce Power's money is going into bringing back two of the four units that are not in service right now, creating hundreds of new jobs in the Bruce community, economic opportunity and clean power that doesn't hurt the atmosphere for the people of Ontario.

I don't see what's wrong with any of that. Go up to the Bruce community and take your theories up there. I've released the deal. There's tremendous transparency, and I have no idea what you're talking about.

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health, and my question is about this government's continued attack on our public hospitals. Minister, your government's record has been a litany of sheer chaos in our hospitals. We've had cutbacks and record bed closures and 10,000 nurses laid off. We've had long waiting lists for surgery and emergency rooms closed and critically ill patients turned away, and we have had inquests into patient deaths.

Now you're launching the second attack wave. Ontario hospitals told you they needed \$650 million just to keep their doors open to patients who need their care. They said that without new money there would be more

bed closures and more emergency room shutdowns and more nurses laid off. Your response yesterday was to cut their budgets by \$100 million.

Minister, for six long years we've been asking your government the same question: what do you want hospitals to cut? Do you want more emergency room shutdowns? Do you want more beds closed? Do you want more nurses laid off? What do you want these hospitals to cut?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member is wrong. She is wrong when she says that we are cutting the budgets of hospitals in this budget. She is wrong when she says that there is a \$100-million shortfall. She is wrong when she says that we are not funding the health care system to the extent that is necessary. This budget, a budget of which we on this side of the House are all proud, is a budget that increases yet again, because the need is there, health care funding by 5.4%, consistent with other provinces in the Dominion of Canada, consistent with the growth in demand and utilization and population growth and inflation. Hospitals are sharing in that growth.

So you are wrong when you say hospitals are receiving a cut. You are wrong, wrong, wrong.

Mrs McLeod: It's the hospitals that have to deal with the \$100 million that they are telling you you are cutting from their budgets. Your government wants to talk about accountability for these hospitals, so let's talk about accountability, Minister. Let's use your words. Let's talk about accountability on the front lines.

I want to know who is accountable when the Greater Niagara hospital is going to have to lay off even more nurses because they don't have enough money to keep them on staff. I want to know who is accountable in Ottawa or London or Hamilton or Sarnia when the beds are closed and the waiting lists for surgery are getting longer. I want to know who's going to be accountable when the town of Picton loses its hospital because they can't afford to keep it open. I want to know who's going to be accountable when the emergency rooms in Toronto are closed more than 40% of the time because their hospitals have no room to care for patients. I want to know who was accountable when Joshua Fleuelling and Kyle Martyn died.

Accountability, Minister, is a two-way street. You're one of the partners. You can't keep cutting hospital budgets and taking no responsibility for the consequences.

I ask you again, what are you prepared to see cut in our hospital services to patients?

1420

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member is wrong when she says that we are prepared to cut the hospital budgets. In the situation she mentioned in greater Niagara, my understanding is that the nurses are not being cut, they are being reassigned, and as a result of the collective agreement there has to be a severance and then a rehiring. So if she considers that a cut, that's a very strange definition of a cut. She is wrong when she says

that we are responsible for nurses being fired or cut from the system. She is wrong in all of her suppositions, and when you're wrong in your suppositions, you're wrong in your conclusions.

So I encourage the honourable member to stick to the facts, and if she has a problem with the way we're spending on our side of the House, with government spending, I encourage her—when we've put an extra \$6 billion into the health care system on behalf of the taxpayers of Ontario since we got elected—to encourage her federal cousins to do their bit as well. With \$6 billion from our side and \$1 billion from their side, we know who is reinvesting in the health care system in Ontario, and it ain't her federal kissing cousins.

CENTRAL NORTH CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Correctional Services. An announcement was made on Saturday, May 5, that Management and Training Corp was selected to be the private partner to run the Central North Correctional Centre, which is in my riding of Simcoe North. Critics who oppose the privatization of this facility have claimed that privately run jails are less safe than publicly run facilities and that those corporations that operate prisons can't be held to high standards. Minister, how will you ensure that this is not the case in this particular facility?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I thank the member from Simcoe North very much for the question. I know he has had a very strong and passionate interest in this particular facility and this particular question, because of course the facility is located in his riding and he needs to speak to the constituents of the riding of Simcoe North—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sampson: Well, as I say to the member opposite who has been clapping and applauding and barking, he's been speaking quite aggressively and consistently to the members of his riding, including yesterday, when he took the winner of that contract to his riding and in front of 200 to 300 people explained to them how this particular operator was going to help us run the safest and securest facility, the most cost-effective—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sampson: They said they were welcoming him, they were happy to have him here because, I say to the member opposite who is barking across the floor, here's a private corporation that's going to bring 500 new jobs into this community. If it had been your choice, you'd have locked them out.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you for that response, Minister. It's reassuring to know that our private partner will have to meet the high standards and will have its performance measured and reported publicly.

I understand that Management and Training Corp currently operates 13 correctional facilities, most of

which are medium-security facilities. Penetanguishene correctional centre is maximum security. Will the private sector partner be able to operate the facility safely and effectively?

Hon Mr Sampson: I thank the member very much for the question. To continue on with the answer that I was giving earlier, this will be a very safely and securely run facility because it will be run by a US corporation that has some experience in this.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sampson: All right, I say to the members opposite, we now clearly understand where you stand on job creation: no private sector jobs for Penetanguishene. That's the Liberal position: they don't want any private sector workers in Penetanguishene; they want them all government-run, they want to have government employees. In fact, I say to the members of this chamber, if it had been the Liberal government over on this side, there would be all public sector workers, and the private sector people would all be unemployed. That's the definition of prosperity to my friends across the floor.

