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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**
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**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**
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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 16 May 2001

Mercredi 16 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

Wednesday 16 May 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 16 mai 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The Minister of Health will be in Sudbury tomorrow to make an announcement. Would it be terribly wrong for us northerners to hope he will finally do the right thing? The northern health crisis has been ignored and trivialized by this government for far too long. Northern health inequities are not something to be used as political ploys, for which this government is now famous.

So today Dalton McGuinty, my fellow Liberal colleagues and I, on behalf of the working families in northern Ontario, call upon the minister to do the right thing tomorrow: release the George report, show us the recommendations; inject immediate funding into physician recruitment and retention strategies in order to address the crisis-proportion doctor shortage problem we have; increase the northern health travel grant to treat northerners as equals; increase the funding to cover the capital construction and equipment costs for the Sudbury Regional Hospital; and finally, show us the money, and show us the site of the northern medical school, with co-campus in Sudbury and Thunder Bay, along with the assurance that the already beleaguered working families of northern Ontario will not be left footing the bill.

Northerners want to hope that the minister will finally do the right thing. With 40,000 people in Thunder Bay without a doctor, and over 40,000 people in Sudbury without a doctor, we know it is time the government implemented the George report recommendations that they should be injecting \$10 million this year to address that problem.

YOUTH AWARDS

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): In today's society, our youth are sometimes labelled as mischief-makers and rabble-rousers, just some kids looking to cause trouble. Well, they're a small minority of youth, and I can be as critical as anybody of that small minority. But that is a stereotype, and it's a stereotype that was challenged on the evening of Friday, May 11 in my riding of Kitchener Centre at city hall.

I want to take this opportunity to congratulate six very honourable youths from my community, who were presented with awards that night for their contribution to society: Anthony Simon, youth of the year; Lillian Machado, outstanding involvement in organized and recreational athletics; Yvonne Jarsch, outstanding achievement in the performing and visual arts; Austin Howes, outstanding service to local charities, organizations and community-based groups; Dan Desrosiers, outstanding initiative in a business or project that resembles coordination of a business; Candace Perry, outstanding involvement in an organization for the purpose of running activities beneficial to others.

I am proud of these individuals and their achievements in the community. I congratulate them and wish them the best in their future endeavours. I anticipate that they will continue to do more and that other youths from the community will follow suit. Many of Ontario's youth do a lot for Ontario.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I am very happy to welcome a group of very brave and courageous citizens who have come here from Victoria county. They have come here to this Legislature because their member refuses to listen to them and refuses to meet them.

They are from the wonderful towns, cities and villages of Lindsay, Bobcaygeon, Fenelon Falls, Omeme, Sturgeon Point, Woodville, and from Fenelon township and all those wonderful parts of central Ontario that this government has forced amalgamation upon against their will, a dictatorial act that took away the rights of these citizens in Victoria county. In fact this government even took away their name and had a consultant force a phony name on this beautiful, historic treasure in central Ontario.

These brave people have come here today because their member will not hear them and this government refuses to listen to them, but they will not forget. They will not give up the fight to keep their names and their heritage, which their forefathers fought for in two world wars. They will not let go of their democratic rights easily. They will fight for Victoria county and they will fight for their heritage because they are taxpayers, they are citizens, and no matter what their member says or Mike Harris says, their rights are inalienable and they will fight for them to the death. They will not forget. Victoria county forever.

NORTHUMBERLAND APPLE ROUTE

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise in the House today to make the announcement of the extension of the apple route in Northumberland. The apple route is provincially recognized by many and has now been in existence for some seven years. Currently the route runs from Lock One in Trenton to Wicklow Beach Road just east of Grafton. This year the route will extend through Cobourg and Port Hope to the Welcome exit at Highway 401.

It has been a magnificent attraction for Northumberland county, encouraging rural touring by combining agritourism with heritage and ecotourism. This event consists of a ribbon-cutting ceremony, a tour of the Welcome Produce Market and apple orchard, followed by refreshments and appetizers at the Welcome Inn. There will also be a display of local businesses as part of the business networking evening.

I welcome all to join me in the celebration and official ribbon-cutting ceremony that will be held on Thursday, May 24, at 4 pm at the Welcome Inn near the Welcome Produce Market, located just north of the Welcome exit, Highway 401.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES
LEGISLATION

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): In 1998 this House unanimously supported a resolution by the member from Windsor-St Clair to establish 11 principles for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act. June, which is approaching, next month, will mark the sixth anniversary since the Premier committed to passing an ODA act. In that time the citizens of Ontario have continued to suffer.

There is an obligation, as we have been reminded through the media in the past several weeks, for an MPP to meet with each and every constituent and to advocate for each and every constituent. The Premier has on 27 occasions refused in writing to meet with the Ontarians with Disabilities Act Committee. When they were just down the hallway here, the Premier refused to go down the hallway and meet with them. But now he is in Switzerland committing to provide accessible accommodation and accessible services for the participants in the Paralympics that will happen here in 2008, hopefully.

Excellent idea. Great idea. It's long overdue that we commit to that. But if the Premier can commit to support the removal of barriers for visitors to the Olympics in 2008, surely he can take and remove the barriers for the citizens of Ontario. He has an obligation as Premier, whether he believes in a group or not or whether he supports a group or not, to meet with each and every citizen. I demand that the Premier find five minutes of time while he's in town to meet with the ODA committee.

1340

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I want to welcome the citizens of Victoria county who are here in the galleries with us today. When they came in they were wearing buttons that they had to take off—I had to take mine off too—that say, No Debate, De-amalgamate—a quick flash here. They're here today in a just cause, and I welcome them. I want them to know the NDP supports their cause.

They are citizens from Victoria county who had no direct say in the creation of the new city of Kawartha Lakes, and they have been trying to get through to their member, the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock, to no avail. As I understand it, he refuses to call them back, refuses to talk to them about this issue.

They say the government has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government they were told, nor the provision of better services at reduced cost. Does that sound familiar to us here in Toronto who are going through the same thing?

The tax decreases they had been promised have not been met, and the expected transition costs to area taxpayers of this fourth amalgamation have already exceeded the promised amount by over three times. It is clear that this forced amalgamation has not worked, and furthermore the citizens overwhelmingly said they didn't want this amalgamation. My party, the NDP, stands with them today and says to the government, "Shame on you." We will be working with them de-amalgamate.

TOWN OF ST MARYS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to recognize the efforts of the town of St Marys in my riding of Perth-Middlesex. The town of St Marys, home of the Canadian Baseball Hall of Fame museum, recently announced that they are not raising municipal taxes for the ninth year in a row. Let me repeat: nine years in a row. This tax freeze is a tribute to St Marys council and municipal staff, who have shown leadership and determination through the municipal restructuring process. They've also been able to maintain a healthy reserve account in excess of \$2 million.

