



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 37th Parliament

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

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 15 May 2001

Mardi 15 mai 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 15 May 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 15 mai 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Ontario's affordable housing crisis deepens, yet page 15 of Ontario's 2001 budget proclaims, "Housing Outlook Healthy." What unmitigated gall.

Here are the facts:

Ontario's vacancy rate is 1.6%, with the city of Ottawa having the dubious distinction of being the tightest rental market in the country, at 0.2%.

Rents are rising at double the rate of inflation while Ontario's three-million-plus tenants are seeing their household incomes drop. On average, three families per hour are applying for scarce social housing units in the city of Toronto.

Where is the provincial leadership to even acknowledge Ontario's affordable housing crisis, let alone to provide solutions? I can tell you one thing: it's not found in the 2001 Ontario budget. Clearly, the Harris government has once again failed Ontario's working families.

I have introduced Bill 37, the Affordable Housing Incentives Act. This bill would provide an exemption to section 111 of the Municipal Act and it would give Ontario's municipalities the ability and flexibility to find local solutions in partnership with interested parties to build affordable housing. I acknowledge that this measure is not a complete solution. However, it's an example that once again Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party are presenting positive ideas on behalf of Ontario's working families.

I'm calling on the government to do the right thing: to finally show some leadership and pass the Affordable Housing Incentives Act.

SUMMER ACTIVE CAMPAIGN

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm sure we all have a concern for the health and physical well-being of Ontario's residents. Physical activity helps to reduce health care costs as well as stress, anxiety and depression. That is why I'm encouraging everyone here today to just "Try it."

May 11 was National Try It Day and marked the kick-off to this year's Summer Active campaign. Summer Active is a seasonal campaign designed to get Canadians active. Parks and Recreation Ontario, along with recreation, health, sport, workplace and other physical activity leaders across the province, invites you to join in on this year's Summer Active campaign.

Summer Active 2001 runs until June 22. This year's "Try It" theme encourages those Ontarians who want to become active to take the first step toward adding physical activity into their daily lives.

Summer Active is part of Active Ontario, a joint initiative between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation.

As part of the campaign, physical activity leaders from across the province will be hosting special events in their communities. It is estimated that 61% of Ontarians are not active enough to achieve optimal health benefits. According to the Canadian Fitness and Lifestyle Research Institute, physical inactivity levels have declined since the 1980s, going from 80% in 1981 to 61% in 1999.

The benefits that can be achieved through physical activity are endless. Physical activity has been shown to reduce the risk of obesity, depression, heart disease, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, stroke and colon cancer, to name a few. Physical activity provides energy and strengthens muscles and bones.

I encourage everyone to look for and participate in their local Summer Active events. Let's all get summer active.

AGRICULTURAL HALL OF FAME

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): It is an honour to have the opportunity to congratulate the 2001 inductees to the Ontario Agricultural Hall of Fame: Alexander Connell, Eugene Whelan, Martin A. Drew, William Thomas Ewen, Ernest Andrew Kerr and Kenneth Lantz.

I would like to pay special tribute to the following two individuals from Essex and Chatham-Kent. Eugene Whelan needs no introduction. He is an officer of the Order of Canada, former member of the Senate of Canada, former Minister of Agriculture for Canada and former ambassador to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. He remains one of Canada's most outstanding agriculture ministers and spokespersons for his industry.

Martin Drew provided extraordinary leadership and vision during turbulent, depressed times in Ontario's agricultural history. He was involved in every agricultural organization in Kent county. Martin Drew encouraged producers to establish innovative new marketing schemes and is recognized as one of the province's influential pioneer agriculturists. I am proud to say that he was my aunt's father-in-law.

Unfortunately, there isn't enough time to acknowledge all the inductees. The achievements of these unselfish individuals are too numerous to mention. Through their dedication and commitment, they have made tremendous contributions to the betterment of agriculture and to our rural community.

ONTARIO ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY LIVING

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I am happy today to say hello to my friends in the gallery from the Ontario Association for Community Living. I'd like to express our government's support for people with developmental disabilities. We're proud to invest in the success of organizations like the Ontario Association for Community Living. I am delighted to play a small part in promoting a very admirable goal, a goal that the Ontario Association for Community Living has battled tirelessly for, which is to ensure that every person in this province lives with dignity.

This association has helped our communities for over 50 years. From their modest beginning, they have grown to over 12,000 members with 100 locations across Ontario. Their volunteers have touched the lives of many people in each of our ridings. They deserve all the praise of the government of Ontario, and more.

The Mike Harris team has a genuine respect for the hard-working staff and volunteers who dedicate their lives to helping the disabled. Our investment of an additional \$197 million to the Ontario Association for Community Living only supplements the already strong and vibrant spirit of this organization.

I was honoured to attend their day at the races on Saturday, only one example of the events, conferences and poster campaigns that the Ontario Association for Community Living uses to promote the awareness of enhanced services for vulnerable people.

We must also remember the families of those that the association benefits. These families show a tremendous and uncompromising love for their children. They compel the Ontario Association for Community Living and the government of Ontario to promote dignity and respect for our province's children.

SCIENCE FAIR

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Over 450 of our country's brightest and most innovative young scientific minds have gathered at Queen's University in Kingston this week for the annual Canada-

Wide Science Fair: A Science Odyssey Through the Thousand Islands.

Students ranging in age from 12 to 19, representing 110 regions from all across Canada, are displaying more than 400 of the best science and technology projects completed by students in grades 7 to OAC. They represent more than 500,000 science and technology projects completed by students across the country.

The opportunity to display their imaginative and innovative skills, and the ability to exchange ideas and information in such a historic setting as Queen's and Kingston, will undoubtedly be a life-changing experience for many of the young people involved.

From personally viewing some of the projects yesterday after the opening ceremony, I can say without reservation that the calibre of the exhibits is simply outstanding and top-notch. Some of the projects have been compared to the equivalent of master's and PhD material.

Over 230 judges, many recruited from our two world-renowned universities, Queen's University and the Royal Military College, will examine the projects and award medals in six categories: life, biotechnology, earth and environment, engineering, physical and mathematical, and computing.

Our hats are off to the three co-chairs, Sandra Davison, Heather Hight of the Limestone District School Board, and Sue Blake of Queen's University, and the more than 200 volunteers who have made this annual event of the Youth Science Foundation Canada such an overwhelming and outstanding success.

1340

OAK RIDGES MORAINÉ

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On Thursday, May 10, I was named by the Speaker and was asked to withdraw remarks directed to the member for Scarborough East. I refused to withdraw those remarks and was kicked out of the Legislature for the day. I want to say to this Legislature that that decision was not taken lightly.

I came into the House that morning to speak in support of a bill put forward to protect the Oak Ridges moraine. Although it was watered down from the bill Mr Gilchrist had introduced in the last session, it still went in the right direction in terms of protecting the Oak Ridges moraine. I brought as many members from my caucus as I could to come and support the member in terms of getting this bill sent to a legislative committee for debate.

We came in good faith under the impression that that bill would be sent by the member—at least he would attempt to send it—to a legislative committee. However, to our shock and surprise, when the time came and the Speaker stood up and suggested it go to the committee of the whole House, the member for Scarborough East just sat in his seat and didn't stand up to ask that it be sent to a committee.

Mr Speaker, I felt betrayed, and the whole community who are working and have been working for years to

protect the Oak Ridges moraine, who were looking forward to this bill going out to the committee, feel betrayed. I would say shame on the member for Scarborough East. He should be ashamed of himself.

POLICE WEEK

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Yesterday, my honourable colleague Solicitor General David Turnbull informed the House that May 13 to 19 is Police Week throughout Canada and the United States. Today I would like to ask the House to once again recognize all our police officers throughout Ontario on this International Peace Officers Memorial Day.

Members of our law enforcement agencies play an essential role in safeguarding the rights and freedom of all citizens. I would ask that everyone join in commemorating police officers past and present who, by their faithful and loyal devotion to their responsibilities, render a dedicated service to the communities they serve.

Recently, the second annual remembrance ceremony took place at the Ontario Police Memorial just outside this building. The Lieutenant Governor, the Premier and the Solicitor General joined with families and police to pay tribute to the 211 officers who have made the supreme sacrifice. These officers gave their lives while protecting the people of Ontario.

This week we celebrate the accomplishments of the thousands of police officers who protect us daily. It is also appropriate to pause and remember those who have died while on duty. They are gone but not forgotten.

I encourage each of the honourable members to acknowledge the police officers in their communities. It is because of them that Ontario continues to be one of the safest places in the world to live, work and raise a family.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Last week I attended a party with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act committee—Windsor-Essex. It was the sixth anniversary recognition of the Ontario government's doing absolutely nothing about an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

They asked me to bring six gifts to Premier Harris. One is a fact sheet outlining the demographic needs of Ontarians with disabilities; two, Ontarians with disabilities buttons, a reminder to the Premier that four out of five Ontarians support an effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act; three, a copy of the Ontario Human Rights Commission report that promotes and clarifies the rights of persons with disabilities. Another gift is a blueprint for a strong and effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act—this was previously given to the Premier. Another gift is a symbolic \$100 bill, a reminder that money is not a barrier to the implementation of an effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act; and six, a ballot that's a reminder that 1.5 million Ontarians with disabilities vote.

Ontarians with disabilities are not different. They just do things differently. They do things well and with dignity. Premier, give Ontarians with disabilities dignity. Give them an effective Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

I am pleased to welcome as well people from the Association for Community Living in my community and those from across Ontario who are with us today.

BRAMPTON BATTALION

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I take this opportunity to talk about one of Ontario's most successful Ontario Hockey League teams, the Brampton Battalion.

The Battalion, in only their third season since joining the OHL, made the playoffs for the second straight year. This followed a strong fifth-place finish in their conference.

In the first round, the Battalion made short work of the fourth-place Guelph Storm, eliminating them in four straight games. The Battalion then faced the first-place Erie Otters in the next round, to lose a very close series in five games.

Congratulations to team owner Scott Abbot; president Mike Griffin; and especially director of hockey operations and head coach Stan Butler. On the ice, the team was led by NHL future stars such as Rostislav Klesla, Columbus' fourth overall draft pick last year, and Raffi Torres, fifth overall pick of the New York Islanders.

A major highlight included the first time ever that a junior team has sent five representatives to the World Junior Championships. Stan Butler was a coach of Team Canada and brought teammates Raffi Torres and Jay Harrison with him, while Klesla and Lukas Havel played for the world champion Czech Republic. Further, Klesla was also voted runner-up for the OHL's best defenceman and made first OHL all-star.

The future looks bright in Brampton, with exciting young players making their way through the ranks. On behalf of my constituents, thank you, Brampton Battalion, for an exciting season. Beat the Slush Puppies.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for his statement.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I actually won a Memorial Cup. I have the ring, but I ended up in the Ontario Legislature. For those who don't make it, there is always another profession that you can end up with.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Today we have with us in the Speaker's gallery Mr Bob Speller, member of the House of Commons for the riding of Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. Please join me in welcoming our federal colleague.

We also have in the Speaker's gallery today and I am also pleased to welcome Mr Jesse Flis, a former member

of Parliament for Parkdale-High Park, who is here with members of the Association for Community Living.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NIAGARA CENTRAL AIRPORT COMMISSION ACT, 2001

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr11, An Act to amend The Welland-Port Colborne Airport Act, 1976.

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

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

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

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I move that, notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mrs McLeod and Mr Phillips exchange places in order of precedence such that Mrs McLeod assumes ballot item number 74 and Mr Phillips assumes ballot item number 13.

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

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I move that pursuant to standing order 9(c)(i), the House shall meet tonight from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm for the purpose of considering government business.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1350 to 1355.

The Speaker: Would the members kindly take their seats.

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

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Pupatello, Sandra
Bartolucci, Rick	Hodgson, Chris	Runciman, Robert W.
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Boyer, Claudette	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Brown, Michael A.	Jackson, Cameron	Smitherman, George
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Snobelen, John
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Stewart, R. Gary
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Curling, Alvin	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dombrowsky, Leona	Miller, Norm	Turnbull, David
Duncan, Dwight	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Dunlop, Garfield	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Ecker, Janet	Mushinski, Marilyn	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Brenda	Newman, Dan	Wood, Bob
Gerretsen, John	O'Toole, John	Young, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Ouellette, Jerry J.	
Gill, Raminder	Peters, Steve	

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

Nays

Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Martel, Shelley
Kormos, Peter	Marchese, Rosario	Martin, Tony

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 64; the nays are 6.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I'm proud to stand here today to provide parents and students across Ontario with details of our plan to ensure that every qualified and willing student will find a place in a college or university.

Our plan is comprehensive. The first phase of our plan involved increased support for research so that our institutions could attract and keep the best and brightest faculty and researchers needed to ensure high-quality education for our students.

We, with our partners, then invested \$1.8 billion to create 73,000 new student spaces across the province. This is the single largest capital expansion in post-secondary campuses in the last 30 years.

To help our students and parents better plan to manage the cost of their education, we have strengthened our student assistance programs, including establishing trust

funds at each of our institutions, introducing the Aiming for the Top student scholarships and requiring colleges and universities to set aside a portion of tuition fee revenue for student aid. We have also introduced a five-year cap on tuition that will limit increases in most programs to 2% per year.

Last week in the Ontario budget, my colleague the Minister of Finance announced the final component of our plan: an increase in operating support for colleges and universities by a projected \$293 million by 2003-04.

1400

When we decided to implement a new four-year high school program, we made a promise that we would provide the funds needed to ensure our colleges and universities were prepared to meet the increased enrolment demands created, in part, by the double cohort. We knew these students would provide a tremendous opportunity as we prepared Ontario for the changing economy of the 21st century. They just needed to have the high-quality and relevant education and training programs that would prepare them to compete and succeed with the best the world has to offer.

We have kept the promise we made to our parents and our students. Our colleges and universities now have a stable, multi-year period in which they can manage the expansion of their campuses. Our SuperBuild projects are being built, and we have committed more than \$297 million to colleges and universities since 1999 to modernize our existing buildings.

Our commitment to increased operating grants ensures that they have the money and the time needed to hire high-quality professors to staff those buildings, and our new \$10-million commitment over three years for the Premier's Platinum Awards for research excellence will strengthen our ability to attract and retain world-class senior researchers.

I want to thank my colleagues, including our student leaders, at our Ontario colleges and universities for their co-operation in developing and implementing our plans over the past years. With their support and their good advice, we have developed five-year enrolment forecasts and capital plans.

We also recognize that not all high school students choose to go on to post-secondary education. Some will move directly into the workforce; others will make other choices. We are expanding the apprenticeship and training system to ensure that these students have the full range of opportunities to find and keep high-paying jobs. The Ontario budget made a commitment to provide \$50 million over five years to update equipment and facilities at our colleges for apprenticeship programs, and a further \$33 million by 2004-05 to double the number of entrants to apprenticeship programs in the skilled trades.

I said our plan is comprehensive. It ensures that students will be prepared to reach their full potential whether they choose to go to college, university or into the skilled trades.

But we've done more than that. We are constantly taking action to ensure our students receive the relevant

education and training that prepares them for the changing needs of the workforce. In last week's budget, we announced an investment of \$60 million to establish a new Ontario Institute of Technology at Durham College in Oshawa. The new institute will provide university- and college-level programs and link post-secondary education and skills training with the needs of the marketplace.

The institute will be located on the Durham campus and will provide one-stop shopping for students looking for a mix of academic and hands-on experience. The institute will offer a wide range of career-oriented programs. Students will be able to earn an applied degree, diploma or other credential, depending on their program.

Through initiatives such as the ones I have outlined today, we are ensuring that future generations of students will be ready to seize the opportunities of a changing economy. We are also ensuring that Ontario has the educated, skilled and flexible workforce it needs for a strong, vibrant economy.

We are helping to create the conditions that provide Ontarians, no matter where they live in the province, with opportunities to take more responsibility for their personal and professional development so they can find and keep high-quality jobs that help them lead full and rewarding lives.

To echo the budget speech, we have provided a landmark response to the challenge of the 21st century, and in doing so we will fulfill the Premier's commitment that within 10 years, Ontario will enjoy the best-performing economy and highest quality of life in North America.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): This isn't a landmark response or statement; this is a land mine.

Your own task force has said we need \$500 million by 2005 to deal with the double cohort. You have promised \$293 million by 2004. Are you going to double this in a year, Minister, as your own task force recommends? The college sector will need \$291 million by 2004 to meet the double cohort demand, according to ACAATO. Ontario universities will require \$500 million to meet increasing enrolment demands by 2005, according to the Council of Ontario Universities. This will just keep us at the status quo, which is in the basement: 10th out of 10 provinces, 59th out of 60 jurisdictions, just ahead of Texas.

This new envelope of funding is expected to break down to \$223 million to universities and \$70 million for colleges. However, this funding increase is really only a percentage change of 1.8%, while inflation is increasing by 3.2% and the application rate for spaces in post-secondary has increased by 7.3%. In 1995, in one year, you cut the operating budgets by 15%. What is 1.8% going to do? Do you really think this is a substantial and significant increase in funding? Whom do you think you're fooling?

We are looking at thousands of students seeking spots in our post-secondary system. This is not a blip on the radar screen; this is a full-force tidal wave heading

toward our underfunded and demoralized public post-secondary institutions.

Ontario now spends 38% less per capita than the province of Newfoundland on university operating grants, and 18% below the national average. This budget will place us even lower. Our provincial expenditure on post-secondary declined by 30% between 1992 and 1999, the most significant decrease in the country.

Although this government continues to point to its SuperBuild fund as a source of capital dollars, we have actually got less than in any year in the last 20 years on infrastructure in this province. The measly \$100 million committed for maintenance costs is only a drop in the bucket. Your own task force says we need \$900 million for universities. Your task force says that. We need \$300 million for colleges: your task force says that.

There is no money for hiring professors. Read your own government document, *Portals and Pathways*. There's no money for the hiring of new professors. What will we do with the empty SuperBuild buildings if you do not allocate the necessary funds to begin the arduous process of hiring new professors? They are now being recruited by US schools with much healthier salaries.

Even our ability to buy books for our students has slipped. We used to have six out of the top 100 libraries in North America; we have one now, and that's at the University of Toronto.

Our college graduates will earn an average of 8% to 16% more than someone with a high school diploma; a university graduate, 9% to 15% more. They will pay an additional \$85,000 in taxes over their lifetimes as a result of post-secondary. Isn't this more than enough to offset the cost of subsidizing higher education in this province?

Isn't it interesting that Ontario is the only province in the country that doesn't have a training agreement with the federal government? We are losing nearly half a billion dollars a year because of this lack of an agreement.

The people of Ontario are concerned about the lack of security they experience in their jobs, education and access to post-secondary. A recent poll showed that 64% of individuals expressed finding it increasingly hard to afford college and university, and 62% of individuals recognize that tax cuts are not enough; we need a long-term plan to protect our prosperity. Some 79% of your own voters who were concerned were concerned that they wouldn't have the money to send their children to college and university.

This isn't a landmark; it's a land mine. Shame on you for letting Ontario's families down.

1410

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I want to respond to this statement by referring to a fact sheet that's been prepared by the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, because, good citizens, this government doesn't listen to us and I think you want to know what the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations has said in response to a number of the problems that have been witnessed by the public. You

citizens are right there and I'm going to talk to you directly. Here's what they say in response to the minister's saying the government will ensure a place for every willing and qualified student. The concern I have, and the concern parents have, is that it will not guarantee a place for every student in this province. Here are the facts:

"Fact: According to the government's own estimates, an additional 88,000 qualified students will seek access to Ontario's universities and colleges over the next four years. That means creating new spaces equal to the enrolments of Ottawa, Laurentian, Western, McMaster, Queen's, Ryerson and Waterloo combined.