We believe in job creation on this side of the floor. We believe in working with the private sector to create meaningful jobs and employment and opportunity for hard-working families in Ontario.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is again to the Minister of Health. Minister, 25% of the people of this province have no family doctor—that means that more than 2.5 million people have no family doctor they can call—and 109 communities are officially underserviced for family doctors. That means, by your own ministry figures, there are not enough doctors in 109 communities. Those communities need at least 500 family doctors right now, today. In northern Ontario, there is a desperate need for 167 medical specialists, and you don't even keep track of how many specialists you need in southern Ontario.

Not having a doctor, not being able to get care, is the single biggest concern that people in my community have, and I believe every member in this House would tell you exactly the same thing. Yet there is not one word in yesterday's budget, not one word about doctor shortages and not one cent to start fixing this constantly growing, urgent problem. Minister, do you not understand how desperate this situation is or do you just not care that 2.5 million people have no family doctor?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Maybe I can remind the honourable member of another document that was presented to this House, which was the speech from the throne, which very particularly and very specifically dealt with the physician shortage issue, both in the short term and in the long term. Part of it is the medical school announcement. This government got off previous government's fences and said we are going to be building a new medical school for northern Ontario. Of course, this was elec-

trifying in the north. When Diane Marleau, a Liberal Sudbury MP, says, "I want us to give credit to Mike Harris and his team for this great decision that was made," I get some comfort from the fact that the federal Liberal government understands the importance of this decision.

The honourable member should know well that there is money in the current budget of the Ministry of Health that deals with a lot of different aspects of the physician shortage. That's why we're funding family health networks, for gosh sakes, so that the rosters of doctors are there 24 hours a day, seven days a week, for each and every Ontarian. We've put our money where our mouth—

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

Mrs McLeod: It's all still total fluff. We know what was in the speech from the throne. It was only two weeks ago that you went out with a flurry of wonderful sounding announcements about a new medical school and about foreign-trained physicians getting faster opportunities to practise medicine in Ontario, and that's why we can't understand why there was no mention of either one in your budget yesterday. Didn't you know the Minister of Finance had no money for you? Was all that just for show? Did you think nobody would notice there was no money in the budget to do any of this?

I come back to medical school spaces. Two years ago your predecessor sent Dr McKendry out to see if there was a doctor shortage and he came back and said, "Yes, Elizabeth, we need 1,000 doctors." A year and a half ago an expert panel was sent out to bring you recommendations on how to deal with the shortage. You have recommendations from that expert panel sitting on your desk right now, and, Minister, one of those recommendations is that you should put in place 80 new first-year medical spots for this September. You told us yesterday there is not one new first-year medical spot for this September. Why did you not at least fund the 80 first-year medical school spots your own experts told you were needed?

Hon Mr Clement: I'm sorry, we're funding the tuition; we're funding the incentives; we're funding everything to do from top to bottom with attracting top-quality, excellent medical students to our institutions. So I make no apologies with our response to the McKendry report because we acted. We've said that if tuition's a problem, we'll be there, that if there are moving expenses, we'll be there, that if there's an attraction to a hospital that has to be beefed up, we'll be there. We have been there and we make no apologies for that. We're moving ahead with family health networks, so people will have access 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to family physicians. We are supporting the family physicians in Ontario.

We are moving ahead with the medical school. If the honourable member doesn't want to have regard for my announcement in this House pursuant to the speech from

the throne, perhaps she could have regard for the estimates that come out in just a few days' time.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question is directed to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As I'm sure you're aware, there has been extensive media coverage over the last few weeks about the possibility of West Nile virus entering the country from the US. As you know, cases of West Nile virus were reported throughout the northeast United States last year, but thankfully none of those cases were reported in Canada. I understand our local health units are concerned about the possibility of this virus entering Ontario. My constituents in Northumberland would like to know what steps our government is taking to ensure that public health safety is being protected here in the province of Ontario.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to thank the honourable member for Northumberland for his question on the West Nile virus. He is quite correct when he says that this is a risk to public health that we take very seriously. I want to inform this House that Ontario's chief medical officer of health has met with local health units to advise them on a public education strategy that has two components. One is source reduction because the virus is spread by mosquitoes; a reduction of mosquito breeding sites such as standing water on private property is essential. Also, there are personal protective measures that all citizens in Ontario can employ. We should obviously avoid mosquito bites. We should be wearing long sleeves in advance of this.

I want to stress to all members of this House that the risk to human health from the West Nile virus is relatively low. It's an infection that has flu-like symptoms. But that being said, we encourage people to take the necessary precautions.

1430

Mr Galt: My constituents would like to know what you're doing in terms of monitoring the possible entry of this disease into Ontario. Only two days ago, on May 8, Health Canada put out a news release stating that border communities, including Cornwall, Brockville and Kingston right here in Ontario, are most susceptible to the possible occurrence of the West Nile virus. Minister, can you assure this House that we're doing everything possible to monitor the entry of this disease into Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: Monitoring and communication certainly are our priorities. It's our priority to ensure that all communities, but particularly those closest to New York state where outbreaks occurred last year, are kept informed, and we want to be kept informed of any suspected cases.

We've made changes from last year's surveillance system to ensure quick and accurate reporting of cases. We're focusing on testing birds that have the most common incidence of carrying the virus; that includes all

birds in the crow family. Of course we're monitoring human cases of encephalitis and meningitis. We encourage the public to report sightings of dead crows, ravens or jays to their local health units. These will be picked up by the local health units and sent to the Canadian Co-operative Wildlife Health Centre to be dealt with either by Health Canada or the Canadian Food Inspection Agency laboratory.