Rather than blame someone else, raise taxes or shirk responsibility, the town of St Marys accepted the challenge and are proud to have one of the most efficient and cost-effective municipal governments in the province. More importantly, the town of St Marys continues to offer and provide first-rate services and programs to its residents.

I want to take this opportunity to commend St Marys mayor, Jamie Hahn, for showing exemplary leadership and vision. I also want to applaud St Marys council and the municipal staff, especially the soon-to-be-retired clerk, Ken Storey, for their hard work and commitment on behalf of local ratepayers.

Please join me in recognizing the town of St Marys for leading by example and for holding the line on municipal taxes for nine years in a row.

PREMIER'S ATTENDANCE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): The government of Ontario is pursuing global positioning technology to keep tabs on parolees, and the corrections minister is going to have a request for proposals. This may be a fine idea. We think we should expand that request for proposals to include some kind of homing device for the Premier of Ontario. That way, we would know all the time where the Premier of Ontario is. As a matter of fact, if we could get his attendance up over 38%, maybe we wouldn't need a homing device to figure out why he doesn't want to come to the House and, when he gets here, why he doesn't want to address any questions. He's famous for passing off from golfer to caddy, because he refuses to be accountable to the people of Ontario.

Imagine: anywhere he might be on the golf course, right before he takes that swing, we could beep him and tell him it's almost question period and he ought to make tracks back to the House and be accountable to the people of Ontario. We think we could even include some kind of zapper device, and as the time approaches 1:30 of the clock, we could zap him and say, "It's question period time, time to answer to the public of Ontario all the accountability questions the Ontario Liberal Party has for the Premier of Ontario." Let's get that global tracking device, because we may actually find the Premier of Ontario.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): On April 27, I had the pleasure of attending a community volunteer summit, hosted by the Cambridge Volunteer Bureau, to launch Ontario's Promise in my riding of Cambridge.

Carol Arris and her team at the bureau did a great job. The summit brought together approximately 100 community and business representatives for breakfast at 7:30 am. Represented were the Waterloo Regional Police, the OPP, the United Way, Babcock and Wilcox, the Royal Bank, Clarica, Rier Industries and Patentia Inc, to name a few. Agencies of promise were identified and successful partnerships shared.

Pat Singleton of the Cambridge Self Help Food Bank and their corporate partner, McArthur Express, presented an example of their partnership that provides a delivery truck and storage for the food bank.

Keith Taylor from Big Brothers told of many companies and staff who supported them in their travelling barbecue fundraiser and others who participated in their bowl-a-thon.

This summit brought together members of local agencies with business to forge partnerships and celebrate success.

Through Ontario's Promise, we all have the opportunity to tap into resources and facilitate partnerships, all to the benefit of the young people of this province. I would urge every community in Ontario to become involved.

HÔPITAL MONTFORT

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): Répondant à une question adressée au premier ministre, à savoir s'il allait se désister de la cause Montfort afin de permettre aux francophones de cette province de conserver le seul hôpital universitaire francophone de l'Ontario, le procureur général a dit qu'il ne pouvait commenter puisque la cause était devant les tribunaux.

Par contre, le premier ministre Harris, à sa sortie de la Chambre, a eu le culot de commenter la cause Montfort devant les journalistes. C'est un manque de respect flagrant envers cette Chambre. Le premier ministre s'abstient de répondre aux parlementaires mais se permet de répondre des énormités aux médias.

Il y a plus : le premier ministre n'a pas le courage ni la décence de le dire dans cette Chambre, mais le message qu'il transmet aux médias est que d'accepter le fait français en Ontario semble être dangereux pour la stabilité du Canada. Il faut alors détruire la cause Montfort et la reconnaissance de la francophonie, sinon les provinces ne pourront plus gouverner. Le gouvernement Harris tente d'intimider la cour et le peuple ontarien en brandissant le spectre du péril francophone.

Maintenant la vérité est sortie. Nous voyons les vraies couleurs de Mike Harris. Les francophones et franco-philés de cette province et du pays entier ont toujours soupçonné que Mike Harris penchait dans cette direction. Maintenant ses propres paroles hors de cette Chambre sont très claires. Son gouvernement s'aligne sur le côté des extrémistes antifrancophones dans ce débat. Quelle insulte aux Franco-Ontariens et Franco-Ontariennes et à tous les Canadiens et Canadiennes.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Yesterday in my statement to the Legislature I referred to the allocation of this government's investment for people with developmental disabilities. I'd like to take just a brief moment to correct the record and clarify my previous remarks.

This government has committed \$55 million this year, growing to nearly \$200 million by 2006-07, to enhance services for people with developmental disabilities and to attract more quality caregivers. This money has not been directly allocated to any one organization.

Again, I would like to thank the Ontario Association for Community Living for their important contribution to community living in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member for correcting the record.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery the Honourable Greg Deighan, Minister of Tourism with the Prince Edward Island Legislature, who is joined by his wife. Would you please join me in welcoming our special guests.

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today I have laid upon the table copies of the order in council appointing the Honourable Janet Lynne Ecker and the Honourable Chris Stockwell as commissioners of the Board of Internal Economy, appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, among the members of the executive council, in place of the Honourable Norman W. Sterling and the Honourable Chris Hodgson; appointing James Stevenson Gilchrist, MPP, as a commissioner to the Board of Internal Economy, appointed by the caucus of the government, in place of Doug Galt, MPP; and appointing Gilles Bisson, MPP, as a commissioner to the Board of Internal Economy, appointed by the caucus of the New Democratic Party in place of David Christopherson, MPP.

1350

REPORT,
OFFICE OF THE INTEGRITY
COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the report of the Acting Integrity Commissioner, the Honourable Gregory T. Evans, responding to the request by the member for Timiskaming concerning the Honourable Michael D. Harris, Premier of Ontario, and the Rail Cycle North waste proposal.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr7, An Act to revive Premium Auto Collision Inc.

Bill Pr9, An Act respecting the Town of Newmarket.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a fourth report of the standing committee on government agencies.

Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

IMPROVED SAFETY ON 400 SERIES
HIGHWAYS ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA SÉCURITÉ ACCRUE
DES ROUTES DE LA SÉRIE 400

Mr Mazzilli moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to improve safety on 400 series highways / Projet de loi 50, Loi visant à accroître la sécurité des routes de la série 400.

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

The member for a short statement.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): This bill amends the Highway Traffic Act. A person driving a class A motor vehicle in a direction on a controlled access highway where there is more than one lane must not do so in the extreme left lane unless the lane is obstructed or closed. Regulations under the act can provide for those exemptions.