"Ontario government record: Universities and colleges have lost \$2 billion in cumulative public funding since 1996-97. No new public money has been made available to handle the projected enrolment increases.

"Fact: One of the reasons for the big increase in demand is the elimination of the OAC year creating the 'double cohort.'

"Ontario government record: The government eliminated the OAC year without making sure that qualified students have the chance to continue on to university or college.

"Fact: The government has acknowledged that Ontario universities and colleges will have to hire tens of thousands of professors, librarians and support staff.

"Ontario government record: To date no new public money has been allocated to hire needed faculty, librarians and support staff. Workload, burnout and injuries are increasing and the people of Ontario know that working conditions directly affect learning conditions.

"Fact: Statistics Canada has reported that a smaller percentage of students from lower and middle-income homes are seeking post-secondary education, compared to those from affluent backgrounds. The gap is growing. The student body at Ontario universities and colleges should reflect the diversity of Ontario residents and not be limited to a wealthy few.

"Ontario government record: The government has increased tuition fees by over 60% in the last five years for regulated programs. Graduate, professional and some college program fees have been deregulated, resulting in increases as high as 521%.

"Fact: It would cost \$1.06 billion to repair all of the deferred maintenance at Ontario universities. That's over \$4,200 per student.

"Ontario government record: The government of Ontario has not provided the public funds needed to make college and university campuses safe and productive."

They conclude by saying, "The time to reinvest in post-secondary education is now. If the government is serious about providing a place for every willing and qualified student, then it needs to make a commitment to public education. This is the only way we can keep pace with growing enrolments; hire new faculty, librarians and staff; provide high-quality services; make our buildings safe; keep tuition fees affordable; and provide better student assistance."

The Conservative government has all the evidence it needs that the public rejects their college and university underfunding policies. On May 7, OPSEU, the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations, CUPE and the Canadian Federation of Students jointly released an Ipsos-Reid poll showing that two thirds of Ontarians are concerned about access to post-secondary education. Of the parents who are fearful their kids won't go to college or university, 80% said they won't be able to pay the higher fees charged under a Conservative government.

I say to you that if this government is not listening to you, the taxpayers and good citizens of Ontario, you have an opportunity in the very near future to send a message to this government that they will not be able to forget.

COMMUNITY LIVING WEEK

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This week is dedicated in Ontario as Community Living Week. I believe we have unanimous consent for all parties to make a brief statement to recognize the hard work and dedication of those providing in the community living sector.

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

Mrs Molinari: I rise today to acknowledge Community Living Week in Ontario. The purpose of this week is to raise awareness about people with developmental disabilities and the importance of including all people in the day-to-day life of our communities. It's also an excellent time to acknowledge the many dedicated people who work in the field of developmental services, including parents and volunteers, for their hard work and commitment to improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities in this province.

I know we have guests from the Ontario Association for Community Living, including Keith Powell, executive director, Lee Holling, past president, and several others from various community living groups from around the province with us today. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome them and thank them for their important contribution to community living.

My colleagues are aware of this government's commitment to support vulnerable people in Ontario, including adults and children with developmental disabilities. We consider it an important responsibility and a priority for the government to help people with developmental disabilities become as independent as possible while living at home on their own in their communities.

This commitment was reinforced by the budget announcement last week that the government will provide \$55 million this year, growing to nearly \$200 million by 2006-07, to enhance services for people with developmental disabilities and attract more quality caregivers. In addition, the government will invest \$67 million over five years to create new places to live for adults with developmental disabilities.

This is a remarkable demonstration of the government's desire to improve the lives of people with developmental disabilities and to support the agencies and people working in this sector. The Honourable John Baird, Minister of Community and Social Services, will be announcing the details of this new funding initiative in the near future.

I'd like to stress that these are the latest in a series of initiatives the government has taken to help integrate people with developmental disabilities into the community. Since 1995 the government has invested more than \$100 million in additional funding for people with developmental disabilities. In fact, the government's total spending in the developmental sector last year exceeded \$965 million, more than has ever been spent before in this area.

Prior to last week's announcement, the largest investment in developmental services in a decade was made last May when the government announced it would provide an additional \$50 million to support people with developmental disabilities and their families to live in the community.

This included \$18 million for new accommodation in the community for more than 300 individuals, including adults living at home with aging parents and young adults leaving the child welfare system; \$6 million for the special services at home program to provide support for approximately 2,000 families caring for children and adults with developmental disabilities at home; and \$6 million for the creation of the innovative foundations initiative, which is funding new programs to help approximately 950 young people with developmental disabilities make the transition from school to employment or other community activity. The \$50-million announcement also included funding to ensure that group homes comply with the new fire code regulations and to help community agencies recruit and retain qualified staff.

The government's ongoing focus on community living has resulted in a system that now supports more than 48,000 people with developmental disabilities in their communities.

Let me stress that the success that has been achieved in community living has only been possible because of the commitment and effort of community agencies that have worked hard to ensure the supports would be in place.

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Despite the achievements and advances of the past several years, the demand for services continues to grow and there is increasing demand for more flexible, responsive kinds of services. The government recognizes that the service providers are struggling to meet these demands and that this is placing a greater burden on the sector at a time when agencies already have trouble getting and keeping qualified staff. The funding announced in last week's budget is the government's response to the concerns it has heard in discussions with individuals, families, agencies and provincial organizations over the past year. With this new investment, the

government is building on the progress that has been made and taking huge steps forward to improving the lives of people with developmental disabilities across the province.

I'd like to reiterate this government's appreciation for the people who work with developmental services in Ontario. It is a workforce that is professional, dedicated and capable. I would also like to acknowledge the families of people with developmental disabilities and their unwavering commitment to their loved ones. Working together, we are creating a province where all people with developmental disabilities can live healthy, productive lives in their own communities.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I'm very proud and honoured to rise today on behalf of Dalton McGuinty, my leader, and the members of the Ontario Liberal caucus to speak on this unanimous consent motion and to offer our enthusiastic support in recognizing May 15 as Community Living Day in Ontario.

I would first of all take the opportunity to welcome the many distinguished guests from the Ontario Association for Community Living and member associations from across the province who join us today. I understand that well over 100 representatives, including clients, board members, managers, caregivers and friends, are with us here to celebrate Community Living Day at Queen's Park. We thank you.

Today is more than just an opportunity for us as legislators to honour and celebrate the accomplishments of an organization that has worked for over 50 years to bring communities and people together. The work it does now in more than 100 communities across Ontario is surely worth recognizing 365 days a year.

Today is also more than a chance for us to recognize the dedicated staff and caregivers who, day in and day out, provide opportunity, hope and friendship to persons with intellectual disabilities. The tremendous dedicated work they do, which often seems undervalued and unheralded, is truly priceless.

Today is a day when we can truly look at the concept of community living, what it implies and what it means. To me, community living is a rallying cry that continues to resonate in community after community in the lives of persons with disabilities right across this province. In many ways it's a cry for help. It's a plea for dignity, independence and inclusion. It is a constant battle for fairness, for equality, and for recognition.

Community living is what we as legislators should be pushing and fighting for each and every day for the more than 1.5 Ontarians with disabilities. The right to citizenship and participation that we all take for granted is often denied to those who can't fend for themselves. Community living is about giving the best supports we can to families and parents of children and adults with developmental and intellectual disabilities who struggle every day to break down barriers, to overcome prejudices, and are in a constant struggle to find needed

services. Community living is truly what the Ontario Association for Community Living is all about.

For my brother Mark, who lives independently thanks to the wonderful staff at the Lakehead Association for Community Living located in my Thunder Bay riding, and to all the brothers and sisters and sons and daughters who you have in your care, we thank you with all our hearts. The Ontario Association for Community Living not only started the movement 50-plus years ago; it has changed and shaped our society for the better.

I'm pleased to hear the member opposite speak so strongly in support of Community Living Day here in Ontario. While disagreements between my party and hers perhaps do abound, I will certainly take her at her word that she's committed to continue the fight for community living, and the rallying cry of what it means, at the Tory caucus table. Perhaps she can start by standing in her place and asking the Premier to fulfill a promise made six long years ago, a promise that would make a huge difference in the fight for equality and fairness for Ontarians with disabilities. I'm referring, of course, to this government's failure to bring forward and enact a real and meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Community living is about inclusion. Without real legislative protection, the hopes and dreams of many Ontarians will be left unrealized, unfulfilled and untapped. My leader, Dalton McGuinty, and our disabilities critic, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, and indeed all the members on this side of the House will not rest until this government recognizes that an Ontarians with Disabilities Act is about human rights, removing barriers and overcoming obstacles. It certainly is more than the legislation that's been brought forward in this House so far. We need a real and meaningful Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

I would also like to suggest to this member that she should be going back to her caucus to inquire as to why the government continues to ignore the fact that costs of living have gone up everywhere. Shelter, food, clothing, utilities: an undeniable fact of life is that everything costs more, yet despite the absolute fact that things cost more, the government has failed to build in even a fair cost-of-living increase to the Ontario disabilities support program, freezing benefits at 1987 levels.

Independent living does come with a cost. Ontarians with disabilities rely on the supports given to them through the Ontario disabilities support program. Real dignity comes with having the means to get by, to live and to participate in meaningful ways. So I say to the member opposite, for the sake of all those about whom you've spoken today, please raise the ODSP benefits to an adequate level so that independent living truly can mean dignified living.

We need to recognize there was a budgetary increase in last week's budget. I would like to say one thing: was last week's news of a budgetary increase to the sector appreciated? Yes, it was. Was it enough? Absolutely not. By their own estimates, the Ontario Association for Community Living has requested an annual increase of

\$220 million to meet critical needs in this sector. After nearly 10 years of flatlined support, it was and is clear that nothing short of significant investment in this sector would serve to address ongoing inequities, lack of services and supports for families, and the growing list of people waiting for services. This government began the process, but I don't believe they had the courage to go far enough.

One of the most pressing challenges facing the entire developmental services sector, including the six cross-sectional associations that make up the alliance of agencies serving children and youth, is the alarming lack of support given to caregivers and staff.

Despite repeated calls and information about how it is becoming more and more difficult to attract and keep qualified staff, despite the reality of how staff turnover is threatening the continuum of care and how positions are being left unfilled and services disrupted, this government responded last year with a budgetary increase that in the end allowed for less than a 1% increase in the developmental services sector for staff, while the broader public sector was given 2%. It's certainly an interesting message to send to this sector.

Further to that, the government must truly be made to recognize the extraordinary level of individual and family needs that are not being met. I have heard personally from dozens and dozens of families desperate to find community placements for their sons and daughters. I've heard from mothers and fathers from all across Ontario who are in near tears as they recount their struggles to find supports for their loved ones. I've heard from aging parents, some of whom are very ill, unable to get the supports they need to secure a place for their child's future.

I've heard from parents who were forced to give up their child with disabilities because this government refused to enter into and fund special-needs agreements between them and agencies like our associations for community living.

We need an adequately funded, multi-accessible system of community supports that is diverse, responsive and reflective of the needs of people with developmental disabilities. That means restoring funds and introducing greater flexibility in order to meet special needs in our schools. It means ensuring the availability of day programs for people with disabilities once they've left the education system. It means continuing the process of moving people from institutional care into supportive community environments. It means recognizing the challenges faced by home share families who are struggling with the day-to-day costs of providing support. It means moving single parents of children with disabilities off the welfare system, where many find themselves, and into a system where they can live with dignity.

There is little doubt that the challenges in the developmental services sector are many and that the obstacles are great. However, with courage and conviction, I would like to envision a day when government support to this

sector is defined not by political need but by the actual needs of those in our communities; in other words, the funding meeting the needs, rather than the needs meeting the funding.

In the spirit of all that we honour here today and as part of this month-long celebration of community living, I would truly ask that this government commit to work toward that end. Consult with the Ontario Association for Community Living, its workers and other agencies that provide vital support to people with disabilities, to determine where new dollars to the sector would most fairly and effectively be used.

1430

I also challenge the government today to please commit to rescinding the offensively titled Homes for Retarded Persons Act, which is still on the Ontario law books. When you consider all the gains that have been made, all the pain and stigmatization that people with disabilities have suffered over the years, surely all we are standing up for today deserves better than this.

I conclude with an appeal that all members of the Legislature take time to read a book entitled *What Came First, The Chicken or the Egg?*, a true-life account of three families' struggles to build a home for their adult children with disabilities, which was published through the Toronto Association for Community Living. Reading first-hand the fights and struggles that working families had to go through to get services for their children gives a greater understanding of what community living is truly about.

To the Ontario Association for Community Living, its member associations, its clients, its staff and caregivers, this day is for you. Thank you.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): On behalf of the NDP caucus, it's my pleasure to acknowledge our support for Community Living Day at Queen's Park. I want to commend the members of the Ontario Association for Community Living for lobbying all three political parties to recognize this day. We welcome our guests here this afternoon.

We would also like to thank all those municipalities that are making May Community Awareness Month and holding celebrations for awareness of community living.

I have some remarks which are non-partisan, but in light of the comments made by the parliamentary assistant, I really feel I am compelled to place on the record the following facts with respect to this government's funding of this important sector. The facts I refer to come directly from a brief that was provided to us by the Ontario Association for Community Living in the lead-up to the 2001 provincial budget. I would like to raise three facts, and these are from the association.

One, while the government has provided some new funding over the past two years for additional services, funding for existing services has fallen 6.5% below the level it was at in 1991.

Two, the cost of delivering these existing services has risen, due both to normal cost-of-living factors and uncontrollable costs, such as escalating worker safety

insurance premiums—increases of up to 400% in some cases—and to pay equity, which are not covered by the government. We know this government has jurisdiction with respect to WSIB and its premiums, and they could be doing something about that. We also know this is a government that cancelled pay equity in 1996, pay equity that was going to some of the lowest paid workers in Ontario, particularly those who work for associations for community living. When the court overturned that decision, this government then went in and capped pay equity at December 1998 levels. This government shows its respect for workers by capping pay equity and by forcing associations for community living to fundraise to pay these benefits to these workers.

Three, eroded funding for existing services and the failure to fund new operational costs have left providers and families much worse off than 10 years ago.

I say to the parliamentary assistant, with all due respect, that's your government's legacy to date. With respect to the amount of money that was announced in the budget, I say it's about time, because your government has surely underfunded this important sector over the last six years.

On to my non-partisan remarks: Proclaiming Community Living Day challenges us as MPPs to use our influence as opposition and government members to give real meaning to the desire and ability of people with intellectual disabilities to live as integral members of our communities. That means, firstly, firmly supporting government policy, adopted by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in 1987 and accepted by all three political parties, to close institutions which house Ontarians with intellectual disabilities and repatriate them into our communities.

There are over 1,100 vulnerable adults who still live in three institutions in Ontario, and we must agree that they will all be repatriated by the middle of this decade. While that means having the community services and supports in place to assist many individuals who may well need continuous care, that care ought to be available as part and parcel of a community versus an institutional setting.

Individuals with intellectual disabilities must be part of, not apart from, our neighbourhoods, new neighbours and new friends.

Secondly, it means guaranteeing aging parents, who long ago chose to raise their child, now adult, at home versus placing their son or daughter in an institution, that there is a safe, secure residential placement or supportive housing unit for that same daughter or son to move into soon. The stress on aging families is enormous, and they need to see some movement to reduce the waiting lists, not just movement whereby a space becomes available for an individual with an intellectual disability because their caregiver has died or is hospitalized. Parents also need to know, as they wait for supportive housing to come on stream or residential placements to become available, that their quality of life will not be diminished because of a reduction of in-home support for their adult sons and daughters.

Aging families need more, not less, support. And they need to be able to receive appropriate and necessary support so that they are never put in a position of second-guessing the decision they made to keep a child, now adult, at home.

Thirdly, it involves recognizing the incredible work done by caregivers—front-line staff workers or family members—and compensating them accordingly. The quality of those already in residential placements or supportive housing, those who are waiting to be placed, of the children supported at integrated schools or child care centres, of adults utilizing day programs, of adults being supported in employment programs is directly related to the skills, the commitment and the morale of those meeting the diverse needs of some of Ontario's most vulnerable adults.

But when front-line staff work day after day for wages that are 25% less than their counterparts in institutions or other public service agencies, sooner or later they do get the message that their work is grossly undervalued and likely to remain the same. So despite their loyalty to the intellectually challenged, they move to other work where they can make financial ends meet and actually get some satisfaction from their skills and the contributions that are being recognized and compensated.

This is what is happening in this sector. The average staff turnover rate is 22%, which is demoralizing for workers, very costly for associations for community living, but most importantly, terribly disruptive and negative for those who really need continuity of care as a starting point for quality care.

If we want capable and committed staff to respond to the needs of intellectually disabled adults, we need to pay front-line workers what they are worth, and that means a whole lot more money than they are now receiving.

Finally, it demands putting in place an Ontarians with Disabilities Act which will truly remove the barriers facing those with intellectual disabilities and allow them to participate fully in all aspects of community life.

I have always felt like I was part of a community, and I suspect most members would feel the same. I don't know what it's like to live outside of or be segregated from the mainstream. I don't want to know what it's like either. No one should be excluded from the community because of a disability. No one should have to live in an institution because of an intellectual disability.

We have an obligation to integrate some of Ontario's most vulnerable citizens into our schools, our workplaces, our recreational facilities, our neighbourhoods. It's the right thing to do. It's what we need to commit to today, on Community Living Day.

VISITORS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd just ask the members to welcome a number of students who are visiting Queen's Park today from the Corrinth Christian School. Please welcome them.

1440

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the Minister of Education. For the last six days you have failed miserably to defend your government's latest attack on public education.

I've asked you to name one organization or even one individual who might be in support of using public dollars for private elite schools, and you have been unable to produce one name.

I've asked you to explain why, and my colleague has asked you to explain why, tax dollars should go to private schools that don't have certified teachers, don't teach the standardized curriculum and don't participate in standardized tests. You've been unable to offer an explanation in that regard as well.

I've asked you why, at a time when today in Ontario we have parents who together with their children are fundraising for textbooks, you've been able to come up with half a billion dollars for private schools.

My question to you, Minister, is, given your failure to explain to Ontario's working families why you are about to do what you are proposing to do, do you not now agree that you should call this off? Understand that you have seen the light and admit that you've been wrong-headed and that you will no longer proceed with your private school voucher plan.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): As I said to the honourable member yesterday—he obviously didn't do it—all he has to do is look at the calls coming into constituency offices, look at the letters to the editor, look at the calls coming into open line shows and look at the correspondence he himself is getting. If he has any doubts about the support the public has for parental choice, he needs to go no further than his own caucus to ask Michael Bryant, Monte Kwinter and other members of his caucus who have supported recognizing and respecting parental choice on this issue.

Mr McGuinty: I want to assure the minister that my caucus is firmly united against private school vouchers.

I want to ask you—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member take his seat. Stop the clock, please.

Sorry for the interruption. Leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: I want to try to determine exactly what it is that you have to do in your Ontario in order to become a school that qualifies for parents who might be entitled to your private school vouchers. We've been able to determine that the only requirement is that they

complete a form, a copy of which I have in my hand. It's called "Notice of Intention to Operate a Private School."

It's just one page. That's it. It is not an application form. There's no application form required. All you have to do is submit a notice of intention. It asks for basic school information, telephone number, fax number, name of the owner, address, school's enrolment, what type of school, whether or not you plan to subscribe to the Ontario curriculum, and it asks, at the end of the day, for a signature. That, apparently, is all that is required in order to be able to access the \$500 million in private school voucher funding.

I'm just wondering: as the minister who is part of a government which is dedicated to accountability, what kind of accountability exists if the only thing you have to do to access \$500 million in private school voucher funding is to complete this form?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, no one is accessing \$500 million worth of vouchers. Again, the honourable leader loves to misrepresent the policy.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education can't say that. I'd ask you to withdraw that.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I withdraw that.