We have a plan and part of it is communication and part of it is collaboration.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): If we could stop the clock for a quick minute, we have three honoured guests in the Speaker's gallery. We have two members of the Saskatchewan Legislature: Mr Andrew Thomson and Mr Dan D'Autremont. Accompanying them is Mr Viktor Kaczkowski, formerly one of our clerks and presently clerk assistant at the Saskatchewan Legislature.

WATER QUALITY

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): A question to the Minister of the Environment: The truth coming from the Walkerton inquiry is that Ministry of the Environment staff and even the Minister of Health himself told your government to take action on safe water before Walkerton happened, but you didn't.

Yesterday in the budget you tried to do some backfilling. Your government issued a press release claiming that \$25 million more was being devoted to clean, safe drinking water, but then we look at the details, and we find that of the \$25 million, \$3 million is going to brownfield development, \$4 million to implementation of the Gibbons report, \$5 million to SWAT teams that have nothing to do with clean drinking water, and in fact there's only \$6 million for Operation Clean Water. Minister, why would you issue a press release telling the people of Ontario that \$25 million more was devoted to clean drinking water when, by your own documents, it's not true?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): Our government is very pleased that the environment has been recognized as a priority. In response to the question from the leader of the third party, I think it's important to point out that since 1999 we have hired 130 new enforcement-related staff as part of Operation Clean Water and SWAT. As well, since 1999 we have enhanced our enforcement activities. There has been an increase in orders issued of 312%, tickets issued of 372%, and as the leader of the third party knows, we have the toughest fines and jail terms at the present time for polluters in Ontario.

Mr Hampton: The question was, why were you trying to tell people there was \$25 million going into Operation Clean Water when there's only \$6 million? That's the question. When you start citing your other statistics, Minister, when you say you hired back 100,

please acknowledge that you fired 1,000 before Walkerton happened. When you say you put more money in the budget, will you acknowledge that the budget now is lower than it was in 1995-96, 1996-97, 1997-98 and lower than it was in 1999-2000? You continue to cut the Ministry of the Environment budget even after Walkerton has happened. The \$6 million you're putting into the so-called Operation Clean Water doesn't even keep pace with inflation.

Minister, do more people have to die before you and your government get it? Clean water is a priority for the citizens of Ontario. Why isn't it a priority for you?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Clean water is a priority for our government. I cannot understand how the leader of the third party can possibly understand that SWAT teams and brownfield initiatives and Operation Clean Water and the implementation of the Val Gibbons report have nothing to do with clean water. They are all related to clean water.

Let me just share with you: We have seen an increase of 51% in the budget of the Ministry of the Environment since 1997-98. There is \$6 million for Operation Clean Water. There is \$5 million more to SWAT. There is \$3 million more for brownfields. There is \$4 million more for the Gibbons report, and \$7 million for initiatives that we will still announce.

Our government has moved forward in a way that we are ensuring that the people in this province have regulations and standards that go beyond anything any—

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

New question?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question to the Minister of the Environment. I should note to the minister that out of the 136 staff she talked about, unfortunately their Management Board made them all temporary staff with 18-month contracts. They'll be gone after that, when the pressure is off, although I will try to help her retain them.

I want to ask the minister about capital funding, however. If you combine the capital funding and the operating funding of your ministry, since you took office it is down today 56%. With the testimony coming out of the Walkerton inquiry pointing to the need for massive infusions of hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars in capital expenditure to ensure that our water treatment plants, sewage treatment plants and pipes are in the best possible condition to produce the water, with that before us and with David Lindsay saying you're going to need over \$9 billion to do the job, how is it that your government can justify leaving you with only \$5 million in the water protection fund this year when in fact it's hundreds upon hundreds of millions of dollars that will be required to assist municipalities in meeting their obligations to produce clean and safe water for the people of Ontario?

Hon Mrs Witmer: For the sake of correcting the record, I should let the member know that all the

members of the SWAT team are permanent. They will be continuing with their responsibilities.

But I think it's important to take a look at what is happening, and that is, money is flowing through SuperBuild. We have committed over \$1 billion in order to assist our municipal partners with strategic programs, including environmental initiatives. As you know, there's \$600 million over five years for the small, rural municipalities, there's \$250 million to help our larger municipalities, and there's another \$250 million to move forward on transportation initiatives in order that we can reduce gridlock and air emissions.

Mr Bradley: I'm dealing with the problem of water. I think the minister knows the tremendous problems out there with producing clean, safe water. Unfortunately, what you've mentioned are many funds from which you must take money for roads and you must take it to upgrade bridges or other infrastructure projects. I'm talking about those specifically related to the production of water. It could be that for the North Bay plant to have a proper plant might be \$30 million for one plant alone. Multiply that right across the province. Your Management Board has given you peanuts to deal with. They have over \$2 billion in tax cuts for the largest corporations in the province of Ontario. They've given you a pittance to be able to deal with these water projects.

It leads me to this conclusion. Let me ask the minister if I'm wrong in coming to this conclusion, and that is that by taking away all this money for water and sewer projects, all this money that must be invested, really what your Premier and your Treasurer want to do is hand over the keys to the water and sewer projects in this province, to the operation of waterworks in this province, to your friends in the private sector who show up to your fundraisers in such great numbers.

Hon Mrs Witmer: Perhaps the member opposite doesn't understand. He talks about money for capital. He should know that the money for capital is presently being administered by SuperBuild under OSTAR.

1440

VISITOR

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that members would want to join me in welcoming one of my favourite uncles to the Legislature today. My uncle Mike Keogh is in the members' gallery west.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It is not a point of order. I was wondering why the gentleman was clapping when you spoke. Now I know.

WORKFARE

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Earlier today we debated a resolution to support the expansion of Ontario Works placements. I was quite pleased to speak in favour of that resolution, because I

know first-hand from my community that this program helps both the participant and the community itself.