PORTABLE HEART
DEFIBRILLATOR ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LES DÉFIBRILLATEURS
CARDIAQUES PORTATIFS

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 51, An Act to help save the lives of Ontarians who suffer from cardiac arrest by promoting the widespread availability and use of portable heart defibrillators in public places / Projet de loi 51, Loi visant à contribuer à sauver la vie des Ontariens qui souffrent d'un arrêt cardiaque en promouvant la disponibilité et l'usage généralisés de défibrillateurs cardiaques portatifs dans les lieux publics.

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

The member for a short statement.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): It's my honour to be here, and in the gallery to have Garrie Wright from Toronto emergency services, who is doing a great job spearheading this defibrillator program across the province.

This bill would require that portable heart defibrillators be made available and installed in significant public buildings, including privately owned buildings such as shopping centres, arenas and stadiums that have

significant public access. The widespread installations would be completed within three years after the bill is enacted. The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in consultation with emergency health stakeholders is required to develop and issue training and education guidelines for the use of portable defibrillators within six months after the bill is enacted.

The bill provides for protection from civil liability for users of defibrillators and owners of premises on which the defibrillators are installed.

This portable device, the cost of a laptop computer, will save thousands of lives and save millions of dollars in health care costs. I hope this bill becomes a reality in the near future.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr O'Toole moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 52, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 52, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): The bill amends the Legislative Assembly Act to provide that a member of the assembly shall not receive any salary as a member for a period during which the member is suspended from the service of the Legislative Assembly.

I must recognize before the Legislature that this bill was first introduced in 1996 by the current Minister of Finance, the Honourable James Flaherty.

I introduce this bill in an attempt to promote the highest level of decorum and civility and respect in this Legislature. Several incidents, such as those now, specifically involve the leader of the official opposition, the member from Sault Ste Marie and the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane and are cause for concern with regard to declining respect and civility in the Legislature.

The VIP visitors, the visiting schoolchildren and the pages who come to Queen's Park are not impressed by the lack of civility and decorum demonstrated in this Legislature.

Last week the Minister of Citizenship proudly hosted several veterans of the Second World War on the 56th anniversary of VE Day, including George Lacey, Frank Russell, Harold Penn and many others.

The bill is consistent with the government's 21st step into the 21st century: support for parliamentary reform.

In summation, we all recall the famous statement, "I may disagree with what you say but I will defend your right to say it."

PUBLIC SECTOR EMPLOYEE'S
SEVERANCE PAY
DISCLOSURE ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001
SUR LA DIVULGATION DES INDEMNITÉS
DE CESSATION D'EMPLOI
DES EMPLOYÉS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mrs Bountrogianni moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act requiring the disclosure of payments to former public sector employees arising from the termination of their employment / Projet de loi 53, Loi exigeant la divulgation des versements effectués aux anciens employés du secteur public par suite de la cessation de leur emploi.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): This bill requires that if a former public sector employee who is not subject to a collective agreement receives \$100,000 or more as severance pay, the former employer shall make available for public inspection a written record of the amount of the severance paid to the former public sector employee.

On June 21, 2000, I introduced a bill called the Public Sector Employees' Severance Pay Act. It passed unanimously in October 2000, but it died on the order paper.

Over the past years, taxpayers in Hamilton and Ontario have been outraged by the number and the secrecy of the severance payments which have been paid. Today I am introducing a bill which requires that all public sector severance payments over \$100,000 will be made public. No more secrecy. This is about accountability. This is about transparency. This is about our right as taxpayers to know how much we are paying to terminate employment.

RETAIL SALES TAX
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA TAXE
DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL

Mr Parsons moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide an exemption for fire education equipment / Projet de loi 54, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail pour prévoir une exemption à l'égard du matériel d'enseignement des mesures anti-incendie.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): In much of Ontario, fire protection is provided by volunteers. In far too many cases they have to fundraise to

purchase their equipment, and the province permits them to have the sales tax returned to them.

In addition to the commitment to fighting fires, they are committed to preventing fires. Unfortunately the province taxes any equipment which volunteers purchase with money raised from the community. This bill would provide an exemption for fire education equipment specifically designed at the time of purchase for educational purposes.

The media on a regular basis carry stories of children who have saved lives within their own households because of skills taught to them via the fire education vehicle. I believe it is imperative that we not cause volunteers to spend additional time taking money from their communities to go to Toronto that would be better used for fire protection in their own areas.

I would like to acknowledge with thanks Bob Pearce and the fire safety committee of Hastings and Prince Edward for bringing this to my attention. I apologize that the rules don't allow this bill to be made retroactive. However, I challenge the Minister of Finance to make it retroactive by regulation and return to my community the \$4,000 that was taken out of it by this government in retail sales tax on fire safety equipment.

MOTIONS

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 from 6:45 pm to 9:30 pm on Wednesday, May 16, 2001, 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 1402 to 1407.

The Speaker: Would all 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	Elliott, Brenda	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Gilchrist, Steve	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gill, Raminder	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Hastings, John	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Hodgson, Chris	Ramsay, David
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Hudak, Tim	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Smitherman, George

Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Cleary, John C.	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Kennedy, Gerard	Sterling, Norman W.
Colle, Mike	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary
Conway, Sean G.	Kwinter, Monte	Stockwell, Chris
Cordiano, Joseph	Marland, Margaret	Tsubouchi, David H.
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Turnbull, David
Cunningham, Dianne	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Di Cocco, Caroline	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Dombrowsky, Leona	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Dunlop, Garfield	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David
Ecker, Janet	Newman, Dan	

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

Nays

Bisson, Gilles	Kormos, Peter	Marchese, Rosario
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Martin, Tony
Hampton, Howard		

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 71; the nays are 7.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have a group from Victoria county who have travelled long and far to come to this Legislature, and they would like to meet with their member, the member for Haliburton-Victoria-Brock.

The Speaker: Get to your point of order quickly, please.

Mr Colle: It would mean having a meeting set up with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the constituents after question period today.

Interjection: You could ask for unanimous consent.

The Speaker: You can't ask for unanimous consent. Members can do that on their own.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION REFORM

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Over the past six years, this government has built a solid record of investment and innovation in Ontario's publicly funded education system. In developing the key elements of our reform agenda, of our plan, we have listened to what parents and taxpayers told us needed to be done.

To improve quality and accountability, we established a more rigorous curriculum with higher standards and brought in standardized testing to measure students' progress.

To provide the assurance that all teachers have the up-to-date knowledge and skills they need to help students reach their full potential, we are implementing a comprehensive teacher testing program. The first phase of the program began last fall with the introduction of the

language proficiency test, through the Ontario College of Teachers, for teachers who took their training outside of Ontario in a language other than English or French.