Again, the honourable Leader of the Opposition confuses the policy deliberately here in the House.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Minister of Education, you can't say that as well. You can't say "deliberately" doing that.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I withdraw.

Again the honourable member is stating the case as he sees it. But what surprises me is that he would stand up and try to say that those independent schools are not accountable to the parents who send their children to them, that those independent schools do not offer quality education.

If the honourable member wants to go to the Ottawa Christian School, Redeemer Christian High School, Metcalfe Christian School in his own riding and tell them he doesn't trust, doesn't like and doesn't respect the quality of education in those schools, he should perhaps tell those constituents of his—

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

Mr McGuinty: Working families are trying to understand this inconsistency, Madam Minister. You tell us your government is very committed to ensuring that our hospitals are accountable, that our colleges and universities are accountable, that our school boards are accountable, our municipalities are accountable—you're going to pass a law banning any of those organizations running deficits in Ontario. So I was just wondering why, in that context, you are now saying, "Here are 500 million public dollars," when the only requirement to access that funding is to file with your ministry a notice of intention to operate a private school.

Madam Minister, why not admit you have not thought this one through? This has been universally condemned by all those who are supporters of public education and understand its value for all of us. Why do you not admit you have made a terrible misstep? Why not agree now

that the best thing to do is take this entire plan and throw it in the garbage?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I find it rather shocking that the honourable member does not trust his own constituents, those hard-working parents in his own riding that he says he speaks on behalf of, those parents who send their children to École Parsifal, Lycée Claudel, the Ottawa Christian School, the Redeemer Christian High School, the Metcalfe Christian School. The honourable member stands here and tries to say that parents who choose to send their children to those schools are somehow not equipped to make judgments for their children. I find that quite shocking.

I also find it quite shocking from the honourable member that when his own members are prepared, out of the conviction in their hearts, to speak out in favour of this support—when Michael Bryant said, “I can’t suck and blow on this at the same time,” when Monte Kwinter called on the government to act on this—he now disrespects their views on this matter.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: My next question is also for the Minister of Education. Madam Minister, it’s become painfully obvious that you are unable to defend your policies. While you are working to abandon public education and invite Ontario parents to abandon public education, we’ve been working very hard on putting together a positive plan that would actually support public education.

An important part of our plan—and this will come as no surprise to you, because we’ve been championing this for quite some time—is that we believe our children should be able to enrol in smaller classes. We think there should be a real and hard cap of 20 on class size from JK through grade 3. We know, as you do, that that will improve learning for our children in that early age group.

You said many times that there is no money available for smaller classes in public education, yet you’ve been able to find \$500 million for private, elite schools. Minister, can you tell working families why elite, private schools are a greater priority for you than lowering class sizes in their children’s public schools?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member likes to say he is in favour of smaller class sizes. But the first piece of legislation that was brought in by this government to tell school boards they couldn’t raise class sizes was Bill 160, and the honourable member voted against it. So there we go. The Liberal Party’s view of a definitive policy stand is: on one day they’re for class size, on the other day they’re not for class size. They voted against the only bill.

The only one having difficulty defending his policies in this Legislature is the honourable member. He goes out and says he’s going to fight this tooth and nail. But then he says to the media, “Oh, well, I’m not ideologically opposed to this. Oh, well, it may be OK to have funding for religious schools. Oh, well, maybe we don’t do it now, but maybe we do it later.” Is that how the

honourable member stands up on a matter of principle and fights tooth and nail?

1450

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I am not ashamed to say that I will fight tooth and nail for public education for working families. This is very perverse. It would seem to me that’s the kind of statement you should be making. You should be working hard, day in and day out, to reduce class sizes, to restore enthusiasm in our schools, to bring back extracurricular activities. That’s the kind of responsibility you should be taking on.

Let there be no doubt about the stark and stunning contrast between me and my caucus and you, your Premier and this government. You would have Ontario parents abandon public education. We want to improve public education. We have plans to save public education, and therein at the end of the day lies the difference.

I ask you once again: you tell us you’re committed to public education. Prove it. Give us smaller class sizes for Ontario’s working families and their children.

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member is again sitting here trying to say his position supports public education. Where was he when the first piece of legislation was brought in by this government that said they had to protect special-needs funding? He was against that legislation.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take her seat. Come to order. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. Bill 74 said school boards had to use special-needs money only for special-needs purposes. He voted against that.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take her seat. The member for Windsor-St Clair, come to order. Sorry again, Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: He voted against that legislation that would have protected special-needs and does protect special-needs funding. The only piece of legislation the government has brought in to start saying to boards, “Don’t increase class size,” and he voted against that. We brought in standardized testing. He is against that. We brought in a standardized curriculum. He now wants to water that down. His solution for extracurricular activities was to decrease teacher workload by increasing student workload. That was his commitment. Where was he when we put 360 million new dollars into education—

The Speaker: The minister’s time is up, I’m afraid. Final supplementary?

Mr McGuinty: Minister, it may be painful, but once again I’ll have you revisit the educational status quo in public schools today. We have a crisis in our schools. We have a loss of confidence in the minds of our parents. We have parents and children out there fundraising for textbooks. We have 35,000 children with special needs who can’t get a psychological assessment because we don’t have the necessary funding. That is the state of public education on your watch today in Ontario.

We have a plan to save public education by improving public education. We've talked about it at some length. I put the question to you again: if you are firmly committed to public education, then why won't you invest in smaller classes for Ontario's working families and their children?

Hon Mrs Ecker: We did invest in smaller class sizes. We also backed it up with legislation, which the honourable member opposed. There was \$12.9 billion being spent on public education in 1995. It's now \$13.8 billion and more money in the classroom.

The honourable member likes to talk about his plan. His plan did not do what our education quality reforms are doing: bringing in the new curriculum; testing our students to make sure they are learning it; and a teacher-testing program to make sure all our teachers are getting the supports they need, another initiative the honourable member opposes.

We stand firmly behind public education in this province, because we believe it is very important for the quality of life and our economic prosperity in this province. We also believe in and respect parental choice, both within the public system and outside the public system.

The Speaker: New question?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Your announcement of the \$3,500 tax credit for individuals to send their kids to private school was a bombshell, and still is a bombshell. I've got to tell you, you surprised a lot of Tory members. You also surprised a lot of Liberal members as well. I have to say that during the 1999 election campaign, M. Harris denounced the idea of publicly funding the 700 or so religious schools and the 35 or so non-denominational private schools.

Minister, I want you to confess today: why is your government breaking that promise to the people of Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: No one is breaking any campaign promises. I must say to the member from the NDP, at least we know where the NDP stands on education reform; at least they've been consistent in their opposition on many of the quality improvements that we have brought forward.

Applause.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Yes, the Liberals can applaud the NDP, if they like.

We have been very clear about our commitment to the public education system, about the changes that the public education system needed to have done. Those were things we promised the voters, promised the parents of this province: the new curriculum, the standardized testing, teacher testing, a Safe Schools Act for safer classrooms. Those were all things we promised the voters of this province. Those are all things that we are indeed delivering on.

Mr Marchese: Madam, you need to check the record. This is what the Premier said: "They"—vouchers—"have never been espoused by me or the Minister of Education,

nor have I seen a suggestion anywhere around the cabinet table, nor do I think it will come as long as I'm Premier."

Then you said the following: "We've been very clear that our goal is a good quality public education, and the estimates of \$300 million needed to fund religious schools would be \$300 million that would come out of the public school system." That's what you said. I didn't say that. It was you, Minister, who said that. What do you have to say to your record?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The government stands by its commitments to public education.

Mr Marchese: Minister, I want to be clear, because you said, "I'm clear on our position," and then I read your position and you've got nothing to say. I'm going to be here every day asking you the same question until you confess.

I'm inviting you to come to our summit this Thursday at 6 o'clock at Queen's Park to account for your flip-flop, and I'm inviting the Liberals to account for theirs. M. Kennedy, the education critic, said, "The Liberals say it's an issue of fairness. Private schools do have to be funded but in a way that doesn't hurt public schools."

I invite you, Minister, I invite the Premier, I invite M. McGuinty, I invite M. Kennedy to come and account for your flip-floppery. Please come, because I've got to say, the people who care—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to allow the NDP to move their seats to that side of the House so they can be closer to the government. You ought to be ashamed—

Interjections.

The Speaker: OK, folks, we've had our fun for today. Now I'm going to start naming people. We're not going to waste time with points of order like that. We've had our fun. It's getting noisy. You're all on warning now. I'm going to start to throw people out, so you'd better behave if you want to remain here this afternoon.

Final supplementary.

Mr Marchese: Mr Duncan, I think you have the same position as they do. That's the problem. That's why we invite you to come, with people who care about our public schools who are joining today with New Democrats, to the summit this Thursday at 6 o'clock to defend public education—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member take his seat. The member for Hamilton East, his last warning. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Marchese: We invite everyone to come this Thursday at the summit the New Democrats have called here at Queen's Park at 6 o'clock. We invite the Liberals—McGuinty and their critic, M. Kennedy—and we invite you, Madam, and the Premier to come and account for your flip-flop. Will you come?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The vision of all three parties with duelling pistols at dawn—or sunset, as the case may be—does give one cause for concern here.

The Minister of Education and this government are very happy to confess: to confess to a commitment for public education that has protected money in the classroom, to confess to increasing money for the public education system, over \$316 million just this year alone for our school boards, our schools, our parents, our children in the public education system.

Yes, we confess to giving parents more choice within the public system. Yes, we confess to bringing in higher standards so our students can learn what they need to learn. Yes, we confess to having standardized testing to make sure our students can learn that. If he's asking for a confession as to my commitment and the commitment of my caucus to the public education system, we are very happy to say yes.

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

1500

PLEA BARGAINING

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I've got a question to the Attorney General. A 17-year-old boy, Jeffrey Fleeton, was struck dead by a truck with an illegal, oversized load. Now the company operating that truck is about to be let off scot-free by one of your provincial prosecutors. The charge, you see, is going to be withdrawn: no trial, no conviction, no jail time, no fine, no record, nothing but a \$2,000 donation to a charity for which the company will probably get a tax receipt.

Minister, please tell this House and Jeffrey Fleeton's parents what steps you're going to take today to prevent this outrageous miscarriage of justice scheduled for tomorrow.

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Let me say at the outset that we're all saddened by what was indeed a great tragedy. My thoughts and, I'm sure, the thoughts of all members of this assembly are with the family and their friends. Having said that, this matter is before the courts. In the circumstances, I am simply not in a position to comment further upon it.

Mr Kormos: His family doesn't want the minister's sympathy. His family wants this government's action. You see, two weeks ago this government with great pride said that it's cracking down on criminals, that it's going to make our streets safer for Ontarians. It wasn't safe for Jeffrey Fleeton, a 17-year-old boy out there working at a summer job. You're the Attorney General. This is your provincial prosecutor who has made a decision to plea bargain away a charge where the death of a 17-year-old boy ensued, to plea bargain it away so there isn't even a conviction, isn't even a record—a \$2,000 donation.

It's your job to supervise your prosecutors. I'm calling upon you today, on behalf of all Ontarians, on behalf of justice, for you to intervene and tell your provincial prosecutor to cancel that plea bargain, prosecute that case

to the fullest and seek the maximum penalty. A dead 17-year-old boy and his family deserve that much.

Hon Mr Young: For about 130 years in this province, we have had a tradition; we have constitutional guarantees; we have responsibilities for this Legislative Assembly; we have responsibilities for the courts. There are restrictions that are placed upon me and that have been placed upon Attorneys General before me. My friend opposite has the right to raise issues in the Legislature, as he does. Given the traditions that have developed, the safeguards that are in place, I am not in a position to comment any further at this time.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Minister of Health. You will be familiar with a recent KPMG report prepared for the city of Ottawa addressing the hospital funding issue. The report confirms what the hospitals in Ottawa have been telling us for some time, and that is that they have to contend with a funding inequity. I'll quote from the report. It says, "The inequities in funding are costing Ottawa hospitals between \$50 million and \$70 million per year." Minister, my question is very simple and very direct on behalf of hospitals in the Ottawa area: what are you going to do to address this funding inequity?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can tell the honourable member that we have received this report, which was of course commissioned by the city of Ottawa, and are reviewing it for any legitimate findings that are found in the report. If the honourable member wants to know what we're doing, I can report to this House, as maybe the honourable member well knows, that since the 1995-96 fiscal year, funding to hospitals in Ottawa has gone from \$587,765,607 to \$714,146,622, an increase of 22%.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, if you think you are fulfilling your responsibilities by citing financial data, I would ask you to speak to patients and their families living in the Ottawa area, because they will tell you they've got to contend with longer waiting lists than ever before. They've got to contend with shorter stays in hospitals than ever before. They've got to contend with fewer hospital beds than ever before. They hear stuff about your primary care reform, but that has yet to materialize. That's the experience on the ground.

I'll ask you once more. We have a report now confirming what we've always known, that there is a funding inequity when it comes to your treatment of Ottawa hospitals. On behalf of Ottawa hospitals, on behalf of working families who rely on Ottawa hospitals, what specifically are you going to do, and when are you going to do it when it comes to addressing this funding inequity?

Hon Mr Clement: I can say this: we are still trying to track down where the report's information comes from, because it is not related to any information we have. It was a report commissioned by the city of Ottawa. The

Ottawa mayor, Bob Chiarelli, might know something about where some of these numbers come from. They don't come from Ministry of Health data or data from the hospitals, so from that perspective I'm at a bit of a loss to respond to numbers that don't seem to match with the published accounts of the government of Ontario.

I can tell the honourable member that from 1995-96 to the fiscal year just ending, the increase to the city of Ottawa hospitals was \$126,381,015 of taxpayers' hard-earned money for the care that we find on hospital campuses, that is needed on hospital campuses. We have been there for Ottawa hospitals just as we have been there for hospitals throughout Ontario because that is the locus of patient care. We are there; the hospital funding is up. We are concerned about sustainability of the health care system which, if the honourable member has any thoughts on, we'd be happy to share—

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

YOUNG ENTREPRENEUR PROGRAM

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Summer is approaching, and that means many of Ontario's young people are looking for jobs to help pay their way through school. Many will be able to find jobs at one of Ontario's premier tourist attractions or at theme parks or restaurants in their hometowns. However, there are many other young people who are looking for something more.

I understand that you were part of an announcement last week that will give young Ontarians the opportunity to try their hand at running their own businesses this summer. Minister, could you please explain why this program is important and what our government has committed to it?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): I want to thank the member for York North for the question. Last week, along with representatives from the Royal Bank and Junior Achievement, we officially launched Ontario's young entrepreneurs strategy. The strategy was created to encourage entrepreneurship as a career choice and to provide young people with business training, mentoring and financial help to start up their own businesses.

Our government has committed \$15 million over four years to this program. We feel that giving our young people a chance to learn about being in business and helping them get a new business successfully up and running is a smart and sensible investment in the future of the province.

Mrs Munro: I thank the minister for his answer. Minister, young people are the future of this province, and I'm pleased to hear that our government is ready to give them a chance to try something new. Opportunities like this can make a huge difference in a young person's life.

You stated that you have committed \$15 million to this program. Could you please explain exactly how this money will be spent and how the program is going to teach our youth about the benefits of being their own boss?

Hon Mr Runciman: The strategy has three different components and will reach 2.5 million students and their parents. The first component, future entrepreneurs, is a program for the classroom that introduces the idea of entrepreneurship to grade 7 and 8 students. The second component, Summer Company, provides hands-on business training and mentoring, along with awards of up to \$3,000, for 15- to 29-year-olds to help them start up a summer business. Finally, the third component, My Company, is a partnership with the Royal Bank that combines hands-on business training and low-interest loans up to \$15,000 to help 18- to 29-year-olds start up their own permanent businesses.

1510

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Education. Yesterday, the Premier was asked about the private school voucher. He was asked why he was doing this private school voucher. He suggested it was a sense of fairness, that the issue was one of fairness. He suggested it was unfair to pay for a system you don't use.

I'd like to know if you, as the Minister of Education, stand by these remarks of your Premier, when I, who don't have children, and many people like me who don't have children, pay education taxes and have for a long time. I'm going to surmise, then, that I too will be getting a tax credit. Is that the case?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I would like to congratulate the honourable member for her support of hospitals, schools and roads by paying her taxes. We do respect her choice by giving back some of her taxes. You have a tax cut. You have the choice about where you want to spend that money according to your own priorities, according to what you believe is in the best interests of your family. We respect that with taxpayers. We respect that with parents in terms of parental choice.

You as a party have talked about the need for parental choice in the public system. We agree with that. But we also think you need to respect parental choice: those who may wish to go to independent schools, who may wish to go to schools that more closely reflect their religious or cultural values.

Mrs Pupatello: That's exactly the point: you have taken \$1.8 billion out of the public education system since you took office, and now you're turning over \$500 million to a private school voucher system that all children cannot benefit from. I am telling you, Minister, on behalf of most of the people in Ontario—whether we pay taxes or don't pay taxes, what systems we support or don't support—that all of us agree, as Canadians, that the

basic tenet of good public policy is that it's not about who's paying but that all of us can benefit from that good public policy.

You have not thought through this policy. The Premier says one thing. The Minister of Education says another. Your own caucus members are surprised to find elements of a private school voucher in a budget document. I ask you again: is this a matter of fairness? If it is, this is going down a road that you owed the people of Ontario that question when they went to the ballot box in 1999 and did not ask this most significant question. I suggest that you go back to the drawing board, because this is not a question of fairness.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I don't know where else the honourable member would expect to find a government statement of tax policy but in the budget. That's where you usually put these things.

Secondly, she can misinterpret or misconstrue what the Premier is saying, because that's not what he said. He is committed to the public system. He is committed to excellence in the public system. That is very clear.

Thirdly, in 1995 we were spending \$12.9 billion on the public education system. Today we are going to be spending \$13.8 billion. That's an increase. To the honourable member, even in the Liberal new math, that is an increase for our public education system, support that system very much needs.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is also for the Minister of Education. Last week, after years of consultation with stakeholders, the government made a very responsible announcement about accountability for our educational system. We introduced a new concept to the Liberals: parental choice. They're having some problems with it.

I have received numerous calls and e-mails from constituents in the riding of Durham and elsewhere, people like Dirk Mostert, Leonard and Theresa Corvers, Barry Thompson, Harry Salomons, Linda Jansma and Carla Witvoet, to name a few. I have been hearing from hard-working families who have struggled to provide this type of education for their children. In much of what I have heard, there seem to be four common themes: choice, quality, accountability and fairness.

Minister, would you please tell not just parents in my riding but all the parents of Ontario about the advantages they will have with the decision made by this government?

Hon Mrs Ecker: To the list of people who support this initiative we can add Monte Kwinter, Michael Bryant, and obviously today Gerard Kennedy. Thank you very much.

This initiative is about supporting parental choice. I know the honourable members across the way in the opposition like to say that somehow or other this is something that's supporting the elite. Far from it. We have many letters and comments from people who talk about the hardship for middle-class parents who may wish to make this choice. Frankly, in more than 95% of the independent schools that belong to the Ontario

Federation of Independent Schools, the students are the children of ordinary middle-class, hard-working Ontario families. We support parental choice here in Ontario, just like other provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, Manitoba. This is not a revolutionary concept. This is something that helps support parental choice, in making choices they believe are in the best interests of their children.

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

Mr O'Toole: Thank you for that very comprehensive response, Minister. It's becoming much clearer, hopefully, on the other side. As you've said, other supporters agree that this decision will help hard-working families in our communities who want a clear choice in educating their children. Will you please tell not just me but other members in the House how this decision will help parents and students ensure they receive the best possible education, whether they attend an independent school, like Knox Christian School in my riding, or any public school in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I agree with the honourable member that not only do we have many excellent public schools in this province with teachers who are very committed and go above and beyond for the children in this system, but we also have independent schools, in my riding, in his riding, in the ridings of the members opposite, that are also very excellent schools.