In my home riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton, the site of the old Royal Victoria Hospital is being transformed into a home to care for elderly people with long-term-care needs. There will also be a retirement facility that will help improve the quality of life for many elderly residents in the city of Barrie. Ontario Works participants have played a key role in making this happen. They have helped convert the site from an old hospital into a new home for seniors in my community. In turn, they have also developed skills that can help them go on and work at local construction sites in the Barrie area.

Minister, what progress has the government made in expanding its workfare program so that more communities can benefit?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We thought to create Ontario Works placements to provide people with some skills, some experience they could put down on their next job application so they could get some dignity contributing to their own community. The program has indeed been a tremendous success. We not only have met the targets that had been unmet in previous years, but we are making very solid progress on that.

I can tell the member opposite that in Simcoe county they've not just met the target, they've exceeded the target because of the hard work and dedication of a really tremendous group of people in Simcoe county. They have a great county council. They have great caseworkers and great folks there. That success is really phenomenal.

I can tell the member opposite that I visited Barrie and had the opportunity to talk to one placement. She told me what a huge difference the placement made in her job search, and that the one thing it got her that she wasn't able to get before—she opened her pocket and pulled out a piece of paper and unfolded it. It was her first job reference. It was someone recommending her for a job. The good news is that when she applied for the job, she got it.

Mr Tascona: One of the key areas I think this government needs to do a better job on in Ontario Works placements is the public sector. I can think of a number of good examples in my riding where public sector groups really need additional help and, in turn, would offer good experience to Ontario Works participants. We heard this morning that while the government has made some good first steps, there are still some areas where we need to do more.

Minister, what action are you committed to take to increase the number of placements in the public sector?

Hon Mr Baird: Like the member opposite, I think it is important that the Ontario government, the major employer in the public sector in Ontario, lead by example. We set a target of 750 people last year. We not only have met that target as an employer, to show a good example, but we've in fact exceeded it by more than 300. Particularly, my good friend John Snobelen, the Minister

of Natural Resources, has had participants working to preserve wetlands, maintain trails and restore damaged shorelines, helping to give a real benefit to our province by restoring some natural beauty.

I do think we can do more, though. I think we can provide more people with some experience. We can provide more people with some skill sets, and we can give people something—I'm going to say to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton that perhaps I didn't appreciate the confidence people can get, the self-esteem that can be increased. You can see it in Ontario Works participants each and every day when they participate in these programs.

We are satisfied with that success this year, but we want to increase the targets this coming year and do even more to help those who are left on the system.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a question for the Minister of Citizenship. I have in front of me the guidebook to the Ministry of Citizenship. It says that your job is to "coordinate provincial policies and programs which support immigrants."

How are you supporting immigrants when the whole world knows that we have the best-educated taxi drivers and pizza delivery people? We have a list of over 400 doctors, as well, who have passed the Ontario exams but are unable to practise while 109 of our communities go without doctors. We also have a list that includes technicians, scientists and engineers.

Your Premier promised six years ago that he would help those immigrants with professional degrees to quickly gain entry into professional life. That was never done. In fact, you've done the opposite. You've done cutting of immigrant services. Mr Minister, you've got the mandate. Why don't you help them?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): First of all, I want to acknowledge that the honourable member opposite has raised an issue which is of great concern to all Ontarians. We agree in all corners of this country and of this province with the importance of immigrants. In fact, Ontario receives far more immigrants than any other province and we're very proud of that fact. The concern that has been expressed, not only by the member opposite but by all members on this side of the House, is how little support we're getting from the federal government when we open our doors so generously and so warmly to the rest of the world.

You've just raised one issue. There are a whole series of issues. I advise you that your former colleague Mrs Caplan has an immigration bill before the federal House at this very moment and I would invite you to make that phone call to your federal cousins and express to them the same kind of concern that you're bringing to the House.

Mr Ruprecht: Let me just point out how concerned this government is about foreign professionals gaining

entry. We've heard previously that there are 109 communities that don't have doctors. The College of Physicians and Surgeons gave you and all MPPs a list of recommendations and it says exactly how you can accomplish it. They have acted. You've done nothing. You've got the recommendations. You have not acted at all on this.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, our province needs 130,000 skilled workers. These are 130,000 unfilled jobs. Yet, right here in Ontario, the unemployment rate for foreign-trained professionals is more than three times that of the national average. Only 24% have found jobs in their professions. Mrs Caplan, our former colleague, approached you to sign an agreement right here a few months ago and you have not signed it. It would have given you millions of dollars in terms of immigrant settlement services and it would have produced a policy made right in Ontario and you have refused.

You get up right now and tell me that I'm wrong and that she has not approached you. Get up right now and tell us that, because you're absolutely wrong. You could have had millions of dollars in the kitty to supply these services. You've done nothing—

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

Hon Mr Jackson: First of all, the member is wrong. I'm surprised that the member doesn't have his facts correct. The fact of the matter is that this province has increased its funding for immigrant settlement programs. My colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and my colleague the Minister of Education are spending millions of dollars in second-language and third-language training for immigrants in this province.

The federal government is spending a lot of its money in its refugee appeals program, in providing supports and accommodation. But there comes a magical moment when, as soon as that individual ceases to become a refugee, they become the responsibility of the taxpayers of the province. You should save your rhetoric for your friend Mrs Caplan and let her know that Ontario's doors are open but that we want a partnership with the federal government. Otherwise, we may just do what Quebec did. It went and got almost \$100 million to run its own immigration program. Look at where the money is going in this country for those provinces to run their own programs. Maybe we should run our own programs, but we're not getting the support from the federal government.