This fall, standards for mandatory professional development with recertification every five years, performance appraisal, evaluation, and decertification will be phased in as well. This will ensure that all of our teachers are evaluated, consistently and regularly, with input from parents. Next spring, we will begin a new qualifying test for all new teacher graduates, as well as for all teachers trained outside the province.

This government believes that the involvement of parents in education is critical to achieving higher standards and raising student performance. For parents to be able to make the necessary decisions and choices about their children's education, they need information and they need effective avenues for participation. Parents also want to see evidence that student achievement is improving.

To strengthen and support parental involvement, we created understandable report cards, and we have been working to strengthen the role of parents in their children's education through school councils.

I recently released new regulations that increase the accountability of the education system to parents and strengthen the voice of parents in the public education system. Effective this fall, school councils will have the right to make recommendations to their principal or school board on any matter. Principals and boards will be required to seek the views of school councils in a number of very important program and policy areas, and to report back on actions taken in response to school council recommendations.

In addition, to provide parents with the stronger voice they have been seeking at the provincial level, we recently expanded the Ontario Parent Council to include six regional representatives chosen by school councils across the province.

Parents want to see steady improvement in their schools, and to help make sure this happens, this past January we announced the creation of the Task Force on Effective Schools. The task force will make recommendations on ways to improve board management practices, planning systems, school improvement plans and teacher excellence. We are all looking forward to the completion of their report later this spring.

We have made improvements in our important special-education services as well. Last year we increased spending by 12% over the previous year, and that's the third year in a row that resources in this important area have been increased.

In addition, as part of our ongoing plan to improve quality and accountability in special education, we created new standards for individual education plans for exceptional students. To ensure boards are accountable for delivering high-quality programs and services throughout Ontario, we've provided standards for school boards' special education plans so that parents will know

what to expect and what programs should be in place for their children. We're now working on the development of special education program standards for each exceptionality. I should also point out that these standards and the programs have been improved immensely because of the consultation and input of parents themselves.

As well, in the recent budget we announced an additional \$3 million this year, and \$4 million annually in future years, to expand the education supports for those children and youth who are confined in institutions and other facilities.

We have also continued to increase our investment in public education overall. For the 2001-02 school year alone, we have increased funding by more than \$360 million. This new money is also being provided in a way that will allow boards greater flexibility in determining how to meet their own local priorities.

Education funding for the coming school year is projected to be 2.8% higher than funding for this year. That means that education funding in this province will have increased from \$12.9 billion to \$13.8 billion since this government took office in 1995, an increase of almost \$1 billion.

On May 7 I announced a package of initiatives, a significant package to enable school boards to continue to make improvements for the coming school year. Subject to the approval of the Legislature where required, this package will include flexibility for school boards to vary the average class size in high schools by up to one student so there will be improved access to teachers and resources to help students; flexibility for boards to provide greater access to remedial help by expanding what is included in the definition of instructional time; and broadening the definition of instructional time to give school boards greater flexibility in recognizing co-instructional activities when assigning teachers' workloads. Part of that announcement was an additional \$50 million that schools and school boards could use to address such important local priorities as these.

Furthermore, and as part of the 21 steps into the 21st century outlined in last month's throne speech, we are taking several additional measures to support increased accountability and choice in education. These measures include the expansion of standardized student testing to all grades; the elimination of the institutional bias against home schooling; requiring schools to provide extra support for students who are falling behind; requiring boards to set targets for improving student achievement and to establish plans to help low-performing schools and school boards; the launch this fall of an annual survey to measure parents' satisfaction with their schools; and the proposal for legislation to allow parents to enrol their children in any available school within their system.

These are the actions of a government that wants to strengthen public education. They represent our ongoing commitment to ensure that Ontario's public education system can achieve excellence.

We have accomplished much in the reform of Ontario's public education system, but we also recognize

that more needs to be done. I remain committed to finish what we started, to complete our plan for better quality, more accountability, improved student achievement, and to simply do what we said we would do.

But just as we are supporting and encouraging parental involvement and choice within the public system, the government also respects the choice made by those parents who choose to educate their children in an independent school. Last week's budget announced another important step in supporting parental choice. The equity-in-education tax credit, which begins in the 2002 taxation year, subject to approval by the Legislature, will give parents a tax credit of up to \$3,500, phased in over five years, for fees they have paid to send their children to independent schools in Ontario. The government will work to identify the appropriate framework for establishing eligibility for this credit.

Every student in Ontario deserves the best education possible. I will continue to deliver on this government's commitment to develop a quality public education system, to improve student achievement and to prepare all of our students for success in a highly competitive global economy.

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Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Before we proceed with today's proceedings, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to take a 10-minute recess so that the member from Haliburton, Chris Hodgson, can meet with his constituents who came down here today—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We've been through this. Member, take your seat. We've been through this. Anyone can meet at any time.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: With respect to standing order 35(d), "After any policy statement the minister shall table a compendium of background information," we have not yet been provided with that background information.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education, maybe for some clarification?

Hon Mrs Ecker: There is a compendium. It should have been tabled. I'd be quite happy to send the copy of what I have here to the honourable member.

The Speaker: Statements by ministries? Responses?

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is a pleasure to finally see the Minister of Education—formerly the minister of public education, now the minister of private education—stand up in this House and put herself forward in some form or fashion in respect of her measure to create private school option preferences in this province. Instead we had less, on the clock, than 20 seconds' worth of justification from this minister, who is patently unable to disguise what none of the caucus across can hide from either: that this is a lazy, ideological, sloppy initiative that has nothing to do with enhancing the well-being of the students of this province.

The parents watching this today are alert to this. They are alert to the fact that we have a minister of private education who wants, at the expense of the needs of the

existing system, to promote the needs of people we'll find are not even the ones they put forward as being in need.

This is nothing less than an attack on public education. This is the culmination of five and now almost six years of deliberate efforts to destabilize the education system. We know from the last election that there are people out there who would like to give this government the benefit of the doubt. Instead, this verifies for everyone that what the government wants to do is create a back door to the public education system, having squeezed it every single way possible.

So these members opposite, these members on the other side, may agree that it's all right to take away \$918 from every single student in the province, because that's what they're doing, and in each of their ridings they know that less than 8% of that money has come out of administration savings. You stood in your place six years ago and said you could get away with taking money and resources out of the system. You stand here today and say, not only will you not live up to your responsibilities to give us a high-quality, excellent public education, not only do you shirk from that, but instead you're diverting those resources into the hands of people who don't need them, by and large.

We've had a new curriculum brought up that has been mismanaged by this government. We have had the most vulnerable students in this province, those vulnerable students in need of special education, who instead have been subject to a cut. The Provincial Auditor has acknowledged and the committee on special education has acknowledged that this government has actually taken money away from special education to fund its tax cut over the last few years. In fact, we have members opposite, the majority of whom I'm sad to report are headed to their constituencies next week—

The Speaker: Will the member take his seat. The Minister of Labour and the Minister of Transportation, we're not allowed to use props. Quit waving them around. Sorry, the member for Parkdale-High Park.