We believe we have a track record that shows we are committed to excellence in education for our children. That's why we have taken the steps we've taken in the public education system to strengthen the curriculum, to bring in a Safe Schools Act, to bring in legislation that prevents school boards from using money in places where they shouldn't take classroom dollars. All of those are steps we have taken because of a commitment to public education: more money, new money, new investments in the classroom because we know they are needed to make sure our children get the best education possible.

TRANSIT SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of Transportation. We have an emergency situation facing our public transit system in Toronto. Brian Ashton, chair of the TTC, warns that the system that more than a million people depend on every day will see major cuts to subway and streetcar services. We're talking about cuts to the very heart of the system. The NDP has put forward a solution called the transportation trust fund. It is a dedicated fund that takes two cents out of the existing gas tax to provide \$180 million a year for transit and \$120 million for local road repairs. Minister, will you support our transportation trust fund?

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Transportation): What's startling about the question is that she's giving absolutely no credit to this government in terms of its commitment to transit in Ontario. If you go back, we

have given the city of Toronto \$829 million for a subway. We increased it by \$50 million to \$879 million. We added \$250 million just recently into regional transit, and we've invested \$500 million and convinced the federal government and the city of Toronto to equal that for transit. Quite clearly this government is committed and will continue to be committed to transit. We want to get on with these developments.

Ms Churley: That was a disingenuous answer. This government has totally withdrawn from transit and local road supports in Ontario. Toronto is the only jurisdiction in North America that does not get operating funds from a government. In this budget—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Member take her seat. Stop the clock. The member for Scarborough East, this is his last warning as well. I'm not going to put up with the continued yelling across. I've yelled order a couple of times. Sorry for the interruption.

1520

Ms Churley: In this budget, your government gave the TTC the back of your hand once again. You provided not one red cent for our subways, our streetcars and our buses, yet you've got funding for seven new expressways elsewhere in the province.

Minister, I'm going to ask you again. We have a solution that the TTC likes and others like. It's a good solution. It is a viable solution: take two cents out of the existing gas tax and provide that funding, dedicated funding—every year it's there, and they can depend on it. Will you commit to funding the TTC here in Toronto today?

Hon Mr Clark: I thank the member for the question again. She still doesn't get it. This government has spent \$829 million on the Sheppard subway line. We committed to paying 75% for that subway line and we included up to \$50 million more. So we're now at \$879 million for the Sheppard subway run. On top of that, we have \$500 million for the waterfront projects. On top of that, we just included \$250 million for interregional transit.

The member doesn't understand it. Maybe she should listen to Minister Collenette, who stated, "It's not just about public transit. It's about long-term planning of how we develop and use our land. That's why we need to approach this together," which we're doing, with Smart Growth.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FINANCING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is to the new Minister of Transportation as well. In the wake of last week's budget, I would like you to clarify why your government is really not honouring its commitment to the roadways in our particular area as well. I would like to remind the minister that 250 miles from here is a fast-growing community, the fastest growing in Canada over the last decade, and the fourth-largest

community in Canada. There is no appropriate funding in the budget that deals with the massive infrastructure needs in the city of Ottawa.

When you look at the budget, it almost completely avoids any responsibility. The budget says, "The government will examine the options and timing for widening ... of Highway 417." Then, "The government will also use this investment to cost-share other projects determined in consultation with the city of Ottawa." This is code for delaying and deferring. We are looking for commitment, not cost-sharing on provincial projects, not studies, not options and not consultations.

Minister, can you explain to the people of Ottawa why this growing contributor to the coffers of the province is getting proportionately less and less of a contribution to address its infrastructure needs?

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Transportation): I thank the member for Ottawa Centre for the question. Quite clearly in the budget we announced \$250 million, which was a part of the SuperBuild Millennium Partnerships initiative; \$70 million of that was addressing Ottawa's issues.

It's important for the member also to remember that since 1995 we have invested \$500 million in the Ottawa area. The member, when he starts to talk about a number of the planning issues that are underway—and I understand that the mayor of Ottawa believes he should simply be able to point to an area out there and say, "Build a road there." We don't do that over here.

What we have underway right now are a number of needs assessments for a number of portions of the highways. We're now looking at the Ottawa ring road and we're co-operating with the city of Ottawa on that particular project. We're looking at two different studies that are already underway looking at operational design for the extension of Highway 417. Quite clearly, the mayor doesn't understand that you have to design the highway before—

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

Mr Patten: I would suggest that the new Minister of Transportation take a look at the wording in the budget, because it says "Up to \$70 million" and it says "to cost-share," and that usually means that you put in your 50%, we claim the whole amount and call it \$70 million, and then you call upon the city to put in \$35 million that they don't have because you removed the commitment to fund them in the amalgamation for over \$100 million.

We're talking about a very fast-growing city, one that contributes to the coffers of this particular province. The ring road has been messed around with for eight years. It is not a priority for the city. The expansion of the highway is, yes. There are a number of things. The city is ready to move right now. You've got all the studies, all the things you need to do. All this means, and what you're saying, is deferring, delaying. Maybe by the year 2005 you might have some kind of a contribution in this. You don't even have an agreement with the federal government on their infrastructure arrangement to be able

to get some resources to put in this area. Are you going to take some particular action and do it now?

Hon Mr Clark: I thank the member for the question. Maybe he doesn't think there's a need for the ring road, but we believe there's a need to not only assess it, but to get on with it.

Quite ironically, I met with Minister Collenette, not a couple of weeks ago. I sat down talking to him specifically about some of the issues in Ottawa and across the province, and how we work together to develop non-partisan, tri-governmental partnerships. The minister has stated himself that the amount of money that the federal government is putting into transportation is a drop in the bucket. He has committed to working with me and with the municipalities to develop these tri-governmental proposals and partnerships. We're anticipating very clearly he will be at the table. We're also anticipating that the municipalities will be at the table.

It's sad that in Ottawa the mayor is more interested in throwing rhetoric around and pointing fingers and trying to aggravate things as opposed to sitting down. When I sat down with the mayor, I asked him to work with me on these projects. He has never called me. He has never picked up the phone. I asked him to work with me. He didn't do it, but Minister Collenette is working with this government.

ELECTRONIC MONITORING

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question today is for the Minister of Correctional Services. Minister, as part of our government's ongoing commitment to making communities safer, the Mike Harris government announced in the budget that \$2 million has been allocated to your ministry for electronic monitoring of offenders who are serving their sentences in the communities.

I am aware that electronic monitoring allows us to increase public safety by monitoring offenders in the community and holds them accountable for their actions. Can you tell us more about electronic monitoring and the types of offenders who would qualify for this particular program?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): To my colleague from Simcoe North, I want to start off by saying electronic monitoring is just one of the tools that we use in corrections to help us better control and monitor individuals who are either released from institutions under a temporary release program or released from institutions as a result of a parole program or sentenced by the courts directly to community-type sentencing. It's just one of the many tools that we put in the hands of probation and parole officers and institutional managers to make sure that we have a full and comprehensive ability to manage and track these individuals and to apply what the courts have asked us to apply as it relates to any particular type of community incarceration to these individuals throughout their com-

munity sentence or, as I say, as a result of some institutional release program.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you for that response, Minister. Yesterday I read in the Toronto Star that you are looking at other types of technology and planning on expanding the use of electronic monitoring with a private partner.

Can you tell us why you need to look at other technology than the devices you are currently using, and if they are indeed effective or not?

Hon Mr Sampson: We started the electronic monitoring program in 1995, using the technology that was available then, and we've used it as extensively as we possibly could. But of course the way technology has gone over the last while, it has developed. There are other types of technologies that can be used to help us apply a full range of monitoring to the individuals released to community sentences or, as I said, released in some way or another from institutions. So we're taking a look at these technologies. They are in fact being used in other jurisdictions around this world quite effectively to help, again, properly equip probation and parole officers with the full range of tools so that we know where these individuals are when they are released to communities, and we know on a regular basis how we can get in touch with them should we have to do that. We'll look at the full range of technology. It's something we should do, and we will be doing it.

1530

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, my office has received letters and calls from municipalities across Algoma-Manitoulin: for example, the town of Espanola, Gordon township, Northeastern Manitoulin and The Islands, the township of Baldwin, Assiginack, the township of Central Manitoulin, the township of Sables-Spanish Rivers, the township of Nairn and Hyman and many others. Each of these communities has the same problem: a significant budget shortfall as a result of your government's downloading. You've created an extra level of government in northern Ontario with the DSSABs, and now they are billing municipalities to pay for downloaded services such as land ambulance, social services and social housing.

Can you stand here today and assure the communities in my constituency that you will increase the community reinvestment fund to offset the increases faced as a result of your government's downloading?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I appreciate the question because that term has been used quite a bit in the media. I think the honourable member would know that there was a trade that took place because municipalities asked for some stability around their property tax base. Education each year on average went up about 10%. They asked for that to be stopped because that eroded their ability to plan and

predict for hard services. We did that. It was a \$2.5-billion trade, uploading half the cost of residential plus the children's aid; these are uploaded costs.

What went to the municipalities were other services that are best handled at the local level. If you want me to review the numbers for your particular municipalities, I'd be more than willing to do that.

Mr Brown: The minister knows that what he just said is more fiction than fact.

Minister, I'd like to quote to you the mayor of Northeastern Manitoulin and The Islands, Ken Ferguson, a mayor you probably know very well on your side. He says, "Our community has many seniors and individuals on a fixed income; the added taxation will be too much for many to afford without experiencing significant difficulties in their day-to-day modest lifestyles." He goes on to write, "I am certain that it was never the intent of this province to create a situation where local municipal services were eroded by squeezing provincially mandated services into an already tight municipal tax structure."

Minister, will you stand here and tell Mayor Ferguson and all the other communities of Algoma-Manitoulin that you will adjust the CRF so that these communities do not have to increase their property taxes? Mr Ferguson is telling us that the increases in NEMI will be between 16% and 50%, depending on the ward.

Hon Mr Hodgson: I will undertake to review their numbers. I can tell you that when I was on municipal council, we always felt that at the local level we knew what was going on. We could run things better than Queen's Park. If your councils are saying that with these new services they can't run it as well as Queen's Park did before the trade, I can look into that.

I can tell you that the trades were to the benefit of municipalities, and we can show you the numbers on that. The children's aid alone has gone up dramatically. That is no longer borne on the property tax rate. You can take a look at education; the rate has actually gone down on the residential property tax. It has allowed municipalities more stability and more predictability on their tax base to plan for hard services. That's what AMO and others asked for for a generation. If you want to review those trades, I'd be willing to look at that.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Attorney General. My constituents and I were very surprised to read that CAVEAT, Canadians against violence, will close its doors at the end of the month. In 1991, Nina de Villiers was murdered by a violent offender who was out on bail. This violent offender had a long history of predatory attacks on women. Priscilla de Villiers began a crusade to put justice back into the justice system. She made it her mission to ensure that victims of crime would have a voice in a system that too often considered victims a nuisance. Mrs de Villiers

founded CAVEAT to offer victims a sense of hope and to fight for their right to be heard.

Minister, can you assure this House that CAVEAT's work on behalf of all victims will not have been in vain?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I would like to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for this question.

This is an opportunity for us to pay tribute to Priscilla de Villiers for all of her tireless work on behalf of victims of crime. She clearly experienced what is undoubtedly a parent's worst nightmare. Yet somehow she found the strength to carry on and work for change. She worked and she made a difference.

The Mike Harris government has always been anxious to work, and has in the past worked, with CAVEAT, and I want to say publicly here that we're committed to continuing to work with victims of crime.

I say to you that we are reviewing her current report—the report from CAVEAT. In fact we are utilizing many portions of it in some initiatives that are coming forward from my ministry.

Ms Mushinski: I'd like to thank the minister for that response. I think all members of this House would agree that Priscilla de Villiers has made a positive and important impact on the justice system in Ontario and indeed in Canada.

I for one am very proud that the Mike Harris government has worked hard to change the justice system on behalf of victims. I only wish the federal government would listen to the cries of victims and finally get tough on crime.

Minister, I'm concerned that in the absence of CAVEAT, victims will not have access to programs that support them in their hour of greatest need. Can you assure my constituents of Scarborough Centre that under the Mike Harris government the concerns of victims will not be ignored?

Hon Mr Young: I can assure you, Mr Speaker, and indeed the people of Ontario, that the Mike Harris government will continue, as it always has in the past, to firmly stand on the side of victims.

This government has taken action to ensure that victims are treated with respect throughout the justice system and receive the services they require. The Victims' Bill of Rights, proclaimed in 1996, was indeed an important step forward. It acknowledged that there are needs of victims, and it travelled great lengths to addressing those needs. But there was more to do after the passage and proclamation of that bill of rights, and we have done more. In the past fiscal year, 2000-01, we spent approximately \$135 million on in excess of 40 programs that will help and assist victims across this province.

DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Front-line workers who care for Ontarians who are developmentally disabled

are chronically underpaid, and they want to know what you're going to do about it. The government's own study shows wages and benefits for these workers are seriously out of whack with other social workers. They earn as much as 25% less. Those low wages are feeding huge staff turnover rates as high as 22%. The developmentally disabled deserve dependable, high-quality care. Will you help bring stability back to the system and raise those workers' salaries?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Our government has listened to people with developmental disabilities and their families, and I can tell you that we certainly have a lot of respect for the courage with which they face these challenges.

They told us that they need more flexible supports to live in the community, and that's why in the May 2001 budget we provided an additional \$55 million in annual funding this year, growing to an annual increase of almost \$200 million over current levels by 2006.

On top of this, we'll help meet demands for new facilities for people with developmental disabilities through an additional five-year, \$67-million commitment toward the construction of new facilities to meet their needs.

We've consulted with this community. Clearly we have a lot of empathy for them and clearly we've come to the table with substantial money in the new budget.

Mr Martin: Everybody knows that you're allotting more money to help the developmentally disabled this year, but there's widespread agreement that workers' wage hikes must be a part of that package.

Minister, those workers are here in the gallery today, ready to jump at the chance to meet with you and make a deal. Every year, almost one in four workers leaves the sector because they're underpaid.

Will you help the disabled and their families who depend so much on these workers and hammer out a deal to raise their wages?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I can only hope to point out again to the member that we have a substantial amount of assistance in the budget that was just announced. I would assume that \$55 million, increasing to \$200 million over a period of two years, is substantial funding.

I can only add to this that perhaps I can help with quotes from some of the people in that community. June Chiu, the president, and Agnes Samler, the executive director, of the Toronto Association for Community Living, said, "Minister Flaherty's announcement ... will help us meet the critical and increasing needs of people with an intellectual disability and their families ... above all, we are relieved to see that there is commitment to a multi-year plan for this sector."

It goes on to say, "Once again, we commend you and your government for recognizing and valuing the lives of people with intellectual disabilities."

Clearly these are people who provide in this community, who are very satisfied with the efforts the government has made to address this issue.

1540

CLINICAL RESEARCH

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a question for the Minister of Health. You will be aware that media headlines today are celebrating exciting advances in research that will aid in the treatment of breast cancer. At the same time as we join in that celebration, I want to bring to your attention the fact that there is another piece of leading research that could be of enormous benefit to women in this province, in this country and indeed across the world. The research is into a new treatment for fibroids called uterine fibroid embolization. It involves 550 women across Ontario. The study includes seven hospitals and three of our research institutions. It is the world's largest study into an alternative to hysterectomy.

This trial could lead to the kind of alternative treatment that would mean 20,000 women a year in this province do not have to face a hysterectomy. That could mean in turn that 10,000 hospital days could be saved. Yet this research is in danger of being cut off at the clinical trial stage because of a lack of funding.

Minister, I ask you today, will you undertake to find the ways and means to ensure this important clinical research can proceed in the interests of those 20,000 Ontario women a year who could be spared the risks of surgery and the complications of hysterectomy?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question. I can report to her and to this House that I am aware of the research being done in this area. It is in the early experimental stages at present. I have had a conversation with one of the researchers, as well as with the Women's Health Council, which as you know was appointed by my predecessor to fund, through a \$10-million-per-year funding from the provincial government, initiatives and research in this area. So the discussions are ongoing, but I will take the honourable member's suggestions under advisement.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The time for question period is over.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin, the members may know that today is the 25th anniversary of the intern program. Jackie Scott, the aunt of one of our interns, Rachel Sheer, is in the public gallery. She is visiting from Castle Acre, Norfolk, England, and we would like to welcome her today.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Davenport has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Citizenship concerning

settlement and integration services and federal-provincial agreements. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

VISITOR

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to welcome the students from Prince of Wales school in Peterborough. Welcome, guys.

PETITIONS

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Just before I go to petitions, I want to tell Auntie Jackie that Rachel Sheer is in my office doing an excellent job. So you can go back to England and tell everyone just how professional she really is.

I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature. It's northerners demanding the Harris government eliminate health care apartheid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 306 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."

AIR QUALITY

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

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

"Whereas the Nanticoke plant, which has more than doubled its dangerous emissions under the Harris government, is now the worst polluter in all of Canada, spewing out over five million kilograms"—that probably should be kilotons, I would think, Mr Speaker—"of toxic chemicals each year, including many cancer-causing chemicals and mercury, a potent and dangerous neurotoxin; and

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

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

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

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

I affix my signature. I'm in agreement.

ELECTRICITY GENERATING STATION

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I have pleasure in presenting this petition on behalf of the member for Oakville, Gary Carr, and myself. This is a critical petition with literally thousands of names. It reads as follows, to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas Sithe Energies Canadian Development Ltd is actively pursuing the development of an 800 MW electricity generating facility;

“Whereas the 14-hectare parcel of land on which the station is proposed is located on the east side of Winston Churchill Boulevard in the Southdown industrial district of Mississauga;

“Whereas Sithe has stated its commitment to an open dialogue with communities where it has a presence and to being responsive to the concerns of the same; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has a responsibility to ensure the safety of Ontario citizens and to determine how this facility will impact those who live in its immediate, surrounding area,

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

“That the government of Ontario direct the Ministry of the Environment to undertake a formal environmental assessment of the Sithe project.”

This project is in my riding and abuts the riding of Oakville. I have pleasure in signing it in support.

SALE OF SCHOOLS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition which reads as follows:

“Whereas the 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 (TDSB);

“Whereas the city of Toronto has issued a building permit permitting the reconstruction of Hughes Public School for an entity called Beatrice House...;

“Whereas the Beatrice House is not a private school registered with the Ministry of Education...;

“Whereas within the context of the zoning bylaw ... the subject lands have been designated as R2 Z0.6 and permits a ‘private academic, philanthropic or religious school’;

“Whereas the TDSB has chosen not to lease the subject premises to a computer training company for \$1.25 million annually. Instead, the board has chosen to lease it to Beatrice House for a fraction of the current market value...;

“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...;

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

“(3) Toronto District School Board has not dealt in good faith with the neighbourhood residents;

“Therefore, we respectfully ask you,” as minister, “to reconsider 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’m in agreement with this petition, I’m delighted to sign it as well.

1550

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition from over 300 good citizens of the riding of Cambridge to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas on September 27, 1997, Cambridge was legally designated underserved, having an insufficient number of family doctors for its citizens; and

“Whereas thousands of men, women and children in Cambridge are not cared for by their own family physician and this unfortunate situation exists in other Ontario communities;

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

“That the Ontario government substantially increase the number of family doctors in Cambridge and other underserved areas by:

“(1) permitting substantial numbers of qualified and highly competent foreign-trained family doctors the right to practise in Cambridge and other underserved areas in Ontario; and

“(2) substantially increase the number of available student spaces in Ontario medical schools and require new graduates to serve in Cambridge and other underserved areas in Ontario.”