1450

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE BOARD

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Labour, who is responsible for the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. When this government came into office in 1995, there were a great many complaints about what was then called the

Workers' Compensation Board. Some of the complaints were about the poor service and the high rates, and the financial situation was unsustainable. I know there have been a number of improvements. I wonder if you could take a moment to tell this House how much that board has improved and what those changes are in the past number of years.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I thank the member for Thornhill for the question. Since 1995 there have been a number of dramatic changes at the WSIB and a very positive approach taken by the management.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I know the member from Hamilton would understand this.

Since 1995, the average premium rate has dropped from \$3 to \$2.13, or 29%. Unfunded liability—that is total liability less total assets—is now \$5.7 billion from the 1994 total of \$11.4 billion. We're on target to eliminate the unfunded liability completely, as promised, by 2014. In 2000, the reduction was \$727 million, in part due to an 8% return in the investment portfolio.

Funding ratio: total assets are now 66.8%, the highest since 1981. That was a Conservative government, I might add. In 1995, the ratio was 40%. Forty-two rate groups have been eliminated, further simplifying the system.

It's an unparalleled success story, I think, by this government. The workers of this province should be happy that they are doing such a good job.

Mrs Molinari: Thank you, Minister, for those numbers and facts. I wonder if you also have numbers from 1990, when the Liberal government handed it over to the NDP.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I would hate to leave the impression that the only party at fault was the NDP, because that wasn't the case. They were handed a dog's breakfast, when it came to the WSIB, when they took office.

In 1990, the average premium rate was \$3.18. As I said, it's down to \$2.13 from the Liberal domain. Claims were 473,407, and in 1999 they'd gone down to 364,000, a precipitous drop. WSIB employees totalled 5,138 people. In 1999 it was down to 4,260. And let me just say that the total assessable payroll has gone from \$80 billion to \$102 billion, so it lends credence to that often-stated fact by the Conservative government, "We're doing significantly better for less."

In 1990, the unfunded liability, under the poor administrative efforts of the Liberal government, was \$9.1 billion; shameful to say, \$9.1 billion. As I said earlier, it's now down to \$5.7 billion and—

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

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. Not many months ago you acknowledged that Ontario hospitals would need

an additional \$380 million this year just to keep pace with inflation and the aging of our population. Then we saw the budget yesterday, and you in fact cut hospital budgets by \$100 million, in effect putting hospitals about \$500 million in the hole. You know that this will mean the laying off of more nurses, the cutting of essential medical services, and more patients who cannot get access to the health care that they need in our hospitals.

Why would you not only not give hospitals the money they need to keep pace with aging and with inflation, but then go on and cut hospitals by a further \$100 million, when you know the disastrous results that will have on nursing and patient care? Why would you do that?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Thank you for the question, but I didn't do that, this government didn't do that and the Minister of Finance and the Premier haven't done that. You are wrong when you say that we have cut funding for hospitals. You are wrong when you say that they are \$100 million short in terms of their funding as part of our budget announcements yesterday. You're wrong when you say that the consequence of government actions necessarily means cutting of staff or cutting or nurses of reducing medical operations or procedures. You're wrong.

The simple matter is that health care funding is up, as part of this budget, by 5.4%. Hospital spending is up. OHIP spending is up. Drug benefit spending is up. Long-term care is up. Mental health is up. One-time operating plans are up—up, up, up.

Our challenge, quite frankly, is to ensure that the system is sustainable over the long term, a publicly funded, universally accessible system, and comments by the leader of the third party are not helpful in that regard.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, the statement of the business of the House for the next week:

Monday afternoon will be a Liberal opposition day. Monday evening will be second reading debate of Bill 25.

Tuesday afternoon we will continue with the budget debate. Tuesday evening we will continue debate on Bill 25.

Wednesday afternoon we will continue with the budget debate. Wednesday evening we will continue debate on Bill 25.

Thursday morning, of course, is private members' business, where we will be discussing ballot items 6 and 7, and Thursday afternoon we will begin second reading debate on Bill 30.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to give you notice to file for the late show this evening.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member can do that and file appropriate documents.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): 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 many more of my constituents, who are absolutely determined that they are not going to give up the fight to get fairness and equity for northern Ontario residents when it comes to getting the health care that they need, despite the fact that there was no reference to the northern health travel grant in the budget yesterday.

In full agreement with their concerns, I affix my signature to the petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Mr Speaker, I do appreciate the chance that you were going to give me last week. I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"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."

In agreement, I affix my signature.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have a petition here which was presented to me by a student at Queen's University and it's to the Parliament of Ontario. It says:

"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."

This petition is signed by about 500 individuals from my area and elsewhere in Ontario, and I'm pleased to sign it as well.

1500

DIABETES TREATMENT

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

"Whereas over 500,000 people in Ontario have diabetes; and

"Whereas to the expense of treating diabetes, many people cannot afford the ongoing expense of treating diabetes and if left untreated or improperly managed, diabetes can lead to blindness, vascular disease, kidney disease, neuropathy and other problems; and

"Whereas today, more than ever before, people with diabetes can expect to live active, independent and vital lives if they make a lifelong commitment to careful management of the disease; and

"Whereas by providing the resources to successfully manage this disease, the government can ensure more efficient health care for people with diabetes at a reduced cost to the health care system;

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

"That all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

SALE OF SCHOOLS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition addressed to the Parliament of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas Hughes Public School at 17 Innes Ave in the city of Toronto closed down and its premises have been declared surplus by the Toronto District School Board;

"Whereas the city of Toronto has issued a building permit to the Toronto District School Board permitting the reconstruction of Hughes Public School for an entity called Beatrice House, for the purpose of a private academic school...;