Mr Kennedy: This minister and her predecessors have spent six years taking choices away from parents and children in the public system, reducing and defining, giving them higher class sizes, because that's what has happened. They have made the school experience less meaningful by creating problems not only in special education but in each and every of the classrooms. We now have in this province a full-blown teacher shortage courtesy of the actions of this government, directly motivated by the attacks they've done, the public dollars they've misspent on advertising campaigns, and this minister still won't tell us how many thousands of teachers she has letters of permission for who aren't qualified to teach in the classroom because in Ontario teachers don't want to teach.

This minister of private education does not have the fulsome grace to divulge to us today who is really benefiting here. In fact, over the days and weeks to come we will learn that this is primarily a benefit, almost ex-

clusively a benefit, for people who attend private, elite schools, that in fact there is no improvement for those people who may be objectors of conscience and in religious schools. It is a narrow, defined benefit to encourage people.

Each of these members will go back to their constituencies next week. I challenge them to go to a public school and explain how you've set up a system that for every child you get to leave a public school, your government now saves \$3,300. This is the opposite of public education, and Ontario will be able to tell the difference.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a copy of a newspaper. In response to the minister, I just want to read a part of it, because it quotes the Liberal education critic, who says, "Private schools do have to be funded." After all that, I guess the Liberal position is that they agree with public funding for private schools, but they wish they'd done it first.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Stop the clock. Order. The Minister of Labour, come to order, as well as the member for Windsor West. We've had our fun. It was a little noisy. I know it's good-natured and there was some laughing, but unfortunately I can't hear the leader of the third party's statement. I would appreciate some quiet. We've had our fun.

The leader of the third party. Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Hampton: I want to be very clear with the government that New Democrats oppose your scheme to extend public funding to private schools not just some of the time, not just in here and then we tell a different story out there. We oppose it in principle, unlike Liberals, who want to have it both ways. But I want you to know why we oppose it, because with all of your grandiose statement today, you ignored the reality.

Minister, in Canada today, in North America today, Ontario ranks 55th—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Sorry for the interruption. The members for Windsor-St Clair and Toronto Centre-Rosedale, come to order, please. I cannot hear him when you're shouting at him. We're not going to continue like that.

Again, sorry for the interruption, to the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I've just been handed another excerpt from a newspaper. This one is from Mr McGuinty, who says, "I have said in the past that there is a fairness issue here, and that's something we must recognize in stressing that the issue of private school funding is a 'how and when' matter."

I want to be very clear again: the problem with this government's scheme is that you have a terribly underfunded public school system. You have a public school system that the Ontario alternative budget calculates would require an addition \$1,000 per student in order to bring funding up to the necessary level. Instead, what is your strategy? Your strategy is to give parents a \$3,500-

per-student voucher to take their kids to a private school. You are not interested in funding our public schools to the level they need; you're interested in giving parents a voucher to take their kids to a private school. You're doing exactly the opposite of what needs to be done, and that's why we're so opposed to this in principle.

Over 138 public schools in this province are either closed or are closing as a result of this government's budget cuts. We know that only 85% of elementary schools have full-time principals—the leader in the school, and only 85% of the schools now have a principal. We know that class sizes are growing. We know that in grade 2, where it's important to have small classes, the class size has increased by 10% under your government.

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We know there are 24% fewer elementary schools with ESL programs as a result of your budget cuts. We know there are now 34,000 students in this province who need access to special education, but the money isn't in the funding formula to give them access to special education. I gather your answer is to give their parents a \$3,500 voucher so they can take their kids out of public school and send them to a private school.

The hypocrisy of this is worse every day. When you go out there—

The Speaker: You'll have to withdraw that word. You can't use "hypocrisy." I'm afraid you'll have to withdraw it.

Mr Hampton: Well, Speaker, the doublespeak about this is worse every day.

The Speaker: It's wrong and I want it withdrawn right now. You're not going to carry on like that. I've asked you to withdraw it, now withdraw.

Mr Hampton: I withdraw, Speaker.

George Orwell would be proud of this government. George Orwell would be proud of the way you stand here every day and say the public school system is being funded adequately, but every day the evidence grows. Children can't get special education. Children can't get access to ESL. Children don't have busing to get to school. Children don't have extracurricular activities. Children are in schools where they know the teacher they had last year is not going to be there, because the teacher has already told them, "I'm leaving. I've had enough. I don't want to be in a system where the government of the day doesn't respect public education and is not willing to fund public education."

That's the reality that's out there, and no amount of George Orwell's use of the English language, no amount of using words in the opposite way that they were intended to be used is going to cover up what's going on. But we're going to be consistent in our criticism. We're not going to say in here one day that we are opposed to your scheme to fund private schools with public money and then say out there the next day that it's OK. It's wrong. And it's wrong because it's robbing children of the education they need.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My questions are for the Minister of Education. You will recall that yesterday I produced a one-page form, the single and only requirement for private school operators. The only thing you ask of them is to complete that one-page form, and then they become eligible for part of your \$500 million in private school vouchers.

After question period, you told working families through reporters that they need not worry about pulling kids out of public schools because the ministry was inspecting private schools. Of the 734 private schools operating in the province, I would like to ask, how many have you inspected during the course of the past year? Of 734 private schools, how many did you inspect?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): Obviously, his scribe was not taking good notes in my scrum yesterday. What we do is inspect those schools that wish to offer the Ontario diploma, to say that students in their schools are meeting the curriculum standards. That is what we inspect, and that has always been the case.

What I'd like to say to the honourable member is that this government believes that parental choice, the views of parents, the voices of parents are very, very important, not only in the public education system but also in those—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister, take a seat.

The member for Hamilton West, come to order. You keep shouting. Please come to order.

Sorry for the interruption. Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. We believe that parents have a voice and that parents understand the needs for their children and their families more and better than the government. But when the honourable member was asked, "What about parents? Aren't they the ones responsible?" the honourable member said no. That is not a mark of respect for the parents in his riding and the parents in the ridings of his members who choose—

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

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, just a few moments ago, during the course of your statement you said, "For parents to be able to make the necessary decisions and choices about their children's education, they need information." I'm just wondering why you're not prepared to provide that particular information. If you won't, then I'll help you out with it right now.

Of the 734 private schools in Ontario, last year your ministry only inspected 90. That's close to a 10% inspection rate. On top of that, you have in your ministry a practice of not inspecting any private schools. When it comes to three-year-olds and four-year-olds in private

schools, those children are none of your concern, apparently.