I affix my name thereto.

FRAIS DE TRANSPORT AUX FINS MÉDICALES

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): J’ai une pétition à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de la part des gens du nord qui exigent que le gouvernement Harris mette fin à l’apartheid en matière de soins de santé.

« Attendu que, d’une part, le programme de subventions accordées aux résidents du nord de l’Ontario pour frais de transport à des fins médicales offre un remboursement partiel au taux de 30,4 cents par kilomètre à aller seulement, à l’intention des personnes atteintes de cancer, et que, d’autre part, la politique de déplacement pour les gens du sud de l’Ontario rembourse en entier les coûts de transport, de repas et d’hébergement ;

« Attendu qu’une tumeur cancéreuse ne connaît aucune politique de transport pour les soins de santé ni de région géographique ;

« Attendu qu’un sondage de recherche Oracle publié récemment confirme que 92 % des Ontariens appuient un financement égal de transport à des fins médicales ;

« Attendu que les résidents du nord de l’Ontario paient le même montant d’impôts et ont droit aux mêmes accès

aux soins de santé, ainsi qu'à tous les services du gouvernement et à tous les droits de la personne inhérents que les autres résidents de la province »; et finalement,

« Attendu que nous soutenons les efforts de Ontarians Seeking Equal Cancer Care, une association récemment fondée par Gerry Lougheed, ancien président de Action Cancer Ontario, région du nord-est, afin de redresser cette injustice envers les personnes du nord de l'Ontario qui doivent se déplacer pour recevoir des traitements anticancéreux ;

« En conséquence, il est résolu que les soussignés exigent que le gouvernement Mike Harris propose immédiatement de financer en entier les frais de transport à l'intention des résidents du nord de l'Ontario atteints de cancer et de mettre fin à l'apartheid qui existe présentement dans la province de l'Ontario en matière de soins de santé. »

J'appose ma signature.

HORSE RIDING SAFETY

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I have petitions here signed by people from Waterloo, Ontario, Elmira, Dundas, Burlington, Kilbride, Puslinch, Carlisle and Oakville.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas many of these inexperienced riders are children; and

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

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

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

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

I am pleased to submit this to the assembly.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

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

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

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

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

It's signed by a number of residents from Tilbury, Blenheim and Chatham, and I have signed this petition.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I have a petition signed by 320 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.”

PROSTATE CANCER

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas prostate cancer is one of the leading causes of fatal cancer in Ontario;

“Whereas prostate cancer is the second leading cause of fatal cancers for males;

“Whereas early detection is one of the best tools for being victorious in our battle against cancer;

“Whereas the early detection blood test known as PSA (prostate specific antigen) is one of the most effective tests at diagnosing early prostate cancer;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to encourage the Ministry of Health to have this test added to the list of services covered by OHIP, and that this be done immediately in order for us to save lives and beat prostate cancer.”

I affix my signature to this petition.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2001 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 10, 2001, on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I appreciate the opportunity to give the leadoff speech in response to the budget on behalf of the NDP caucus.

Let me begin my remarks by taking a look at the economic framework that we have in front of us with which to measure the budget. Just today, I'm sure members will know, especially those on the government side with huge stock portfolios, the federal reserve—well, I've already got O'Toole up on his legs, so it's already a successful speech and I'm not even one minute in—announced that they were cutting interest rates by a further 50 basis points. That's half a percentage.

Some will see that as good news, and the markets may indeed respond short-term as a result of that. But for those who watch the market and watch interest rates and watch what the federal reserve is doing, they will know that an abrupt drop like this, while good news and providing a bit of a jolt to the American economy, particularly the stock market, also suggests very clearly what the federal reserve sees six, nine, 12 months down the road, which of course is what they're looking at. If you accept the notion that markets are reflecting where investors think the economy is going to be in six months, nine months or 12 months, as opposed to where they think it's going to be today or tomorrow, this is horrible news. It suggests that as they look down the road, things are going to get worse. If they didn't, they wouldn't have cut it by as much.

I think it's worth noting that since the beginning of the year there have been five occasions—one of them was a total surprise, the one on April 18; totally unexpected—and again, every one of them was a 50-basis-point drop. That is big. Normally it's 25. Fifty is not the usual, and here we have since the beginning of this year the fifth drop.

Why do I bother raising all of this in the context of the budget? Because one of the first things we have to do is look at the assumptions the government makes, because that's what tells us what they think their revenue is going to be, and then you compare that to what they think their expenditures are going to be and that, in a rough form, tells you whether or not you've got a balanced budget. So for a government that wants and needs to show a balanced budget, one of the ways of giving off that impression is to use assumptions that are, to say the least, a little optimistic. You're looking at 2.2% growth. You've got no wiggle room in this budget if that's not delivered. If we don't get 2.2% growth—and that's why I

mentioned the announcement today—what it suggests is that for the bulk of the time that this budget is going to cover in the fiscal 2001-02, the federal reserve, arguably the single most important entity in determining where the major economies of the world are going, sees bad news, continuing bad news.

As I mentioned, when we started our public hearings in the finance committee on the upcoming budget, we started with a minister, just prior to the opening hearings, talking about growth at over 3%. That got revised. Then we heard, in front of the committee, the economists come in and suggest that things were fairly good and that Ontario should be in a good position to withstand some of the downturn because of the new diversification that we have in Ontario. Again, the government is trying to de-link the negative aspect of the American economy and the potential for the future of our own economy here.

During the course of our public hearings, Nortel did its swan dive and there went the rest of the NASDAQ with it, and the whole tech side was at one point down—I think they're up a little now—over 60% in value. This was the area of the economy this government said was going to save us from a downturn elsewhere. Well, suddenly we start getting revisions and the government starts backpedalling faster than an Olympic racer as they start lowering their expectations.

Now we're at 2.2%. I want to say very clearly that I don't believe you're going to hit 2.2%. You don't even know for sure whether or not we're going to go into a recession—a recession defined by two quarters of negative growth. We're not there yet. I hope we don't go there, but it doesn't look good right now. Today's announcement is bad news for Ontario. What that means is that if this 2.2% doesn't hold, because you've got legislation now that says there has to be a balanced budget, the only way it can happen is more cuts.

I'm going to spend some of my time today talking about the cuts and the continuing damage this government is doing to the key quality-of-life factors, such as health care, education, environmental protection and the provision of affordable energy. All of these things are damaged by your budget, and that's based on the 2.2% growth assumption. If that falls, all the other areas and everything I say today is worse in six or eight or 12 months. In order to meet their new arbitrary law that there can't be any kind of a deficit—it doesn't matter how many hospitals are in crisis; it doesn't matter how many schoolrooms are in crisis—that legislation will take priority and you will start slashing even further.

The government has tried to tell us all along that this economic boom we enjoyed, and we did, the longest economic boom in North American history, the longest bull run on the markets in history—this government said they were going to cut taxes and slash spending to pay for it, and that that was going to give us a buoyant economy. Right or wrong, given the kind of economy we had, of course the numbers went up and of course revenue went up. The real test, and we said this all along, is when the economy starts to cool down, because then

the smoke will clear and we'll be left with the facts. The facts are already there now, and the facts show that when the American economy goes up, we go up with it, especially Ontario because of our linkage to the American auto industry, actually the integrated auto industry we have in North America.

Conversely, when that economy cools, we will too. The government said, "No, the American economy has nothing to do with it. It might provide a little bit of influence here and there, but by and large, it's the agenda of the Mike Harris government that's going to make the economy work." The test of that can only be when the American economy cools. That's what is happening now, and what is happening in Ontario? We're getting the cold. It's cooling. If they slip into even borderline recession, we're going to have pneumonia, and all your tax cuts in the world aren't going to make any difference at all. They never did, certainly not to the extent that you're talking about and that you have bragged about.

We, in this caucus, have said that a tax cut in Ontario has absolutely nothing to do with whether somebody who lives in Wisconsin buys a new car, and yet when they buy that new car, our economy benefits because of the integration of the auto industry, because of the Auto Pact, which we've also lost. Now, with that citizen in Wisconsin not buying the auto, your tax cuts mean nothing because there is no demand.

1610

While all this is going on on the economic front, we're left with a scorched earth policy in terms of anything that has to do with creating and maintaining the kind of society that has made this one of the best places in the world to live, as decided by the United Nations on a number of occasions.

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I hear muttering from the government benches. I didn't hear it all. If he wants to heckle, he should do it a little louder so at least I can respond. If you mutter, I can't hear you. Now he doesn't want to, so I guess it wasn't that important after all.

Let's take a look at some of the key things—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Why do you start mumbling as soon as I speak? I give you a chance to heckle and say your bit and you clam up, but as soon as I start up again, you start mumbling. Which is it?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): You didn't say it. Relax.

Mr Christopherson: You jump in too and we'll make it two to one. How's that?

Let me deal with a couple of aspects of the budget itself, having outlined the context for this budget and where I think, unfortunately, we're going to be in a few months. What exactly is going to happen, for instance, to our health care system?

The government right off the bat in this budget—we have heard members of the government talk about the fact that they're increasing spending in health care by \$1.2 billion and isn't that wonderful? "We care about

health care. We're going to make sure there's \$1.2 billion invested in health care." Number one, it doesn't meet the need. Yes, you can announce it's a higher number, but the higher number doesn't mean anything if the demand by virtue of inflation—although it's not rampant right now, cumulatively there's a cost—an aging population, meaning more health care, and yes, health care is costing more, and just growth in the population which also places demand—if you don't meet at least those three drivers of costs, then there's not going to be enough money.

What's really insulting about this is that of the \$1.2 billion, \$1.05 billion is federal money. It's not even your money. It's not even money you've made it a priority to spend. It's money the feds gave as a result of the agreement that was reached with the provinces—and believe me, the federal Liberals have a lot to answer for too—and you took that \$1.05 billion and you added \$150 million, which is not a lot of money in the context of this budget; \$150 million is not very much. That's how much of your budget you were prepared to put in health care: \$2.4 billion in tax cuts for corporations and \$150 million for health care, but you stand up and brag about \$1.2 billion and all but \$150 million is not even your money. You just took the money from the feds, put it in the budget, added a little bit of change and said, "We're investing \$1.2 billion." What a scam for a government that talks about wanting to be up front and transparent.

What of that announcement of the \$1.2 billion? It's interesting. The president of the Ontario Hospital Association, Mr David MacKinnon, said this: "The failure to provide funding for a growing and aging population and other cost pressures will mean real reductions in essential medical services and longer waiting times," said a visibly angry MacKinnon on budget day."

How does your government respond? "For too long in this province we have rewarded poor performance by funding hospital deficits each year," Flaherty said. He promised a much tougher approach in the future to make sure that "not a penny is misspent." Mr MacKinnon called this "sanctimonious rhetoric." You're the one who changed the policy in the first place when deficits weren't allowed. You changed it. Now you want to go back.

What does this mean? In my own community, it means that the deficits we are running in all our hospitals right now, which are about \$48 million—and let me remind the government members that the shortfall for hospitals, as a result of your budget, is \$750 million. There's legislation coming that's going to put in law the fact that hospitals can't run deficits. In Hamilton, we've been through this. We've seen the future. Quite frankly, there are two things that saved our butt. One was there was a phenomenal community campaign around closing the Henderson hospital, which was the plan that was being put forward to deal with the deficit that was created because our board—and I give them full credit; I was very proud of them—said, "We don't have enough money to meet the demands of those Hamiltonians who are coming to our doorstep. We are not going to say no to

them. Therefore, if we have to run a deficit, we will, and we'll try to work that out with the province. But we will meet the demand of Hamiltonians as we see it, as we're faced with it." I support that.

By the way, our school board trustees, in the last term, did exactly the same thing. That's the right thing to do.

The other thing that saved our bacon the last go around was there was a local by-election where you were fighting to save a seat that was open because one of your own members resigned over a different broken promise. By the way, you lost that by-election. But at the end of the day, the only way we saved the Henderson hospital was because the government stepped in and said, "We will cover the deficit." One sentence makes a huge difference. Now they didn't have to find almost \$50 million in cuts just to break even.

What's going to happen with the legislation you're going to bring forward about hospitals is that the same hospital board, faced with the same dilemma, would be required by your law to turn away Hamiltonians who need health care, because the option they chose last time you will have eliminated, which was, "We will meet the health care demands of this community first and we'll deal with the dollars later," in terms of talking to the province.

Some \$750 million in deficits across the province in all our hospitals, and your answer is to bring in a law that says, "No more deficits for hospitals." What about the people who need the health care? What are they supposed to do? What are they supposed to do when they're turned away at the door of one of our hospitals in Hamilton because they don't have the money? You've got \$2.4 billion for another corporate tax cut, but you bring in a law and a budget that's going to turn away Hamiltonians from their own hospitals. How is that helping communities? How is that helping Sudbury, Windsor, Ottawa, Hamilton, Toronto? How? How is that helping health care? The only thing it's helping is you, because it helps make your books look good.

Then what's going to happen? Here's what's going to happen down the road. Anybody who wants to know what's going to happen, watch what happened in Hamilton. The board put together a plan because they were told originally they weren't going to get the money for the deficit. So they put together a plan that dealt with that. That's how we ended up with Henderson hospital on the chopping block to try to offset the deficit. That's going to happen in every single community—most communities; I shouldn't say "every," because I don't know that, but most communities—if not this year, then next or the year after. But eventually they're going to run into a point where they don't have enough money—your underfunding is a chronic problem, regardless of what we're talking about—only now they don't have options. They will have a law in front of them that says, "You cannot run a deficit. So if you have to close down a hospital ward, close it down. If you have to cut back on the number of surgeries you can do in a day, do that. If you have to lay off nurses"—I guess they'd have to look

at that too. It's frightening what's happening overall in Ontario with regard to health care and education, environmental protection, labour law and social services.

1620

It used to be for decades, even under previous Tories, that you could manage the economy and the great gifts that we've been given, those of us who are lucky enough to live here, and still incrementally move forward. With the right kind of pressure, a lot of that pressure coming from the labour movement and community groups, we were able to, over time in the past, bring even a Tory government to their senses. And they brought in legislation that was positive that also maintained the economy. We're so rapidly losing that. How do you expect Hamiltonians, for instance, to believe that the health care system is going to be better when they're going to have to cut services? All that really is going to do is to create the kind of climate that you created in our education system. That is one of slow deterioration.

Don't forget, Minister John Snobelen let the cat out of the bag way back when, at the beginning of your last term, when he told a group of staff people—and it's on videotape—that you had to create a crisis to justify the actions. I know if the minister's watching and that's not an exact quote, he'll be all upset. So it may not be exact, but it certainly is a close paraphrasing. The fact of the matter was that they wanted to create turmoil in the education system so people would say to themselves, "Somebody's got to do something," and then when you stepped forward with your plans you said, "Here's what we're going to do to fix it. We're the only ones who have the guts to actually do something about it. We're the only ones who are prepared—the 10 lost years," mumble, mumble, all that stuff. But everything you brought in made things worse.

Now, predictably, with the public system in so much turmoil—and we now know, of course, why you did the back handspring, the flip-flop on extracurricular activities a while ago with regard to teachers: because your senior ministers knew what was in the budget and they needed to get that problem off their plate in order for this plan to work. That plan, of course, is as people feel less and less comfortable about their public school system, whether it's because of the ongoing labour trouble that you caused, the chronic underfunding of our schools that you caused, the lack of adequate and proper textbooks at our schools that you caused, the lack of a decent transportation system that you caused—our schools aren't as clean any more because the custodians had to be laid off; you caused that.

So it's not hard to understand how the average working family begins to start taking a sidelong look at private schools. The average working person doesn't get into the issues nearly as much as we do, obviously. But what they know for sure from experience, from what their children tell them and from just being at their community schools, is that they're falling way behind in terms of the quality that once we all felt was in our education system.

I remind this government, as I have in previous speeches, that education is one of the key competitive advantages we have here in Ontario, and you're blowing it—not for everybody. Those who are well off are even more well off in Mike Harris's Ontario, but for the vast majority of people, things aren't so good. How could any of us fault anyone for saying, "My first priority when I get up every day and the biggest priority when I go to sleep at night is my family." Some of the brighter lights, I believe, in the background in your government are fomenting that. With Snobelen's announcement, that's what that was all about. If you can create this crisis where people no longer view the public education system—and, I say, our public health care system. If they don't view it in the same way, then they're going to look for alternatives, and that works just fine for you.

That brings us to the voucher system you've announced. For a lot of individuals, regardless of the religious aspect, just in terms of the quality of education they want their kids to have, private schools suddenly are at least being talked about at the kitchen table: "Maybe we shouldn't take that vacation this year. Maybe we shouldn't buy the new car or a second car this year. Maybe we shouldn't put an extension on our house. Maybe what we ought to do is take that money and set it aside and send our kids to a private school because their future is so much contingent on the kind of education they get."

Now you've got people sort of looking around. Because you created the crisis that caused the doubt in their minds about the public system, they're looking around, saying, "Well, maybe that's what we ought to do." Then you bring in your voucher system, which is totally consistent with the idea that you start providing tax cuts, and you would do exactly the same thing on private health care if you got to that stage. It's certainly where you want to be.

Then over time that same working family, just your ordinary citizens, starts to begrudge—I'm not talking about the wealthy now, because they've got enough money to play with that they can cover off these sorts of things. They just cut a cheque and that's not a problem. I'm talking about the vast majority of ordinary citizens in Ontario who are not wealthy. If they have scrimped and saved and cut out of other parts of their lives enough money to send their kids to a private school because you've caused them to lose faith in the public system, it won't take too long before that average person, that average family, starts to say, "You know, I'm getting a little tired of paying twice for education. I've got to pay my regular taxes and keep the public system going, plus we have to put in all this money to pay for the private school."

Then it becomes politically palatable to talk about more tax credits on the private side and continue cutting on the public side. That's why the debate about the voucher is about quality public education, the kind of education system that gave us the quality of life we have, certainly the quality of life we get to enjoy. I can't speak

for future generations, but I benefited from the past policies of this province, where education was a priority and eventually—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. My apologies. I hate to interrupt the dialogue and so on that you contribute to this place, but I only have a minute in the chair and I wanted to introduce to you Tony Lupusella. Tony represented the riding of Dovercourt from 1975 to 1990. Help me in welcoming him to the members' gallery.

My apologies to the member for Hamilton West.

1630

Mr Christopherson: That's fine, Speaker. I appreciate your using the word "dialogue." Had you been sitting over here, it might have been a different word, but thank you.

I was talking about where the mindset of the average person will be if we continue down this road. And eventually where will this take us? We do have the experience south of the border. Again, as a sovereign nation they have a right to make their own laws and decide how they want to structure their own society, as do we. But when we look at some of their experiences in their large urban centres, we see a public education system that's in crisis, not to mention their health care system. There's no reason to believe that's not where we're going to be down the road. Now, that may suit you just fine, and some of your best backers, but for the majority of Ontarians that's not a win. It helps you because you don't think you have to spend as much money on education. There's \$300 million that's going into the voucher system by the time the plan is fully implemented. Does anybody actually believe that, first of all, it's only \$300 million and, secondly, that's where it ends?

We've even got the Premier saying it's a great idea because for everybody who goes to a private school, even with the deduction of the tax credit, taxpayers are still saving money. Great; the whole strategy for providing sufficient funding for the public education system is to have as many people as possible leave. Great plan. It lets you find some of the money to pay for the \$2.4 billion that you've given away to your corporate friends again. That's \$300 million that could have gone into the public education system.

I want to say something else too, because there's an aspect of this that's very disturbing. I debated whether to raise it or not, and I'm going to say it anyway. Rather than having a discussion and a public debate around public education, and the preservation and accessibility of a quality public education system, rather than have that debate about what that should be, what it should look like, how much money, where the money will go—rather than that discussion and that debate, you want a diversion. And boy, there's no quicker diversion in politics after starting a war than there is to start stirring up religious issues. While you keep saying that this is about fairness, what you're doing is igniting religious arguments in this province that can only be damaging.