"Whereas a lease has not been signed between the Toronto District School Board and Beatrice House while renovations to the building are underway;

"Whereas local taxpayers' concerns have been ignored by the Toronto District School Board;

"Whereas other locations, such as Brother Edmund Rice School at 55 Pelham Park or the Earlscourt Public School at 29 Ascot, which are also being closed down, have been offered to Beatrice House but to no avail;

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

"That the Honourable Minister of Education investigate the leasing arrangement between the Toronto District School Board and Beatrice House inasmuch as:

"(1) Boards are to seek fair market value when selling, leasing or otherwise disposing of schools, except that the price for the property is not to exceed the value of the ministry's grant for the new pupil places when the purchaser is a coterminous board, a provincial school or a publicly funded care and treatment facility offering programs leading to a diploma;

"(2) Boards are to offer the property to coterminous boards and other public agencies operating in the area in accordance with the priority currently specified in regulation 444/98;

"(3) The Toronto District School Board has not dealt in good faith with our neighbourhood residents;

"Therefore, we respectfully ask you, the minister, to consider our plea for justice. The Toronto District School Board has ignored our concerns and" has ignored "due diligence. We as a community tried everything within our power to fight the glaring and obvious wrong done to us, but to no avail."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign my name to it as well.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's always difficult to follow the member for Davenport, but I'll reluctantly try my best.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas over 500,000 people in Ontario have diabetes; and

“Whereas to the expense of treating diabetes, many people cannot afford the ongoing expense of treating diabetes and if left untreated or improperly managed, diabetes can lead to blindness, vascular disease, kidney disease, neuropathy and other problems; and

“Whereas today, more than ever before, people with diabetes can expect to live active, independent and vital lives if they make a lifelong commitment to careful management of the disease; and

“Whereas by providing the resources to successfully manage this disease, the government can ensure more efficient, effective health care for people with diabetes at a reduced cost to the health care system;

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

“That all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.”

I'm pleased to support this.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Mike Harris promised an Ontarians with Disabilities Act during the 1995 election and renewed that commitment in 1997 but has yet to make good on that promise; and

“Whereas the Harris government has not committed to holding open consultations with the various stakeholders and individuals on the Ontarians with Disabilities Act; and

“Whereas the vast majority of Ontario citizens believe that there should be an Ontarians with Disabilities Act to remove the barriers facing the 1.5 million persons with disabilities;

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

“To pass a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act that would remove the barriers facing the 1.5 million persons with disabilities in the province of Ontario.”

I am in full agreement and will affix my signature hereto.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 336 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

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I have here a petition that's addressed 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.”

I completely and totally agree with that and I've signed—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Further petitions.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I've got another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas over 500,000 people”—and that's half a million—“in Ontario have diabetes; and

“Whereas to the expense of treating diabetes, many people cannot afford the ongoing expense of treating diabetes and if left untreated or improperly managed,

diabetes can lead to blindness, vascular disease, kidney disease, neuropathy and other problems; and

“Whereas today, more than ever before, people with diabetes can expect to live active, independent and vital lives if they make a lifelong commitment to careful management of the disease; and

“Whereas by providing the resources to successfully manage this disease, the government can ensure more efficient health care for people with diabetes at a reduced cost to the health care system;

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

“That all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan.”

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): 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,” including citizens of Newmarket, Scarborough, Mississauga and Toronto, “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.”

I'm in full agreement as a southern member and have signed my name hereto.

1510

PROTECTION OF MINORS

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

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

“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.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2001 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 9, 2001, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I welcome this opportunity to join in the budget debate. I do so on behalf of Ontario's working families and I do so proudly on behalf of my colleagues in the Ontario Liberal Party caucus.

We on this side of the House are committed to fighting for our families and that's why, without reservation and without hesitation, we must condemn this budget. Clearly, this budget is failing Ontario's working families.

I would ask you to consider a day in the life of one Ontario family. Mom and dad may wake up first to make breakfast. Mom, let's say, grabs some frozen juice out of the freezer and she turns on the tap water. Can she be sure that the water is absolutely safe? She may have some doubts. She remembers Walkerton. I think the important question here is, has this budget done anything to put her mind to rest? Precious little. Our water plants, our pipes and our sewers, our infrastructure is crumbling beneath our feet and yet this budget invests less in infrastructure than we have during the course of the past 15 years. That is what I call failing our families.

Now, after breakfast dad might drive the kids to the school. In a vast majority of cases it's a public school and, after six years of this government, it's a school that is underfunded, understaffed and full of people who feel, to put it mildly, unappreciated. But at least it's open. Well, maybe it's open. Some days it's closed, thanks to the most poisonous education-labour climate in the history of Ontario.

Now, from the perspective of the working family, does this budget come to the rescue of these schools, of these children, of this family? No, it certainly does not and once again it fails working families. What it does instead

is it takes money that should go into public education and invests it in private schools. I can tell you that we on this side of the House do not believe that we should be using public money for private schools.

I gave the Minister of Education ample opportunity—in fact I gave her six separate and distinct opportunities during question period—to defend her policy. Not surprisingly, she couldn't.

If some families can afford the luxury of private schools, then more power to them. I don't have any objections to that. But with public education on the rocks, there are better uses for our public dollars. After six years of trying to drive our families out of public education, this government apparently now wants to pick up the tab for the limousine. What this amounts to is a voucher program for private schools. The government will try to cloak it under a different guise and try to tell us it's something decidedly different, but if we're giving parents taxpayer dollars so that they can take their kids and put them in private schools, that's what I call a voucher, and I believe the overwhelming majority of Ontarians would also call it a voucher.