I want to know, on behalf of Ontario's working families, why you are taking \$500 million out of the public system, which is starved for funding, a system of which you demand tremendous accountability, and instead you're giving it away as a private school voucher to elite private schools and you are conducting only 10% of inspections out of a total of 734 private schools?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, no one is handing out \$500 million in vouchers. Again, the honourable member keeps trying to repeat it to make it true. Secondly, the honourable member believes that the parents in his riding, the parents in the ridings of his other caucus colleagues, are going to somehow put their children in situations that are not appropriate for them or not safe. If the parents of any school don't want their children there, they won't put their children there. If those independent schools, the ones in his riding, the ones in the ridings of his members, are so bad, then parents won't have their children in them.

We think parents both in the public system and outside the public system have a voice, and we are prepared to respect that voice; we are prepared to respect that parental choice. The honourable member is certainly quite prepared to say to those parents, "Maybe we will; maybe we won't. We're not sure how. We're not opposed to it but maybe we will"—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

Mr McGuinty: Madam Minister, less than 15 minutes ago in that very seat you said, "For parents to be able to make the necessary decisions and choices about their children's education, they need information." Why are you so afraid to put out the facts when it comes to the accountability measures or lack thereof connected with your \$500-million private school voucher program?

All you need to do is complete a single-page form to start up a private school in Ontario. You're only conducting an inspection of 90 schools out of 734. Those are the facts. Why not make them readily available to Ontario parents?

Here's another fact, something I dug up in a Ministry of Education guideline. It says, "The ministry does not inspect health equipment, nor practices related to safety and staffing issues." Given that you're handing out a \$500-million incentive to parents to send their kids to private elite schools, don't you think you have some responsibility to make sure you inspect each and every one of those schools, that you make sure they are safe and that you make sure there are qualified teachers in those schools?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member is again showing the reasons as evidence for why we needed to change the curriculum in this province. His math simply is not adding up. No one is handing out \$500 million. What he likes to forget about is the over \$360 million we put into public education this year alone on top of the new money we put in last year. He likes to forget that. Here he goes again, showing no respect for the parents

who want to make that choice, no respect for the groups or organizations. The Jewish community, the Muslim community, the Montessori schools, all of those schools out there, he has no respect for them, what they do or the parents who make that choice.

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We believe that parents are to be respected. We believe that they have a voice in their children's education, in the public system, outside the public system, and that's why we are moving forward with the reforms to the public education system that we are doing.

The Speaker: Order. The minister's time is up, I'm afraid.

New question, leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: This question is for the Minister of Education. I want to talk to you about your continuing lack of commitment to public education in Ontario. You will know that the new curriculum requires new textbooks. This year, in September, it's going to be the grade 11 textbooks that have to be replaced. Two years ago we replaced the grade 9 textbooks at a cost of \$30 million. This year we replaced the grade 10 textbooks at a cost of \$30 million. But this year when it comes to replacing the grade 11 textbooks—it is the same students who will require the same number of new textbooks—you have cut the funding in half. You're only allotting \$15 million for new textbooks.

I'm just wondering now, again on behalf of Ontario's working families, why it is that you have \$500 million for private school vouchers but you've decided to cut the funding in half for our grade 11 students in our public schools when it comes to their textbooks.

Hon Mrs Ecker: This is the honourable member across the way who said that school boards needed more flexibility, that there were too many rules around how school boards get their money.

We listened to what schools and school boards said. We gave them over \$360 million more this year. Do you know what we also said to them? They could make those decisions according to what the parents and the local community wanted.

Here we go again: if it's his party that's dictating how to do it, it's OK, but if the parents want to make the choice, he doesn't respect that. This government does respect those parents and their choices. He may not have respect for parents who want to make that choice, but his caucus colleague Michael Bryant does, his caucus colleague Monte Kwinter does, and obviously his caucus colleague Gerard Kennedy. They have more respect for parents in their ridings than you do in yours, sir.

Mr McGuinty: I want Ontario parents to learn something of your real priorities when it comes to education. You have \$500 million for a new private school voucher program, but you don't have enough money for textbooks for grade 11 students.

Let's take a look at some of your other priorities. This year school boards will be getting \$39.7 million less from you to heat our public schools. I'm sure you will have noticed that the cost of gas and the cost of electricity are

skyrocketing. Given that you have \$500 million for private school vouchers, why have you decided to cut \$40 million that is needed by our school boards in the public system to heat our schools for our children?

Hon Mrs Ecker: With respect, the honourable member is clearly not paying attention. He is not paying attention to the new money that we gave them at the end of this year above and beyond the \$360 million, the \$43 million that we gave schools and school boards just for heating costs.

Mr McGuinty: These are the facts. You may find them difficult to grapple with, but they are the facts. You want to keep parents informed, then let's keep them informed. You have \$500 million for a private school voucher program, but you don't have enough money for textbooks and you don't have enough money for heating.

Here's another fact. I'm sure you have become aware that the price of gasoline is going up and it's going up dramatically. Despite this, you are cutting \$19 million from busing for our school boards in Ontario. It seems odd to me that you don't have money to drive the kids to public schools but you've got the money to drive them away from public schools.

Again, Madam Minister, on behalf of Ontario's working families and the parents, why is it that you have \$500 million for a private school voucher program but you don't have enough money for textbooks, you don't have enough money for heating and you don't have enough money for busing for kids in the public system?

Hon Mrs Ecker: This government has \$13.8 billion—billion, not million; again, I know the honourable member obviously missed that math class—\$13.8 billion for the public education system, because the public education system is an important priority for the hard-working Ontario families this government represents.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take a seat.

This is the last warning for the member for Hamilton East. We can't continue. I'm going to start picking out people on both sides.

Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

He likes to say he's for standards in public education. Well, what about all the standards we brought in for the curriculum, the testing, the teacher testing, the safe schools—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Minister, take a seat.

The member for Kingston and the Islands, this is the last warning as well, and I don't believe he's in his seat. You can't yell, and it's your last warning.

Sorry again for the interruption, Minister.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Every one of those standards that he now trumpets, that he now says are so important, were standards this government told voters we would bring in, standards we are indeed putting in and standards the honourable member voted against every time. Now he says he's for standards.

This government believes in the public education system. That is why we have put more money in. That's why we have raised standards. We also respect parental choice, obviously something he does not.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education. The opposition to your scheme to use public funds to fund private schools is growing across this province. Part of the reason it's growing is because people remember you saying six months ago, "We've been very clear that our goal is a good public education system. The \$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.

Minister, since you've completely changed your story, and the Premier has completely changed his story, before you ram this legislation through, will you hold public hearings across the province so you can explain yourself to the people you flip-flopped on?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I do respect that at least we know where the honourable member and his party stand, unlike the Liberal Party, which has been on at least six sides of this issue in the last couple of weeks.