And let's not kid ourselves: in addition to wanting to get more kids out of the public system because you do save money, this is all about you trying to position yourselves against the official opposition, the Liberals, because you're 20 points behind in the polls. Having said that, one needs to be reminded that there are Liberals who will tell you on the qt that there ought to be a law that prohibits any poll from being published that shows them above 50%, because it seems to be that's the kiss of death for them. Notwithstanding that, this is all about trying to catch out the Liberals, because they were talking about choice. Of course, we see them over there, sort of squirming about—

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: Well, the only Liberal in the House is yapping away from the other side; it's the only time they pay attention.

What the government wants to do is to try and nail the Liberals on ground where they're very shaky, which is the whole issue of, what did they mean by "choice"? The Tories went ahead and adopted the idea of allowing children to apply for schools outside their catchment area, and that's going to create a lot of problems too. It's already starting to show itself, certainly in my community.

But having said that, the other aspect of this was when they talked about the further definition of "choice." And you're hoping—you were hoping—to put them on the hot seat over this issue. That's what's driving this in large part: the politics between the government, the official opposition and what the polls are telling both of them.

They also know there are a lot of the same religious groups that will benefit from the voucher idea in terms of individual tax returns of people who already have their children or choose to put their children in private school. But there's not just that issue that it's a benefit for them, but also a lot of these groups have been in the forefront of condemning your policies: condemning your policy of not providing enough money for our health care system, condemning you for not providing enough money for environmental protection, condemning you for what you're doing to the disabled—we talked about it here in the House today.

The clawback of that federal money is shameful. Goodness knows, people benefit very little from their federal Liberal government as it is, and you claw back one of the few crumbs that finds its way down to our communities in terms of people who need it the most. You claw it back. That's even worse than what you did with the health care system. At least you put the money in. The only thing is, you took credit for it and it's not your money. In this case, you claw it back, you take it back.

So a lot of the groups that may, on an individual basis, benefit from your voucher and your tax credit are the same ones who have been condemning you. Quite frankly, I don't think most of them are going to change their minds. You might hope it's the case that we get this religious firestorm in Ontario and that the dynamics will be

such that you can still cobble together enough of a coalition among our population to form a third majority government. You may think that's going to happen. But how shameful to introduce that kind of debate now.

At a time when we've got so much chronic underfunding and the economic outlook isn't exactly the best, you want a nice diversion among people who, by and large, don't support your policies. Let's have a fight about religion. Let's have a fight about funding of religious schools. You'd rather see us as Ontarians have that fight and divide among ourselves than fess up to what you're really up to, which is dismantling all the public services so you can do more tax cuts. That's the essence of this budget. It's the essence of everything you're doing.

Look at all the things you're privatizing—this whole notion that if it's in the public sector, it must be bloated, it must be wasteful, inefficient by definition. Then the private sector—suddenly there are special people there. They come from somewhere else. They come in, and they're not like ordinary people. They're not like the people who work in the public sector. If you have a different label, if instead of "public sector" you have the label "private sector," then everything changes, everything's just wonderful. Look how efficient, look at the costs go down. Meanwhile, the overwhelming majority of money saved when something is privatized is by virtue of getting rid of the union and getting rid of the collective agreement, and you cut wages and benefits for the working people and their families. That's where the efficiency comes from in privatization.

Does that mean everything ought to be public? No. But it doesn't mean everything ought to be private either, and yet that's where you are. There's virtually no aspect of our society where you aren't privatizing something and some worker is losing their benefits, losing their pensions that have been negotiated in collective agreements, losing decent wages they negotiated. You even passed a law that said if you work in the public sector and it's sold to the private sector, unlike in the private sector, the union contract dies. In the private sector, if there's a sale, the contract stays with it. It used to be the same with the public sector. There was no difference, and why would there be? But you brought in a law that said that as soon as anything in the public service of Ontario is privatized, the collective agreement dies. And do you know what? It's not even working. Privatization is not working. The auditor slammed you not that long ago for the privatization of much of the Ministry of Transportation.

1640

The majority of Ontarians aren't even benefiting from your plan, which is that we would all save money by seeing some other poor schmuck get squeezed out of a decent-paying job, right? That's how we all benefit. That's the proposal in front of municipalities. Certainly the whole notion is creeping its way into Hamilton again that if we want to save money—because there's not enough money; you've cut the funding to municipalities.

By the way, where is the money for the education business tax that's killing downtown Hamilton and other downtowns all across the province? Where is the money for that? Still nothing. But it's starting to creep in: "We don't have enough money to do things. Maybe we ought to privatize the collection of garbage."

Interjection.

Mr Christopherson: I hear somebody on the other side hollering, "Yeah, that's the way." Yet the only way there's a savings is that you send somebody out the door of their home every morning to do the same job they did yesterday but without a pension plan, without health care benefits and without decent wages. How is that a good thing? If you didn't believe that was the case, why didn't you leave the collective agreements in place when a public service is sold, just like in the private sector? You leave it in the private sector but you eliminate it on the public side. Why? Because you always want to make sure, as best you can, that the numbers show that dollars have been saved, and that's all you'll point to. You'll probably blame it on the fact that it was inefficient before and efficiencies have been brought in. The fact of the matter is, the overwhelming bulk of dollars saved come from someone's quality of life and how much money they have to spend on their kids.

We've now got legislation for full-blown private universities. You're going to privatize our energy, one of the key ingredients—arguably the biggest ingredient—in terms of our natural resources. It has been the fact that we had such an abundance of secure, cheap energy. We're blessed. They privatized it in California and prices went up 650%. They privatized it in Alberta and they're close to having brownouts and blackouts there. But you're going to march right ahead. Why? Because it's privatization. Privatization is going to be good. It's going to save the consumer money. Of course, that's what everything is all about. It's going to save money; it's always going to save taxpayers' money. Who are you kidding?

If you lower the taxes marginally—\$20 or \$30—for the average working family but increase the tuition they have to pay by a phenomenal amount, and more if you're into private universities, what good is the tax cut? If you've got to spend money on insurance premiums because our hospitals have been privatized, where are you saving money? Maybe if you're in the big leagues and you're making hundreds of thousands of dollars every year, the 10%, 20% and 30% tax cut more than offsets those. But if you're the ordinary working family, just a middle-class family—never mind those who are truly in need; I'm not even speaking of that group at this moment, but the vast majority of Ontarians—the \$20 or \$30 is not going to pay that tuition fee increase. It's not going to pay the energy increase. And what do you want people to do in that case? Not use energy? Is that the alternative people are supposed to have?

How far is the tax cut going to go when you have to send your kids to a private school because that's the only place there's a good quality of education? Down in the

States, more and more, if you go to the public schools and have to use the public hospitals, you're seen as a charity case.

If you privatize our public education system—and the first step is in this budget—and you privatize our post-secondary education system and you privatize our health care and you privatize our energy, I defy anybody to show me how your \$20 or \$30 tax cut offsets those costs. That's assuming you can afford it. I could be wrong on the number, but I believe it's around 40 million or 50 million citizens in the United States who have no health insurance. Why? Because there isn't a public system that's broad enough at all. They just deal with special cases. There is no public health care system to speak of and they can't afford the insurance premiums.

One of the things that makes us most competitive in the auto industry, to the tune of \$6 an hour, is the fact that our employers—General Motors in Canada, negotiating with the Canadian Auto Workers—don't have to factor in the cost of health insurance, because we have a public system. That's six bucks an hour competitive advantage with a public health care system and you want to throw it away because your friends are looking at all the money they can make owning hospitals.

I've never had to deal with that thought in my entire life, the thought of a hospital existing for any other purpose than to provide health care to the community. The board of directors are there to ensure that our health care needs are met. It's totally foreign to think about a hospital whose board of directors are more worried about what shareholders are going to say in terms of the profit line rather than, "Did we meet the health care needs of Hamilton?"

Look at the university system. I heard the minister earlier today bragging about her \$293-million announcement, to increase by the year 2003-04, but they're only going to get \$30 million the first year, and you've been told by the Investing in Students Task Force that \$500 million is needed. Same game plan, universities and colleges, only now the legislation is already in place. That's already been done, bringing in privatized universities. We're on our way to seeing our universities either squeezed out of the game, dropping their quality so again they become the charity university, or they'll have to get in the game and start letting more and more corporate need decide what's best taught at university.

Should we care at all what corporations need in terms of people being trained to provide individuals who are skilled to fill jobs available? Of course. That's not the issue. Right now, there is so little funding that presidents of universities are more full-time fundraisers than anything else. Yes, corporations are willing to belly up to the bar and give universities some money, but more and more they want a say, a major say and a growing say in what's being taught.

They should have input. We should know what their needs are. But the university system in Ontario provides one of the highest educations in the world not because we turn out little worker robots—whether they do physical

work or mental work, robotic work is robotic work—no, it's because we turn out people who are well educated, well skilled and rounded, who understand history, who have an appreciation of art and music and the role these play in our life.

Some may go on to become some of the best business leaders in the country—fine. But our university system—by the way, held in awe by many countries around the world—is not just about training workers. It is to educate people, to educate a civilization, so that hopefully the next generation of people who fill these chairs have a broader vision than just the bottom line; that they come here with a sense of what makes a society a good place to live in; and if we have natural benefits, like our geography, that we learn to share those. I'm not suggesting in some Utopian way, where you set a flat rate and everybody is going to earn the same, as much as you might like to point that that's where the direction of that sort of thinking has to inevitably go. Not at all, but dismantling all the things that matter to the people of this province that build a quality of life is wrong.

1650

We've got the new Minister of the Environment popping up and down talking about all the wonderful things they're doing about the environment. The money they've announced in this budget still means that the Ministry of the Environment is receiving half the money it used to before you took power. Talk about putting money where your mouth is. If you really care about Walkerton, if you really care about the environment, if you care that citizens can breathe the air—think about it. It is not even the end of May and we've already had at least one, maybe two, smog alert days where seniors were told to stay indoors. Thirty years ago that would have been science fiction. Today it's reality.

Why would it change if you aren't taking action to change it? And that's just the finances, by the way. There's about 40% less staff. Even if we had the laws to protect our environment, our water, our air, our land, you don't have the bodies there to enforce it. But you made sure you didn't get caught out on that one, because you changed the laws so anyway there's no need for enforcement, and therefore there's no need for the staff. If the law's not there, you don't need people to enforce it.

The single biggest advancement in public health was not miracle drugs, not new procedures, not new technology; it was the provision of clean water. The Romans understood that, if you were lucky enough in Roman times to be a Roman citizen. Good luck if you weren't, but if you were, then you were afforded a view of a society that said, "You know what? We need a way of providing water to the citizens and to the lands that don't have water right now—irrigation—and we need a way to remove waste from our city." Some of those aqueducts are there to this day. Seven people dead, 2,000 hurt badly, and you're still funding the Ministry of the Environment by half of what it used to be funded at before.

What good is a tax cut if, when you drink the water, you get sick or die? What good is a tax cut if your

children can't go to university because your family can't afford tuition? What good is a voucher system if you don't have the money to send your kids to a private school because your government has abandoned the public system that's served us so well? What good is a 20% tax cut if you're sitting in the dark because we don't have the energy?

You know what? That would have been science fiction three years ago. Now it's the reality. Where? Not some Third World entity. California: I think individually the state of California is the eighth largest economy in the world. Energy was not an issue other than the usual politics that energy always is, depending on the times and the ebb and flow. As major issues, that was not the biggest problem they had. It wasn't the biggest problem in Alberta.

Now take a look at where they are after they privatized both of them. Why is anybody surprised? What's this argument that it can't happen here? Does this thinking come from that same special world where all these private sector people come from who are different from everybody else? Is there a whole set of laws of physics that we aren't aware of that says the border of Ontario shall be deemed to be exclusively special? "No matter what happens down here in California, even though we do the same thing, and no matter what happens over here in Alberta, even if we do the same thing, it won't happen here." Why won't it happen here? Because Mike Harris said so.

I suppose if he really meant it, he might have pinky swore, but we know what value that is. Remember the pinky swear with the municipalities? "I wouldn't do anything that would reduce your revenue." When a Premier starts breaking pinky swears, where are you?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Mr Silly.

Mr Christopherson: Mr Silly, my friend from Hamilton East says.

So you're going to barrel ahead. Most of the backbenchers won't have given it too much thought. They don't need to. They're told what to do by the cabinet. But the reality is that people are going to be sitting, probably down the road, at least the potential will be there—Niagara Falls is a stone's throw away. Even the infinitesimal possibility that we could be sitting in a brownout ought to be absurd, and rather than being absurd, it is a legitimate part of the debate we're having, as limited as you allow public debate in this province. It's now a possible reality that somewhere down the road we may have insufficient energy. Keep in mind, those who are most worried in Alberta are the business leaders.

Go back to the history of Ontario. Why did we develop the way we did during the industrial revolution? In large part it was because of secure—key word given what's going on in California in particular—cheap, not just affordable but cheap, hydro, cheap energy. That was great for business. Now what's great for business is those individuals or those corporations that get to buy into the new world of buying and selling energy. The average citizen? I guess the average citizen got their \$20 or \$30

tax cut. Last year they even got 200 bucks. I wonder what good that's going to be to somebody now? That was last year. It wasn't every year. It was just a one-off thing. What good is that \$200 going to do for somebody this year? Nothing. And the tax cuts for individuals in your budget, this budget? Less than that 200 bucks. It's like you sent them a cheque for \$100.

But for the corporations, money's there, and it'll be in law so they get their cut. And everybody else? Whatever. You've got the right to choose, I guess. I guess that's what you're left with. You're left with your memory of a \$200 cheque, a \$20 or \$30 tax cut, and the fact that you now have the right to choose whether to sit in the dark or not, whether to go to the hospital or not, whether to send your kids to school or not. Is that the choice? I'm going to tell you something: for a lot of Ontarians that's their choice.

As I understand the system in California, the cheaper the energy provision contract you had, the closer you were to the top of the list of people who stopped getting energy when it got scarce. So most of the people—except where it happened in regional areas—who are sitting with brownouts and blackouts are those who didn't have the money to buy a better plan.

See, it all comes back to this notion of, should each of us as individuals build a school for our kids and build a hospital for our kids and now provide our own energy to keep our family going, or do each of us take a few bucks and put it together and say that collectively we can open up a school in this neighbourhood, that collectively we can open up a hospital in this neighbourhood and that collectively we can ensure we can provide energy to business and individuals and hospitals and schools in our province? That whole notion is being blown apart so quickly.

Speaker, because it wasn't done the usual way, is that the count, down to the hour?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Yes.

Mr Christopherson: Then that means my time is up. I would just close by saying that I'm prepared to stand by a lot of the projections I made here today, and I'm prepared to have them thrown back at me years down the road. Some of this stuff I've already spoken about in previous years. I'd gladly have that read back because a lot of what you're doing is exactly what I said you would do. It doesn't make me brilliant; it just means that a different perspective on how to govern Ontario creates a different level of quality of life. If we work together we have a higher quality of life. If it's all dog eat dog, then collectively we don't have a better standard of living but a very few get an incredible standard of living. That's the Tory way.

1700

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): After that rousing speech I'm almost speechless, but not quite. The good news is just ahead of us.

I want to start, and it would be remiss of me if I didn't start, by thanking Minister Flaherty, who I believe listened and responded with responsible choices, and

clearly our Premier, as the strong leader that he is with a very strong commitment to promises. It's all through this budget that I want to talk about today.

If you want a copy you can certainly get one from my constituency office or on my Web site. It's worth reading. It's worth the time to read. As I said, it's about responsible choices. I'll probably be splitting my time with Mr Hardeman. I have some remarks that I want to put on the record here.

I think it's sort of like looking at it, and while I was listening on budget day to the minister, much of it as being his parliamentary assistant, I had heard some of the earlier discussions in the broad consultations across this province in 10 days. Mr Christopherson was a member of those consultations, as was Mr Phillips. We did hear from a range of constituents, whom in fact we all try to serve. These are people from the issue of shelter and homelessness all the way to the financial community talking to us about interest rates and competitiveness. But I can assure you that hearing all that very complex and important input is what we were there for. In fact, there was a report issued by the committee to the minister. That was just one part of the consultations. The minister had many formal occasions to meet with the health community, the education community and the environment community, and certainly there's evidence in this document, as I go it through this afternoon, that you'll hear very clearly was there for the minister to consider and is clearly in the budget.

I don't want to make this a talk about John O'Toole and Durham riding—

Interjection: Oh, go ahead.

Mr O'Toole: Well, I will.

Really, I was overwhelmed personally. It may sound almost selfish in a way—we serve all the people—but when they announced the Ontario Institute of Technology in Durham, it's a dream of a community of people. That's what it is. It's important to put it in context. I would say that Gary Polonsky and Terry Hing and the student community, as well as the CAW, General Motors, all of the community, contributed in an absolutely non-partisan way and, I would say to myself, also committed to that fundraising effort that occurred. They had a plan for \$12 million and it grew to \$15 million. That was in the 1990s; 1998 I believe it was. That formed the basis for community support, and then the awareness that there were 500,000 people in Durham, a rapidly growing area with a nuclear plant, General Motors, the Ministry of Finance building and a large agricultural component, and citizens without a lot of infrastructure around them. A university, and the research that goes along with that, was absolutely critical.

I personally want to thank the minister for doing the right thing, and the Premier and all of cabinet who were part of that important decision to allow that dream of the people from Durham to come true. So in a very selfish way I take a moment to acknowledge that and thank all of the citizens. It was a very fortunate privilege to have a very small part in that, along with Jerry Ouellette and

Janet Ecker, and Chris Hodgson and Jim Flaherty. Certainly, I know we all worked hard, along with the mayors and regional chair Roger Anderson. To make this dream come true was probably the most satisfying experience. Then to be thanked personally in the budget speech by the minister, well, I rushed down and asked Minister Flaherty and the Premier to sign it, because this becomes a piece of historic testimony for my five children. All of this experience is personal to me because I really think that we all, on both sides of the House, try to make a contribution and to be recognized over and above the small stipend that we receive for this job. It's done more for content—

Interjection.

Mr O'Toole: I hear Mr Smitherman barracking. I'm sorry if I woke you up.

Anyway, it gets down to the fundamental economics of it all, and the fundamental finances of it all are really a substantive part of what I have to say in the few moments left.

A remarkable achievement—clearly a remarkable achievement—is about the only proper definition, and that's a balanced budget for three years in a row, the first time in a hundred years. No one could disagree with the important statement that sends to the taxpayers of Ontario, our commitment to not go beyond having a balanced budget.

There's a temptation to overspend, Mr Speaker. You were a member of a government that just loves to solve every problem by writing a cheque. A lot of times there are tough decisions, whether it's the province or the federal or municipal government. Mel Lastman is a perfect example, always whining for more money. It's almost tiresome, actually. The solutions are there for sophisticated organizations and government to deal with it by trying to make every single tax dollar count.

I think the next most important kind of theme or statement or benchmark of excellence in management and fiscal prudence would be the fact that we had a surplus. In fact, the surplus was in excess of \$3 billion, coming out of that fiscal year. It's the largest single payment on provincial debt ever, it's my understanding. Three billion dollars was paid toward the debt. As we all know—it's almost \$600 billion federally—the debt interest, the interest on the debt, is what's crowding out program spending. So if you let the debt grow without addressing it, you end up paying annually, I think it's \$9 million in debt interest. Pardon me. It's \$9 billion in debt interest on the outstanding debt, which is about \$110 billion.