We on this side of the House will continue to fight for public education on behalf of working families.

Once the children of this particular working family walk into school, they may join overcrowded classrooms. We put forward a positive plan to deal with that very issue. We believe there should be a cap on class sizes in the early grades, from junior kindergarten through to and including grade 3. That would be a good use of public education dollars. Think of that: no more than 20 students per class. I know you have children, Speaker, and like all Ontario parents you want nothing less than the very best public education for them. We want to help our children get off to a good start in school. We want them to learn how to learn right off the bat in the early grades.

The government could have taken that particular idea of ours, a cap of 20 students, JK through to grade 3, and they could have financed that through this budget. We would have applauded, because that would have been a good thing, a healthy development for working families and public education. Instead, this budget provides an additional \$2.2 billion in tax cuts for big business when our corporate taxes are already competitive when we compare them to our US neighbours.

Let's understand the juxtaposition here: crowded classrooms for our kids, \$2 billion more for Ontario's already competitive corporations. That's why we say this budget clearly fails our working families.

After school in this working family I've been talking about, one of the kids' asthma starts to act up, especially if it's hot or a muggy day, not unlike today. After all, as I've said before in this Legislature, Ontario's air is making our children sick.

Does this budget do anything to clean up our environment? It doesn't do a thing. What it does is fail our working families once more.

If that asthma becomes acute, our family may decide they've got to take their child to the doctor or the hospital. But does this budget tackle the doctor shortage? No, it does not. Does this budget ensure that the emergency room will be open and properly staffed when the family arrives? Does this budget take steps to bring back the thousands of nurses this government sent packing? No, it does not. We've got another \$2 billion-plus for corporations, but we have precious little to meet the needs of our working families.

At the end of the day, when the kids are home from school with another fundraising form tucked into their knapsacks—and I speak from experience on this front—the parents may find time to talk. They might talk about what they're going to do about an aging parent who needs home care or a nursing home. They might worry about how they're going to find that care. They might worry about how they're even going to pay for that care.

Oh, this budget promises them another income tax cut, but that pales next to what corporations are getting and it positively pales next to the other costs that they face and the other challenges that they face, challenges just like finding long-term care for a loved one.

I think clearly from any objective perspective, our working family's real, everyday life is not one iota better because of this budget. If you are a member of a working family, your tax cut is nothing compared to what corporations are getting, and it pales next to what's happening to your schools, your health care and your environment.

1520

This budget, to repeat, fails our working families, so much so that you're tempted to say that if you run a corporation in Ontario, if you've got kids in private school and you've got a big income, well, you win. You might say that, but if you did, you'd be wrong because you won't win for long. You see, for all the same reasons that this budget fails our working families, it also fails our very future. Simply put, this budget is based on the premise that all we need do in order to prosper is to ensure that our corporate taxes are the lowest in North America. Mike Harris has as his inspiration the objective of ensuring that we offer here in our province the lowest corporate taxes in North America—hardly a grand vision.

Our vision of a truly competitive economy, a prosperity that lasts, is much more far-sighted. We believe that to attract and keep jobs and investment we need the best-educated workforce in the world. But sadly, this budget invests \$300 million less in post-secondary education than we did five years ago. Just about every other province and state has boosted its investment in higher education, but not Ontario. It's a source of tremendous embarrassment.

I've had the occasion to do a bit of travelling recently outside the country and it's a tremendous source of embarrassment when we, the adult generation—those who have arrived, found success, benefited from all the public institutions that were laid at our feet by previous generations who worked so darn hard to have them there

for us—admit that on a per capita basis nobody invests less in the younger generation when it comes to post-secondary studies than we do here in Ontario.

To attract and keep jobs and investment, we need to realize that our publicly funded schools are the bedrock of our social and economic success. But this budget takes a half a billion dollars that could go into smaller class sizes—and the government maintains that their new voucher program is going to cost \$300 million. Mark my words: I maintain we're looking at half a billion dollars here easily. They want to take that money and put it into private schools.

To attract and keep jobs and investment, we need quality public health care. On average, the cost of doing business here compared to the US is \$2,500 cheaper per employee simply because we have medicare, because our health care system is publicly funded. But this budget, after six years of the Harris government, still offers no plan to improve access to health care and no plan to improve the quality of health care. The Premier tells us that he wants to ask now a number of questions and that he shouldn't be prevented from asking questions and that it might be unreasonable for us to place any kind of restrictions on him when it comes to the kinds of questions that he might want to put to the Ontario public when it comes to our health care.

You know what? He's been on the job for six years. He's had six years to carefully consider the questions and six years to carefully come up with good, progressive answers. He is failing us in health care and now he's looking to the private sector to rescue him. We've got something else in mind on that score and I'll be devoting some time, as will my caucus, and we'll be devoting a tremendous amount of energy in defence of publicly funded, universally accessible health care for all Ontarians.

To attract and keep jobs and investment, we need a modern infrastructure, but this budget invests less in our infrastructure—in roads, sewers and pipes—than we have in the last 15 years. The foundation is literally crumbling, yet this budget turns a blind eye to what must be done and instead invests in already competitive corporations and private schools.

To attract and keep jobs and investment we need livable, safe communities. But our cities and towns are struggling. They are struggling under the weight of this government's downloading.

Speaker, you understand this. People turn to their cities and towns and their communities for important services: for roads, for sewers, for libraries, for rec centres, for garbage pickup, for planning that creates neighbourhoods instead of just sprawl. Cities and towns are struggling, but this budget offers nothing to those cities and towns, nothing to create livable, safe, people-friendly communities.

Of course, we all recognize that we need taxes that are competitive, but our working families know, and I would argue that business today in Ontario knows in their heart

of hearts, everyone except this government seems to know, that we need more than competitive taxes alone.