No one is taking \$300 million—at least he gets the figures right; again, the Liberals can't seem to tell the difference between the numbers. No one is taking \$300 million out of the public education system. As a matter of fact, we have put more money in. We are spending more on public education today than was being spent when this government came into office. Why? Because we believe the public education system is extremely important.

I believe that putting that money into the public education system is an investment in our future in this province, both economically and in the quality of life of this province. That's why the budget was also very clear that we are going to continue to make new investments in the public education system, because it is so important to those hard-working Ontario families this government represents.

Mr Hampton: The question was: since this government has totally flip-flopped, will they hold public hearings so the people of Ontario can hear from you what your reasons are? You have no mandate to do this. Six months ago you said this would never happen. In the last election campaign the Premier said this would never happen.

Minister, the last time there was an educational change of this magnitude in the province was in 1985, when the decision was made to extend public funds to public Catholic schools. The Conservative Party at the time demanded unlimited public hearings, and 80 days of public hearings were held.

If that was the test for the Conservative Party then, let it be the test for the Conservative party now. Will you hold public hearings across the province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, this government does not support vouchers, and it is not implementing vouchers.

Secondly, the decision to fund Catholic education in this province, as I recall, because I was there also—and the NDP lined up right there with the Liberal Party, lined up right there with the Conservative government to support that decision.

Mr Hampton: It was a very simple question. It was a Conservative member in 1985 who demanded unlimited public hearings on the decision to extend public funding to public Catholic schools. Now, after your saying it would never happen that public funding would be extended to private schools, after the Premier's saying it would never happen when he was Premier, you've made that decision.

So the test for Conservatives in 1985 was public hearings, Minister—public hearings. We're having an educational summit here tomorrow tonight to talk about this issue. Come to that summit and explain to people that you will grant public hearings across the province, just as you demanded in 1985. Will you do that?

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Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, this government and this Premier were very clear. He ruled out a voucher program. He didn't think that was appropriate for a parent in this province. What we have put in place and what we're proposing to put in place is a tax credit.

But I must also say that our commitment to the public education system by steps to make sure that we have more accountability, better quality, bringing in higher standards in the public education system, is my priority. It continues to be my priority. That's the business we're in, those are the commitments we made to parents, and we are indeed meeting those commitments.

I would challenge the honourable member that, rather than criticizing every one of the standards we brought into the public education system and voting against them and not saying they were important, perhaps he might want to support some of those standards for the public education system to make sure our students are getting the education they deserve in the public education system.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Hampton: I would say to the Minister of Education that public hearings were good enough then; they ought to be good enough now.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question to the Minister of Energy. The situation in California with respect to hydroelectricity gets worse. Yesterday, the residential electricity rates were forced up by 34 cents a kilowatt hour. The residential electricity rates are now three times what they are in Ontario.

When you sold your dirty deal to sell off Ontario's hydroelectricity system two years ago, you said that California was an excellent example to follow. Minister, why are you risking California-style price increases here in Ontario?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I've said time and time again that we are not California, nor are we Alberta. We have the opposite problem of California and Alberta. We have plenty of supply. We simply have that supply in a monopoly situation with unchecked costs, no choice for consumers, and frankly it's illegal to sell green power in this province, something that we're undoing as a government and making sure that people in this province have choice to buy clean power, to buy more environmentally friendly green power, all of the benefits of opening the market to competition.

The honourable member keeps misquoting, I suppose; I don't know. The fact of the matter is, I've been very clear. If he does his homework he'll find out from our independent market operator that the rules that are being written in Ontario are unique to Ontario to address our monopoly situation. They have nothing to do with California or Alberta.

Mr Hampton: This would be the only person I know in Ontario who would call the Premier's idea of 10 new nuclear plants "green power."

You keep saying there's lots of supply. California said there's lots of supply, but the reality in California was, the supply dissipated very quickly. Minister, the question is this: would you confirm that since 1999, on at least two occasions in this province, the demand for electricity has spiked up such that there was in fact a shortage of supply, and that on two occasions since 1999 they've had to reduce the voltage because of that problem of supply? Even your friend Tom Adams acknowledges that. Will you finally acknowledge that there's a problem with supply and that this is a lot more like California that you care to admit?

Hon Mr Wilson: With his green power comments the member is completely misinformed. I call taking the methane gas off of Waterloo's landfill site, the plant that we opened last year that now supplies power—green power, using methane gas, to 80,000 homes in the Cambridge and Waterloo area—I call that green power. I call green power the power that we're taking off the sewage treatment plant down on the lakeshore and burning that methane gas. Today, Toronto Works uses that electricity. That methane would have gone to hurt the atmosphere. Today it's being burned and it's used as green power.

There's a huge windmill project being built on the Bruce Peninsula, as we speak, by OPG and British Energy. I call that green power. I call the windmill on top of Blue Mountain, today providing power to the Collingwood grid, green power. You did nothing for green power in this province. It was illegal under your government. It was illegal under the Liberal government. We're breaking that monopoly and we're giving consumers choice.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. I want to ask

you very bluntly about the contradictions you're serving up to the parents of this province. Less than a week ago, you introduced a private—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Kitchener Centre, this is his last warning.

Sorry for the interruption.

Mr Kennedy: Minister, less than a week ago you introduced a private school voucher, and in it you committed \$300 million, which in actuality is easily 500 million scarce dollars. You used figures in this House that don't give a true illustration of how much money is missing from that system, and we'll deal with that outside this House. But I want to ask you very specifically: a week before that in this House you finally brought resolution to the extracurricular problem, or tried to, attempted to—we've been trying to get you to do that for months and months—and you said to the high school students of this province, "Your class sizes are going to get bigger, because we're not prepared to put money into quality education." The only way we're going to get peace in our schools in the turmoil you introduced is for those kids to suffer less access to their teachers and have more kids in their classes.

Minister, will you admit today that you're not interested in quality public education, or will you—

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

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I thank the honourable member for his contribution to this debate—the honourable member who said it's a question of fairness that we fund private education, private schools in this province. I welcome him to this debate. At least he can get some of the numbers right.

How many days did we in this House hear the honourable member and his colleagues say, "The government has this task force on extracurricular activities. They put out good recommendations. Why won't the government accept the task force on extracurricular activities?" Mr Speaker, we did. When we did, did they support the task force recommendations? Oh, no. Now the Liberals say, "You shouldn't have accepted this one, you shouldn't have accepted that one." Yet again, we hear them on both sides of the issue on a regular basis.

Mr Kennedy: When we used to have a minister of public education in this House, not one for private education, here's what that minister said: "I disagree with the task force. We shouldn't be increasing class sizes," and today we've heard again that there is an ideological, politically opportunistic bent on the part of this government that makes the students of this province come second.