In my view, that money could be spent arguably in health, education, safe communities, a large number of areas. You can't just spend money you don't have. The families and the people of Ontario and the people that I represent in Durham can't do it either, and I don't think the government can do it without extremely sound reasons. That's what we introduced: balanced budget legislation, that when there were dire circumstances in the economy would be the only time that you could have a deficit or you could raise taxes.

I've mentioned the two important themes, one of which was balancing the budget a third year in a row. The next one, of course, was the debt repayment. But of course the proverbial one has to be our commitment, a non-renting commitment, to cutting taxes.

Why do I put all of these principles ahead of the people? It's important to understand conceptually what perhaps we've often heard referred to as the lost decade, 10 years of mismanagement and irresponsible governments. How it really works, the equation really has three pieces to it. In fact, it has four. I'll add the fourth later.

The three principal equations are, first, you have to have a strong economy. That strong economy creates wealth for both individuals and companies. That wealth becomes part of the tax base, which allows you to have an education and health care system. Without the wealth and the wealth generation infrastructure, you can't have the public resources for the hospitals and other services provided by government.

The third piece is to be fiscally responsible; that is, balanced budgets and that sort of stuff. It's those three principles that this government and our Premier are firmly committed to. The fiscal responsibility part shows up very clearly in this budget, much of which will be talked about over the next while.

But I want to add a fourth, and that fourth is leadership with a vision. Because if you have no vision or direction, you're actually going in circles, you're not going anywhere. You have to have clear commitment to a vision. You have to have clear leadership in that vision to deliver on your promises. I think that's no better demonstrated than with Premier Harris. There are difficult decisions, and I know how hard it must be to do his job, but that is how we've achieved the milestone of three balanced budgets consecutively.

1710

Now, a bit of background with respect to the tax-cutting, I think, is a very important part, while at the same time addressing important expenditure areas. Because if you look at the details, there is increased funding for health care, there's increased funding for education, there's increased funding for the environment, there's increased funding in a number of other areas, but I generally classify it as vulnerable people.

We have in fact cut personal income tax between 1996 and 1999 by 30%. We can translate that out to a typical family of two earners with two children as roughly \$2,400 in tax savings. Now, let's put \$2,400 in perspective. I understand from the member opposite that clearly, when people see that the consumers, the taxpayers of Ontario, have an additional \$2,400 in their jeans, what happens is this: often there's a temptation by other levels of government to take it back.

We saw that with the federal government. They saw us creating much more disposable income in the pockets. What did they do, Mr Speaker? You know what they did. They upped the CPP premiums and they upped the UI premiums. The federal government clawed it all back. It's tragic, actually. If one of my constituents, like me an

ordinary person—I'm here so I get told this stuff. I don't know it innately; I'm told it and I listen thoroughly. I thought, "Gee, that's tragic. What's happening to the hard-working people, the people working shifts and working overtime and having it clawed back through higher CPP and UI premiums?" Then I look at the federal government. What have they got? They've got in excess of a \$20-billion surplus.

Where did a lot of that come from? Ontario. We're a very, very generous family. I can account for my community. As I've described with the Durham university fund, extremely generous: a target of \$10 million, raised \$15 million; United Way, hospital fundraising. In every area our community is generous to a fault. But I can tell you this as well: unless you give people back the money that is taken away by some other level of government, they can't be generous and they can't make choices about which charity, whether it's heart and stroke or cancer. As we're talking, May is Cancer Month. People like to be generous. They like to be empowered. Why should Big Brother—government—always be telling them where their money's going, some bureaucrat sitting there deciding we're going to give \$576 million to the arts community? I have no problem with that. I'm certain that in my community, many individuals would have felt empowered if they had the money in their jeans to write the cheque to the local, in my case, art gallery or the museums or theatre groups, whatever, to help the arts community. The message I'm trying to say is that government makes choices.

But in 1999, the government made a promise: Ontario taxpayers would get an additional 20% reduction. That's \$4 billion over five years. The budget proposed to complete this tax promise, with the result that the average tax savings for the public with income less than \$100,000 would exceed 20%. I want to repeat that: it's going to exceed 20% reduction. The largest percentage reduction would be concentrated on taxpayers of low to middle income. In fact, we changed the marginal tax rates for the surtaxes, I think, from \$54,000 to \$63,000, which is the middle income: the skilled trade person, the person working at Ontario Power Generation in Darlington and other people who work, including in that nurses and teachers. These are the income groups that make in that salary range: front-line, hard-working people who deserve a tax break. This isn't even political. This is about putting back in their jeans the money they earn. You see, government really has no money. It takes your money and gives it to somebody else. It's as simple as that.

The largest percentage, as I said, would go to the middle-income people. They're the people who make up this province. In fact, the most important part of this province is small business, and those are the people who actually make this province go around. More than \$4 billion of additional tax savings would be delivered to Ontario taxpayers.

I should say that despite cutting taxes and despite all the naysayers, from 1994, before he was Premier, when Premier Harris was touting this idea of cutting taxes and

raising revenue, it was very clear that some people didn't get it. Certainly the opposition and the NDP didn't get it.

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): They still don't.

Mr O'Toole: They still don't get it—the experts. But, in fairness, there are some who are getting it. There really are.

We did cut taxes—in fact, by \$4 billion. What has happened to revenue? Revenue has gone up \$15 billion, because I gave you the money to go to the florist shop to help the person who's doing the growing. That's how the economy works. But when you give it to government—and that comes down to one of the points I'll make later, the whole issue of accountability in government spending. If I'm pouring money into health care or education, what's the mechanism for measuring the results? If business does it and it doesn't work, the shareholder dumps the stock and they're out of business. It's that simple.

The best evidence I can think of is the job creation we committed to: 550,000 jobs between 1998 and 2000. As recently as April 2001, employment rose by 23,600 and the unemployment rate was 5.9%. Job growth will continue in 2001. The growth is slow, but there's still growth. It's 2.2%. There will be those who talk today that at least it's not negative growth. We have a far more diversified economy, and certainly that's how we're developing this province.

The Ontario economy has grown 25% since 1995—more evidence. There are also more positive indicators that I'll quickly put on the record. Real exports as a percentage of GDP have grown from 59.8% to 70.2%, an increase of 17.3%. Housing starts have gone from 35,800 to 71,500, a 99.7% increase—almost a 100% increase in five years. The consumer confidence index from 1991 as the base of 100% has grown from 97.7% to 122.6%, a 25.5% increase. Retail sales have grown from \$79.6 billion to \$106.4 billion, a 33.7% increase. Auto sales have grown from 452,800 units to 660,800, a 45.9% increase. Disposal income—the bottom line here—has climbed from \$209.8 billion to \$256.2 billion, a 22.1% increase in disposable income.

There are other measurements, but certainly I think it's evidence that the plan worked. If we can establish nothing more than confident, stable planning and a promising future as we look forward—I think Paul Martin also is a further compliment in that he's now addressing the tax issue, which allows the economy to grow, and not for government to smother it.

The final testimony had to come when the Prime Minister used as a reference that the province of Ontario and Mike Harris are showing the way. Other Premiers are leading the way as well. I think the best compliment is to be imitated. I know the Premier is always listening and always aware, and I hope he gets these remarks, because it certainly won't hurt my future—I'm only being flip-pant on that.

However, I would say that one of the themes we've brought forward in the plan is Ontario's edge. I should

take the remaining time to make a commitment to, first of all, economic stability within the province. We have a tax review panel that's going to review economic measures, tax policies and other things, but also building toward a quality of life in Ontario is extremely important. I want to say the Business Tax Review Panel will be made up of experts. They will also be considering such items as the tax on fuel conversion—a very important part, the gas guzzler tax—introduced by the Liberals and increased by the NDP and important to my riding of Durham, an auto-sector riding, and many other ridings as well.

There's a commitment here of some \$500 million to public transit, which is very important in my riding, as it is a commuting riding. There is the important commitment of \$1.2 billion in health care, growing by 5.4%. Premier Harris and our minister, Tony Clement, are leading the way on questioning the sustainability of health care. It's an important debate to have. I think Roy Romanow will be considering this, but we're not patient enough to wait. As the largest province in Canada, it's important to have strong leadership, and we are encouraging that debate. In fact, I'll be having many forums in my riding of Durham in the month of June.

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I can tell you that the most important thing in this whole public sector accountability is having Erik Peters, the Provincial Auditor, actually looking at best practice and value for money. We need that in our public sector, we need it in this province and, arguably, we need it in the federal government.

I've run out of time, unfortunately, but I have much more to say on the issue, and with your indulgence I'll continue.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I just want to make a few comments on what the member from Durham said. I'm glad everything is great in his riding because there are other areas of the province that are not as wonderful as he says.

I know we all have to protect our water, our food and our air or our health care will skyrocket.

He talked about the tax break. He should tell the residents of Ontario that it was all borrowed money that they gave in the tax break.

The member talked about how great things were, but in my community we still have 17 people travelling to have dialysis treatment in Ottawa and Brockville, and that's unacceptable. We have the facility right in Cornwall that could solve that problem, but it's getting through the red tape and the other issues. It wouldn't cost the government one penny more to have that treatment for the residents at home rather than have them travel and go through that four hours—two hours each way—and parking and everything else that goes along with it.

He talked about how wonderful everything else is but he should come to eastern Ontario and look at some of our roads and bridges that have been downloaded on to the municipalities.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): He's not even listening.

Mr Cleary: I know he's not listening. He's busy there.

The bridges are a disgrace, there are overpasses that need repair, and the municipalities can't get through to get their share of that money from the provincial government. In the township of Williamsburg, South Dundas, they have many bridges and roads where the infrastructure has deteriorated. You used to be able to get supplementary funds to solve some of these problems, but not under this government.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I listened carefully, of course, and I'm going to paraphrase what I think the member from Durham said. "The government has no money, but we take your money and then we give it back to you," is what I think he more or less said, and then added, "We've had increased funding of 15 billion bucks since 1995." My question is, where did it go? Where is it? It certainly didn't go into hospitals, because everybody is crying. It didn't go into the education system, because everybody is saying, "We're hurting." They took about \$2 billion out of there. It didn't go into the post-secondary education system, our colleges and universities, because they took about \$2 billion since 1995. Where is the money going?

"Where are your priorities?" is the question that most Ontarians are asking. It appears, member for Durham, that your priority as a government is to facilitate privatization of resources that we own and that ought to be in the hands of the public. What you're doing is saying to the public sector, "Don't you worry, we are here"—genuflect—"to serve your needs."

You are giving away POSO, the Province of Ontario Savings Office. It's a money-making office. It's a bank, the provincial bank. We make a lot of money out of that, money that can be used to help those areas that you say you have no money for. Why would you be selling a Province of Ontario Savings Office that makes money and facilitating its privatization so that presumably the private sector can enjoy the fruit of what we as a government have done? It doesn't make any sense, member from Durham.

You took \$2.4 billion of our money and gave it away to the corporate sector, almost an equivalent amount to what you took away from the public education system. Member from Durham, you've got to speak to these matters.

Hon Dan Newman (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I am pleased to participate today and to comment on the member for Durham, who serves as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance. I think he gave an excellent presentation here this afternoon. I know all the members present here enjoyed his speech, as they do on all days. He provided an excellent opportunity for the people of Ontario to hear more about the balanced budget that was brought forward by the finance minister and Deputy Premier, Jim Flaherty.

In fact, this budget is now balanced. It is the third year in a row that the government of Ontario has presented a balanced budget. I remember the finance minister's first words in the House here when he spoke about the budget. He said, "Mr Speaker, the budget is balanced." That sent, again, a strong message to the people of Ontario. In fact, the people of Ontario now have taxpayer protection legislation that includes that all budgets in this province must be balanced. There are penalties for cabinet ministers if the budget is not balanced. This government has lived up to its word by balancing the budget for the third consecutive time. I might add that's the first time in almost 100 years that there have been back to back to back balanced budgets. I think the people of Ontario realize that this government is showing strong leadership in that regard.

We also made a \$3-billion debt repayment. We made a commitment in our Blueprint document that we would make a \$5-billion debt repayment this term of office. We are well on the road to doing that. There's been \$3 billion. That's the largest debt repayment ever.

Taxes continue to be down in our province. Revenue is up. Job numbers are up. I know back when the Common Sense Revolution came out, we said that 725,000 new net jobs would be created in this province. We're well over the 800,000 mark. We've seen that. Because investment is up, because taxes are down, the revenue is up for the government. We've kept our word. I want to compliment the member for Durham for his excellent speech this afternoon.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'd like to say to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, I wouldn't give the member from Durham the 9.6 that you gave him, but somewhat less than that. He's trying very hard over there, I know, and we have to give him points for that. But I'm glad the Minister of Northern Development is here because I think it gives me another opportunity in this House to remind him of some of the areas regarding northern Ontario on which this budget was silent.

One big thing is the health travel grant in northern Ontario. I would say it is probably one of the biggest issues right now in northern Ontario, especially when not only is it inadequately funded, but what sticks in the northerners' craw is that example in cancer treatment where southerners who have to travel to Buffalo or to northern Ontario receive a much more generous benefit. That really sticks in the craw of northerners.

The other area that I know northerners are very concerned about is the 10% reduction in highway construction that is for the whole province, but especially in northern Ontario where the highway conditions are in great need of repair. I know there's been considerable upgrading in the last few years. That needs to continue. Having a 10% cut right now, especially with a slowing economy, is certainly bad timing and is not going to get the job done. I encourage you to get back to the commitment that you had started a few years ago so that we

can get the job completed and the highway up to standard in northern Ontario.

The last thing I'd want to say, that I know is a concern of many members from the north, is the \$157 million that sits there in the heritage fund. That was committed in previous years, yet because the fund was looking at redesigning its criteria, it has not been able to invest in northern Ontario. We need that money invested in the north. It is there. We're not asking for new money. It is money that you've committed. You've doubled that money and we'd like to see it invested in northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr O'Toole: I'd thank the members from Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh, Trinity-Spadina, Timiskaming-Cochrane, and Minister Newman, of course, from Scarborough Southwest.

I'll briefly try to respond to the points they've raised, which were good; they were paying attention.

The first member talked about infrastructure and its importance. You should know that the \$20-billion SuperBuild fund is all about building infrastructure. Part of it has been rolled out under OSTAR, which is an Ontario small town and rural development initiative. That's a commitment to building infrastructure. This was neglected for 10 years. There's a 10-year commitment of \$20 billion of public and private money.

The member from Trinity-Spadina talked about \$15 billion and questioned me on where it went. I wish he had asked that question in 1992, 1993 and 1994, because there was an \$11-billion deficit that we started with. Now we have a surplus of \$3 billion. There are the numbers. Clearly, he still doesn't get it. There is more money coming in. We were spending \$1 million an hour—we all know that story—every hour on the interest on the debt, which they had doubled. So it's an unfair question, but it's fair for me to point out to him that if you add the numbers—\$11 billion and almost \$4 billion—that's \$15 billion.

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I should say that we have increased funding in almost all of the priority areas. One of the areas he mentioned was health care. We started in 1995. If you look at any provincial budget, it was 38 cents on the dollar, and now it's 45 cents on every dollar. We have made major commitments year after year and it's clear, whether it's the Fyke commission or whether it's Roy Romanow, that it's not sustainable, and our government is setting about to fix it, not to stall the problem, as I think the federal government is.

The Minister of Northern Development and Mines is very familiar with the north, and the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane mentioned there was some question with the northern heritage fund. Clearly Mr Newman has committed to sustainability in the north and marketing of the north. From \$30 million, he has doubled it to \$60 million. It's the right thing to do.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Mr Smitherman: When I stood in this House and made my maiden speech in October 1999 on Bill 5, the same-sex spousal benefits bill, I said that I thought it would be the most important speech I ever gave in the Legislature. I'm here today to tell you that the most important issue I've confronted in my time in public office is before us, and it's contained in this government's budget.

The issue of a properly and adequately funded system of public education is an issue that defines my Liberalism and informs my view of Canada. I believe therefore that the debate we are engaged in at the moment is a crucial one for the future of our great country and our province. It's important to put it in context. If we are prepared to see this kind of tax credit voucher system used in a sense to offer an incentive to people to obtain educational services outside of the broad public realm, then it is a slippery slope toward exactly the same principle being applied to the issue of health care. It is in these adequately funded systems of public health and public education that I find my view of Canada formed and shaped, and the fundamental role of public education in our society is enormously important.

The *Globe and Mail* isn't always a supporter of my party; in fact, it's more likely to be a supporter of the government. But in the lead editorial on Friday, entitled Mike Harris's Body Blow to the Public Schools, they made a salient comment: "In a multicultural society such as Canada's, public schools are much more than places of instruction. They are the forge of integration. Schools are where young people of different classes, nationalities and faiths come together as Canadians."

I find that comment to be highly reflective of my view with respect to education, and it is in that I find enormous concern with the approach the government is taking to offer an incentive to parents to take their kids out of the public education system.

I want to talk about that in the context of my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale. Much has been said in the course of the last few days around this debate that this is about fairness and equality. But the most important experience, the most emotionally moving experience I've had in my two years as a member of this place, was in witnessing the celebration of Black History Month at Park school in Regent Park, where kids of different backgrounds, different faiths and different colours participated in the celebration of black history. To see black history interpreted by Asian children and white children was an incredibly moving thing. This is the product of our public education system, taking place in one of the poorest neighbourhoods known to our country. Similarly, I've seen at Regent Park/Duke of York school a commitment to understanding and learning more about the Muslim faith by students who are from different faiths. This is the kind of thing I fear is at risk.

I was heckled yesterday by the member from Kitchener, who thought that because many of my constituents are wealthy and have made the commitment to private schools for their children, I would be standing

alongside them. But I had the opportunity this past weekend at the May fair in Rosedale to speak to many of the more affluent members of our society. Many of those who have had the privilege of a private school education understand that is a privilege—they're wealthy people in many instances—but they also understand that there is a parallel commitment on their part to an adequately funded system of public education because they understand that a Canada that is distinct from the United States is a Canada where the disparity between our richest and poorest is narrowed as a result of our commitment to public education and indeed to public health care. That is what is at risk and what is being lost.

I realize that this is not a debate just about those who are wealthy. We've heard, of course, that many parents who are, I would say, in the broad middle class are sending their children to religious and private schools. Some of them are doing so for specific reasons related to their culture or to their religion, but others unfortunately are increasingly being forced to pull their children out of public education and send them to private schools because of the declining quality of the public education system.

I believe that the government's initiative of the other day is in a sense a message from the government that they're throwing in the towel, that they have abandoned the opportunities to enhance and improve the public education system, to build on this fantastic base of quality that has been there and served us generation after generation after generation. Instead, we're moving toward a system where we will have two systems of education in this province: one for those who have and one for those who have not.

I fear that in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, a place that already deals too much with the broad disparity between rich and poor, in the absence of these well-funded systems of public education and public health this disparity will grow and Toronto—my beloved Toronto—will look more and more like cities in the United States.

I believe that's what is at stake here and that is why on this issue, since Wednesday, I have found a new life, a new enthusiasm to get out and work against this government's budget and particularly to focus on this issue. I believe that this initiative on the part of the government is nothing less than an incentive to those parents who have concerns about the quality of public education to give up on it and to pull their kids out of the public education system. I think that's shameful.

Much has been said about the Catholic system, but the experience in my riding with the Catholic system is that it mirrors so much of the quality of what is referred to generally as the public education system. The children who stream in and out of Catholic schools in my riding, like St Paul and like Our Lady of Lourdes, reflect the broad diversity of my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, and there they learn and benefit from this great mix of culture and religion that takes place in environments like in the public school system.