What this budget should have done is it should have combined tax cuts targeted at our working families together with investments in public education, improved access to health care and clean air and safe and clean drinking water.

Applause.

Mr McGuinty: Thank you very much, above there.

Instead, it offers \$2.2 billion in corporate tax cuts when our corporate taxes were already competitive; and instead, it transfers half a billion dollars to private schools when our public schools are struggling to fulfill their oh so important responsibilities.

Instead of helping our working families, this budget is failing our working families. Instead of securing our future, it is failing our future. Instead of seizing the opportunity and presenting a bold new vision, it turns a blind eye to our real challenges.

We on this side of the House await the day that we will enjoy the privilege of delivering the budget that Ontario wants and deserves. We await the day we can deliver the budget that Ontario's working families want and deserve, and that will be a balanced budget in more ways than one.

Of course, we will ensure that we live within our means. As a father of four myself, I have no interest in saddling our children with our bills in the form of more debt. But our budget will also feature a balanced approach. It will balance targeted tax cuts aimed at working families with the investments that we must make for prosperity that lasts. It will help our families and our economy by facing the challenges that we all share.

Our budget will act to ensure that our children have the very best education. Our budget will ensure that our loved ones can count on the very best health care. Our budget will ensure that we clean up the water that we drink and the air that we breathe. Our budget will act to create safe and livable communities in which people are proud to live and raise their kids. Our budget will attract and keep the jobs and investment that will keep working families working, and that will be a budget that truly serves working families. That will be a budget that secures our future. That will be a budget that we can all be proud of.

With that, I wish to move an amendment to the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 9, which I will read as follows:

That "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words after "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

Recognizing that this budget fails our families and our future by:

Introducing private school vouchers which jeopardize the future of public education of Ontario;

Putting the interests of corporations ahead of the interests of working families;

And by failing to make strategic investments such as a real cap on class sizes in the early grades, or measures to reduce the doctors' shortage, or a clean drinking water plan;

This House has lost confidence in this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker: All in favour? Agreed.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister without Portfolio): I move adjournment of the House.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe there's a late show that's been requested. Would this motion prevent that, or do we have to do this first?

The Acting Speaker: Yes. For clarification, it's my understanding that the late show will be put over until Tuesday automatically.

This House stands adjourned until Monday at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1532.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneure: Hon / L'hon Hilary M. Weston
 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
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Halton	Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas-	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Flamborough-Aldershot		Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Beaches-East York	Lankin, Frances (ND)	Hastings-Frontenac-	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton-	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Lennox and Addington	
Springdale		Huron-Bruce	
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)		Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister without Portfolio (Health and Long-Term Care) / ministre sans portefeuille (Santé et Soins de longue durée)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)		Gerretsen, John (L)
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)		
Burlington	Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron (PC) Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Minister of the Environment / ministre de l'Environnement
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)		Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Economic Development and Trade / ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Solicitor General / solliciteur général	Lanark-Carleton	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Dufferin-Peel-Wellington-Grey	Tilson, David (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Wood, Bob (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)		Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)		
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et des Loisirs	London West / -Ouest	Sampson, Hon / L'hon Rob (PC) Minister of Correctional Services / ministre des Services correctionnels
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)	London-Fanshawe	DeFaria, Carl (PC)
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail	Markham	Marland, Margaret (PC)
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)	Mississauga East / -Est	
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	Mississauga South / -Sud	
Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)	Mississauga West / -Ouest	
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
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué au dossier de l'Enfance, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones	Scarborough East / -Est Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Gilchrist, Steve (PC) Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Niagara Centre / -Centre Niagara Falls Nickel Belt Nipissing	Kormos, Peter (ND) Maves, Bart (PC) Martel, Shelley (ND) Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif	Scarborough-Agincourt Scarborough-Rouge River Simcoe North / -Nord Simcoe-Grey	Phillips, Gerry (L) Curling, Alvin (L) Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Energy, Science and Technology / ministre de l'Énergie, des Sciences et de la Technologie
Northumberland Oak Ridges	Galt, Doug (PC) 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 Catharines St Paul's Stoney Creek	Bradley, James J. (L) Bryant, Michael (L) Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Cleary, John C. (L)
Oshawa	Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre Ottawa-Orléans	Patten, Richard (L) Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales	Thornhill Thunder Bay-Atikokan Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord Timiskaming-Cochrane Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Molinari, Tina R. (PC) McLeod, Lyn (L) Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Ramsay, David (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Toronto-Danforth Trinity-Spadina Waterloo-Wellington	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Ottawa-Vanier Oxford Parkdale-High Park Parry Sound-Muskoka Perth-Middlesex Peterborough Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Boyer, Claudette (Ind) Hardeman, Ernie (PC) Kennedy, Gerard (L) Miller, Norm (PC) Johnson, Bert (PC) Stewart, R. Gary (PC) Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Education, government House leader / ministre de l'Éducation, leader parlementaire du gouvernement	Whitby-Ajax Willowdale	Smitherman, George (L) Churley, Marilyn (ND) Marchese, Rosario (ND) Arnott, Ted (PC) Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances
Prince Edward-Hastings Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke Sarnia-Lambton Sault Ste Marie Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Parsons, Ernie (L) Conway, Sean G. (L) Di Cocco, Caroline (L) Martin, Tony (ND) Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)	Windsor West / -Ouest Windsor-St Clair York Centre / -Centre York North / -Nord York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston York West / -Ouest Vaughan-King-Aurora	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones Papatello, Sandra (L) Duncan, Dwight (L) Kwinter, Monte (L) Munro, Julia (PC) Cordiano, Joseph (L) Sergio, Mario (L) 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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