Equity issues have been raised and the Premier, in his appearance yesterday, spoke about fairness and equality, but I wonder how this will be extended. The member for Simcoe North has been very active in ensuring that the only prayer that's ever offered in this place is the traditional prayer. Statutory holidays very closely resemble Christian traditions, which are not the traditions for all. Will we see a move, as a result of this commitment to equity, for Telehealth Ontario? Will it be available to people who speak any language, regardless of their numbers? And do those who support this extension of opportunity to send kids to schools which are segregated want to see a breakdown to the point where parents of gays and lesbians are establishing school boards and schools that speak to their issues, perhaps at the expense of others? That's something that I would oppose.

I would say also with respect to the word "accountability," which has rung from this government in its throne speech, that they are rather hollow when it comes to this issue. There is a double standard being created. I quote again from that Globe and Mail editorial which said, "Private schools, moreover, need not employ provincially certified teachers, submit to inspection, publish their budgets or be accountable." I think that highlights the fundamental hypocrisy of this effort.

We also have heard so much about the United Nations and I would want to quote again from the Globe and Mail, which spoke to the fact that Ontario funds Catholic schools but it does not mean that it needs to fund all religious schools. This dates back to the history of our country. To lose sight of that I think clouds the very nature of this debate.

The point I want to close on relates very clearly to my view about segregation. In my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, I say often that if people wake up in the morning and think not about what they have in common with their neighbours but rather what their differences are, if they get on a different school bus, if they walk a different route and if they take a different approach, the chances are that the relative peace and calm that come even in neighbourhoods with 50, 60, 70, 80 different nationalities will be shattered. The opportunities in the public system for Eritreans and Ethiopians, whose countries are at war, still to be schooled together will leave; they will be diminished. I think that the mixed faces who reflect the incredible gift of diversity that this world, in all of its marvellous breadth, has given Canada is at risk. That is what is at risk here.

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I think we need to face a reality: that this policy, this segregationist policy, threatens to destroy the key contributor to that famous indicator that allowed the United Nations to declare Canada the best country in the world in which to live. Do you think the United Nations had that in mind when in all of their wisdom they decided they should supersede the Canadian Constitution and the Supreme Court of Canada? I think they missed the point. I think they missed the point about the fundamental basis

of Canada, the two-founding-nations principle which has informed our spirit and I think helped to shape a public education system which has been providing an extraordinary capacity for people from all over the world, of mixed cultures, to come together and in one spirit move forward to create the greatest country on earth. The government, in their initiative as contained in their budget, is putting that at risk.

I'd like to share my time with the member from Windsor.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Of all the years I've been here since June 1995, this budget was the most disappointing to me. I want to speak to how this budget is negatively impacting on Windsor.

Truthfully, all of the years I've been here I've watched the government take monies out of the most important institutions that run in my city and that are of primary importance to the people and the residents of Windsor: namely, our public education system and our hospitals. We've had dramatic changes in the way we're delivering health service since this government has come to power; none of them have been positive. Ideologically they have been so right-wing and they have been implemented in such a terrible manner that in the end none of us can say that our public education system is better because of it or that our health care system is better because of it.

I want to talk about the impact on Windsor as the canary in the coal mines for much of the change in Ontario, because we were always on the verge—on the verge of doing great things until the government comes along and throws a wrench into the plan.

I want to talk about overall funding of hospitals. When the Health Services Restructuring Commission came out and decided that they were going to make wholesale changes to the way we deliver health care, in retrospect, today we are echoing the words we said in here when that commission laid its reports on these tables. We knew that it was wrong. We knew that the funding was inadequate and it wasn't in the right place to allow for that kind of change. Today in Ontario, and especially in my riding of Windsor, we see those changes happening. We see community care access centres which are struggling under the weight of trying to provide services to people that are required because people are being booted from hospitals sicker and quicker, and everyone admits that's the case.

Today when we review the budget, what do we see that they've done for our hospitals which are dealing with this kind of crisis? They've cut \$100 million more out of operating budgets for hospitals across Ontario. What will that mean to volunteer boards and the decisions they will be making? They will run deficits. Oh, but we have an accountability piece now by this government that says, "No, you can't do that." These volunteer boards then have to decide, "What services will we do without?" Those will be the decisions we're going to continue to make and have continued to make in my community. So I bring cases in here of people who can't access health care, and I ask you, whether it's a discussion about the

north or the south, about any issue—gridlock, transportation, SuperBuild—ultimately, if we don't have our health care, none of that matters, which is why it is of paramount importance that we get this right.

We have come time and time again to each new minister. We've gone through the list, like we have with this most recent, the nine-point plan of what we can do immediately in my riding to make positive change. How do we go through primary care reform without the necessary number of doctors? We cannot. We've advanced how we could streamline the process of foreign-trained physicians to get them working tomorrow in Ontario, but we've been ignored, and that wasn't even touched on in this budget. We talked about how we can do things like bring angioplasty to Windsor so that we can move forward, so that patients aren't waiting three times the length of time for such a simple cardiac procedure in Windsor that the guidelines say across the province. But that's what is happening today in my community because this government doesn't come forward with solutions. What did we see about that in this budget? Absolutely nothing.

I want to mention the sustainability question in health care, that this government has determined to talk about the notion of private hospitals—any option will do. I say the government asks the wrong question. It's not, "Is medicare sustainable?" The question is, "How do we sustain it?" because paramount to us as Canadians is the notion that we will have a public, accessible system. Our work in this House is to find ways to better the accessibility of it, not to make determinations of how we're going to do without service. That's what the people in my riding ask us for regularly.

I want to talk about the impact of infrastructure in my community. As a rough estimate, we've lost \$5 million just in road maintenance in my community in this downloading exercise that was never revenue-neutral. Everyone knows it was not revenue-neutral. So you created SuperBuild. We heard hardly anything about SuperBuild, because what we said happened when you determined to go down this road. We said from the beginning that that was a notion that would not work. So far, the government has managed to make announcements of a mere \$4 million of capital expansion out there in Ontario, when you assigned \$200 million for that project, because you can't get your head around the fact that some government services will not be provided by the private sector.

Then the Premier himself discusses the notion of private hospitals, so that a lead doctor in my own community wants to stand and say, "Let's turn Grace hospital into a private hospital." I asked some very basic questions. We asked the Premier in the House; he refuses to answer the question that I put to him directly: would we, as Windsorites, stand for watching Americans come flying in on a helicopter to receive care so that we might make money off those Americans while our Windsorites are looking through the window like in some Charles Dickens novel, watching Americans access care that our

own Windsorites cannot access—can't access in Windsor, and moreover get put on enormously long waiting lists through London, the supposed mecca of southwestern medical care? When I speak to doctors in London, what do they tell me? They are as strapped as those who are in Windsor, and Londoners themselves can't access the system in London. We have huge issues around access to health care.

Those are the things we wanted to see addressed in the budget, not further cuts; not huge grand statements about, of all things, a voucher system for private schools. The Ontario government, since it took office in 1995, has crippled public education in Ontario. It has put public education on its knees so that you now choose to come forward with a notion of a private school voucher to benefit but a few. The Premier himself suggested this is about fairness, so that these parents who pay education taxes—you can't raise the spectre of fairness in how we pay to support services that all of us, having children or not, all of us, needing health care or not, are prepared to pay into for the good of a community. That is very basic about Canadian living. In this budget, this government takes us down a road that none of us agreed to go down, making such monumental philosophical shifts about government services and how they're to be delivered that you owed it to the public to make this part of a 1999 election platform. You owed it to us to vote you to be there going down that road, and you chose not to do that. This will come home to roost for this government.

I want to talk about accountability. The government spent so much time in the budget talking about it. I want to talk about the accountability of this government to slash across ministries that were relevant to all of us, like the environment, and where we will see today, through a Walkerton inquiry, what role the provincial government had in Walkerton and the disaster that befell the people who lived there—what role, what accountability to doubling the office size of the Premier while the rest of us deal with emergency room crisis and people who cannot access simple things like a knee surgery in time and are now on the welfare system.

I want to talk about the accountability of Cancer Care Ontario, with no tendering process to enter into an agreement with a private firm at \$4 million of start-up costs for that private company after no public tendering process. This same government has the gall now to stand and talk about accountability of other broader public sector partners, when this government itself is not accountable—the Premier, who cannot have better attendance in this House, after four months of not being in the House, cannot come in here on a regular basis and answer the questions that my residents, whether they live on Elsmere Ave or Marentette or Parent or in south Windsor, demand to have answers for. That's what the Premier's job is and I recommend that he get in here and take his job seriously.

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I want to talk about what this budget truly means to Windsor. We have normal expectations in Windsor of the

provincial government. We want our health care to be there for us when we need it. We want a school system that takes care of our children. We want to know that next year, when the grade 11 students take their new Ontario curriculum, they will have textbooks. We did not want to see \$300 million to \$500 million being set aside for private school vouchers, while the majority of our students are doing without in the public system.

Whether you go to Begley in downtown Windsor or whether you're in Southwood in south Windsor, all of those children deserve to have access to the equalizer that public education has meant for generations. My parents knew that was the case when they came to this country, that the public education system would give me every opportunity. Whether you came from some part of Rosedale or from Windsor west, all of us have the same—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Questions, comments?

Mr Marchese: I want to speak for two minutes to the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, because I agree with the thrust of his argument, that philosophically New Democrats are opposed to the extension of public dollars for private schools. Philosophically, politically, we believe it's wrong. New Democrats have always been unwavering and unambiguous about that. For me, consistency is critical.

I've got to say that in this regard, both the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party have got a problem, because when Minister Ecker today said, "I want to be clear; we've always been clear: we're for choice," I read out a quotation from her that reads in the following way: "We have been very clear that our goal is a good quality public education, and the estimates of \$300 million needed to fund religious schools would be \$300 million that would come out of the public system." That's what Minister Ecker said but a mere six months ago or so. Her position was very unambiguous, very clear: "We will not support publicly private schools, religious or class-based schools." She was profoundly clear.

When I hear Madame Janet, whom I will probably refer to as Madame Janus, the two-faced mythical character, I've got to remind her that she's not so very clear.

Respectively, with the Liberals, Mr Kennedy was quoted as saying on May 11, Bloor West Village, "The Liberals say it's an issue of fairness. Private schools do have to be funded, but in a way that doesn't hurt public schools." So I say to the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, you've got to be consistent. You can't have it each and every way. You can't slither hither and thither. You can't.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): First of all, I just would like to respond to the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale. He covered a whole range of subjects, but the one for which I'm on my feet particularly is when he runs for election under the British parliamentary system and wins his riding and has the privilege of representing his constituents in this place and

then wants to change the hundreds-of-years-old tradition of this place, I really get upset.

He's referring to having something in here that represents everybody in terms of the opening prayers, readings and so forth. You know, the wonderful thing about the diversity of the members in this place is that we do represent all the different interests of our ridings and the people who live there. But it doesn't mean that we come to this place and suddenly say, "The British parliamentary system doesn't address the needs and we have to change what we've been doing." I am totally opposed to any consideration of changing the opening prayers of this assembly. This subject has come up a number of times in the last 17 years, and when that member refers to that, it gives me a great deal of concern.

The member for Windsor West talks about health care. She talks about an equalized public education system. It is our government that introduced the equalized funding of students across this province, no matter where they lived, whether they were in a wealthy board or an assessment-poor board. Every student in this province now has the same amount of money allocated to their education. I wish the member for Windsor West understood a little bit more about—

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I am pleased to make a few comments about the debate today on the budget. Particularly, I want to compliment my colleagues on their comments because for the most part—totally—they reflect the view of the Liberal caucus, our leader Dalton McGuinty and obviously the view of many working families in Ontario.

I was pleased to see some things in the budget. One was that the debt is beginning to be paid down. I'm pleased to see that the debt is beginning to be paid down, because the Conservative Party of Ontario is responsible for by far the greatest part of the debt. We know that since this government took office, it increased the debt by some \$20 billion. If you take away from that the \$5 billion the Liberals added to the debt of the province and the some \$40 billion to \$45 billion the NDP added to the debt of the province, by far the greatest debt in Ontario was created by the Conservative Party, and \$20 billion of that in just the last few years.

That's because they gave a tax break before one should have been given. I can remember when Mike Harris was the leader of the third party sitting down there and saying, "This province is bankrupt." What did he do the first time he got into office? He gave the province a tax break. I don't think there are many businesses on the verge of bankruptcy that would give a dividend before they got their fiscal house in order. And he wouldn't have had to borrow that \$20 billion.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mrs Pupatello: I wish we had more time to go into detail about the kind of impact a budget like this will have on my community. We have to continue to struggle for the most basic of things, like access to a family doctor. I want every one of the Conservative Party

members to come to my riding and meet some of the 40,000 people who can't access a family doctor. We see nothing about primary care in this budget. We see nothing about medical schools. You know that is the long-term solution we need in Windsor, and it was not addressed in this budget.

I ask the members of this government to come to my riding to meet the people who can't access cancer care in a timely fashion, who can't get heart surgery in a timely fashion. I ask every member on that side of the House to come to my hospitals to watch the stress our nurses are under, the number of times and the hours they work overtime.

How many of our people have to continue to live in this manner while this government rides high on the hog and decides for themselves to give private vouchers to 4% of the student population in Ontario while students in my riding are doing without basics like textbooks?

These are the questions I put to the government and will continue to put to the government on behalf of the residents of Windsor. I want questions answered around the environment, how you could make cuts to the environment and then not be responsible for the outcome. We want basic services from this government, none of which have been delivered so far; a restructuring of health care that has only been a disservice to the people of Windsor; a reorganization of public education that has only done a disservice to real working families who live in Windsor West. Those are the people I represent, and I commit you to work on behalf of my constituents as well.

1800

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): It being 6 of the clock, the motion to adjourn is deemed to have been made.

Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Davenport has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Citizenship concerning settlement and integration services and federal-provincial agreements. The member for Davenport has five minutes.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I appreciate that, Mr Speaker.

I have a problem with the answer the minister gave us last week in this House and I will just quickly tell you why.

I had in front of me the guidebook to the Minister of Citizenship, which says that the core business of the Minister of Citizenship is to coordinate provincial policy and programs which support immigrants. I asked him consequently, how is this minister going to support immigrants when the whole world knows we have the best-educated pizza and taxi drivers in the world? We

have also a list of over 400 doctors who have passed their Ontario exams but are unable to practise, while 109 of our communities in Ontario are not getting sufficient doctors to care for them in their respective communities. Our list, I've also mentioned, includes foreign-trained technicians, scientists and engineers.

The Premier promised six years ago that foreign-trained professionals would get quick entry into professional life. So my question to the minister was, how is he helping them to quickly get into professional life? I had indicated that, according to the conference board, our province is in need of over 130,000 skilled workers. We have 130,000 unfilled jobs in Ontario at present—130,000 unfilled jobs. And what are we doing about this? The unemployment rate, then, for foreign-trained professionals is more than three times the national average. And you know what? Only 24% of those who have degrees and are foreign-trained have found jobs in their professions. In other words, there are a lot of other people out there who are looking to enter into professional life but are unable to do it.

How is this minister helping? If the minister's core business is to help and aid immigrants get into their professional life as quickly as possible, then it makes sense to me that he would at least communicate with the federal government. The federal government has offered to the Minister of Citizenship to sign an agreement that would indicate that the federal government would give up to—this is across the provinces—\$63.6 million for purposes of aiding foreign-trained professionals and others—settlement services, that is—to get that kind of money, or at least a good chunk of that money, to Ontario so that we would be able to help immigrants.

The minister then indicated that he was never approached. I have checked with the federal government in the meantime, and they said they have been approaching the Minister of Citizenship since 1997 to sign an agreement with the province of Ontario. The province of Ontario, through the Minister of Citizenship, has categorically refused to sign such an agreement.

I know the minister is here and I appreciate that. He will give us some reasons. But it's obvious his first answer to us was, "We were unable to sign an agreement because we have never been approached." Somebody is not telling the truth.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I didn't say that.

Mr Ruprecht: In that case, if the minister has not been approached—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member would have to withdraw that comment.

Mr Ruprecht: Mr Speaker, which comment is this?

The Deputy Speaker: "Truth."

Mr Ruprecht: Oh, truth. OK. The minister then, I would expect—

The Deputy Speaker: You need to withdraw it.

Mr Ruprecht: I withdraw that. Yes.

So what we have here, very quickly then, is that there is a settlement realignment negotiation committee. It's

presently ready to sit down with this minister to work out an agreement with the province of Ontario. We're asking this minister, is he willing to sit down with this committee so that we can have an Ontario-made plan for immigrant settlement services, that we can make it easier for foreign-trained professionals to get into Canada—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. The minister has up to five minutes to reply.

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to thank my colleague the honourable member opposite for his question last week. I want to state very firmly that this government not only supports immigration expansion in our province, but wants to do all it can to assist foreign-trained professionals to find work so that they can contribute to the Ontario economy. In fact, we're probably one of the only governments in recent memory that responded to the Cummings report in the late 1980s that talked about wide-ranging changes to policies on access for professionals and trained individuals. This was unfortunately ignored by the past two provincial governments, and we're acting upon that now.

The real issue here is the federal government. We have repeatedly asked the feds to fix a system that is supposed to help immigrants and refugees and they keep dragging their feet on critical issues. In 1999, Ontario received 55% of all of Canada's immigration and yet the federal government only assisted or supported us with funding for 40% of the cost of settlement program dollars in our province. Our immigrants deserve better treatment from their own federal government if we're going to work together to find them jobs and to help them settle.

We continue to extend an open door policy. We warmly welcome these people so that they can bring their families to Ontario, enrol them in our schools and find work. Last week in the budget we announced \$12 million over the next three years to help foreign-trained professionals upgrade their skills. This includes engineering technicians, nurses and other health care professionals and teachers.

The honourable member criticizes our skilled labour policies. I think he shows he's not fully aware of what we're doing. We've created an unprecedented number of new high-tech jobs for skilled workers and we're working to make sure qualified workers have access to them.

Our record is clear. Only last October we established a self-financing academic credential assessment service to evaluate academic credentials of individuals educated outside of Canada. Operated by World Education Services in Toronto, it's a not-for-profit academic accreditation assessment agency. It provides fair, accurate and consistent assessment for foreign-educated qualifications. They've done 33 assessments from 19 different

countries and they're connected to over 130 countries around the world. This program is successful; immigrants are telling us that it's very successful.

This year, we'll spend about \$9 million on Job Connect, a program that helps newcomers prepare for the job market. The May 2000 budget of a year ago also committed \$3.5 million in bridge training for foreign-trained nurses and other professionals to help them meet Ontario's licensing standards. Each year, Ontario provides entry positions in training opportunities—and 36 international medical graduates, an increase of 50%. Our government has made that commitment.

We're doing everything we can to attract professionals to our province, but the federal government keeps throwing up roadblocks. Health care workers, engineers, high-tech professionals abroad who attempt to immigrate are turned off by all the federal red tape that's thrown in their way. The immigration system in Canada has had severe cuts.

The honourable member opposite has complained about skilled workers not finding jobs. He's wrong. The record is clear. We know how important a skilled workforce is to our province. We acknowledge that building and retaining a skilled workforce is important to our growth. After all, we have welcomed 100,000 new immigrants each year in the last five years. That's half a million people.

My own ministry has invested close to \$4 million annually in close to 100 community agencies for settlement services for new immigrants since 1996. Last year, the Ministry of Education spent \$40 million on adult education and English-as-a-second-language programs. The Ministry of Economic Development has immigrant investment and entrepreneur programs.

The honourable member alleges that I refused to sign the federal agreement. That is not true. The federal government offered to transfer its existing programs to Ontario. This would not be new funding to Ontario immigrants. It would simply be dollars already spent by Citizenship and Immigration Canada. There is no guarantee that the funding and the programs won't be cut after one year. Ontario taxpayers deserve better treatment from the federal government.

We are not sure the federal offer will still be there. That's why our immigrant activities have been designed to be good for immigrants and good for Ontario taxpayers. We believe that's good for Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: This House stands adjourned. We will return at 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1811.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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