Minister, I want to give you a chance: we in this party have a plan for improving public education, and we have said the investment has to be made to decrease class sizes. There are schools not far from here, like Fern Avenue public school, where grades 1 and 2 mixed classes are 31, 29 and 27. Minister, in your term you have increased class sizes. I want to know today if you will commit to implementing our plan to see class sizes

go down, or will you stand exposed to what is readily apparent, that you're not prepared to invest in the well-being of students in this province?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The honourable member brings up ideological and philosophical differences, etc. His own leader has no ideological or philosophical objection to funding independent schools. His own leader said that, so I don't know who he's talking about being ideological or philosophical.

We needed a solution for the extracurricular problem in some of our public high schools. Our students told us they wanted a long-term, sustainable solution. We sent out a task force of esteemed individuals who did an excellent job of bringing in recommendations. We consulted with our education partners. They said, "Adopt the task force recommendations." So we set aside our original position, because we were prepared to compromise to get those activities back for our students, and I have challenged all our other education partners: are they prepared to set aside their original positions? I have to tell you that they have said they are. Obviously the Liberal Party is not prepared to compromise. They said, "Let's let the students work longer and—"

The Speaker: I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

1500

IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE SERVICES

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): My question is directed to the citizenship minister and it concerns the whole issue of immigration and the financing of newcomer settlement programs in the Toronto area and Ontario.

This morning I had the privilege of attending another citizenship swearing-in ceremony, which shows that Canada has welcomed thousands of newcomers to this country. Also, I had a discussion with some of the new people who have come to the riding of Etobicoke North in the Toronto area. They are concerned as well about the financial inadequacy and the role that Ottawa does not seem to be playing in this whole issue. What we would like to know, Minister, is, how does the Ontario government's financial participation play up to and contrast with Ottawa's pretty Scrooge-like financial aid to newcomer programs in this province?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to thank the member for Etobicoke North for his question. Clearly, this government and all past governments of this province have acknowledged that cultural diversity is one of our province's great strengths. But the member raises some very serious questions about the level of federal support. Although the federal government sets the exact numbers of new immigrants to this country, they're not doing their fair share equally in terms of supporting these new Canadians.

Ontario welcomes almost 60% of all of Canada's new immigrants, and yet we're only getting 41% of the funding back from the federal government. These are tax

dollars we pay to Ottawa, but they don't come to us. In fact, if you go to our neighbour in Quebec, they receive only 14% of all new immigrants, but they're getting 33% of all the funding. So we are asking the federal government that they be more equitable in their treatment of immigration in this country and that Ontario taxpayers get the money that they—

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

Mr Hastings: Thank you, Minister. It seems to me this sounds like chapter 2 of ongoing discrimination by Ottawa against Ontario. We have it in job training upgrades; we have it in newcomer settlement programs.

What kind of a strategy are you planning to put in place to rectify this Scrooge-like treatment newcomers in Ontario are getting and restore some basic, elementary fairness and decency to the whole issue of financial aid for newcomers to this province so they can make their rightful and appropriate contribution as citizens, workers, investors, participants in this province, instead of being discriminated against?

Hon Mr Jackson: Clearly, the federal minister responsible for immigration is hearing from Canadians and Ontarians on this issue about equity in funding. In the meantime, the province of Ontario continues to improve and strengthen its commitment to new Canadians who settle in Ontario. My own Ministry of Citizenship allocates almost \$4 million to over 90 community agencies that provide newcomer settlement programs across the province. My colleague the Attorney General has to find on an annual basis anywhere from \$13 million to \$15 million for legal aid for refugee appeals and claimants. The Ministry of the Attorney General also offers programs for immigrant women who are the victims of violence and cultural discrimination. The Minister of Education provides \$42 million per year for adult ESL training and provides ESL programming for more than 70,000 school-aged children.

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up. Stop the clock.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: For your information, the federal minister is ready to—

The Speaker: No, don't waste our time. Your member was going to ask a question. Let's not do points of order and waste time in here back and forth; otherwise, I'll let the clock run and we won't get any questions. We're not going to start with that. Please don't do that.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a question for the Minister of Education. Minister, St Timothy school in Don Valley East has 11 portables on-site. The school was opened in 1964 to 200 students. Today, of 600 children at St Timothy, half are cramped in portables that are poorly lit.

Given the conditions at St Timothy's school, how can you justify providing half a billion dollars for private

school vouchers while—and I want to quote your 2001 budget on page 67—you provide \$16 million in capital for the entire province of Ontario. So your priorities seem to be half a billion in private school vouchers, yet the public system received \$16 million in capital expenditures. Can you justify that, Minister?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): First of all, if the honourable member has the budget in front of him, he will know that the amount of money for the tax credit is \$300 million, not the figure they keep trying to put on the public record, because it's not an accurate figure. Secondly, if he's reading the budget, he will also know that school boards get, and will be getting this coming school year, \$13.8 billion in resources. We have in Ontario the biggest school-building boom we have seen in years. Under this government, not under the honourable member's government, we have actually for the first time seen a reduction in the number of portable classrooms in those schools, in those communities, in the province that were in desperate need of a new school. The way we fund education, the way we provide funding to school boards, allows them to build faster than the way your government funded those school boards, sir.

Mr Caplan: Obviously that's not going to help the students in St Timothy's school. I'd like to relate to you another school in Don Valley East, Lescon public school. Lescon needs its roof replaced, but the Toronto District School Board can't afford to do it because of the way you fund capital in Ontario. They require \$80 million annually, but they also have a backlog of over \$300 million. The way you fund capital in the province of Ontario, the students at Lescon and the students at St Timothy's are going to be waiting a very, very long time.

Once again, I want you to justify your priorities. You provide \$500 million for private school vouchers, yet you only provide \$16 million for capital expenditures for public education in Ontario. Minister, stand in your place and try to justify that.

Hon Mrs Ecker: First of all, the honourable member may wish to justify his position on independent schools. I think that would be more important for the voters in his riding. But secondly, he deliberately keeps misreading the numbers. We are putting \$13.8 billion into the public education system. We are putting money into the system for capital for new schools in a way that has had a 9% decrease in the number of portable classrooms in this province, the first time any government has helped support that kind of school construction that we needed in those communities with growing populations.

If the honourable member is now asking the government—because he doesn't agree with the decisions that the Toronto school board has made in terms of the allocation of their resources—to take over from the Toronto school board, he should be clear because they have the responsibility, as they always have and—

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

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. We've often heard that the agri-food industry in Ontario is a major contributor to the province's economy. Farmers and rural people in my riding don't mind, and I would even say relish, the opportunity to support the rest of the province—even Toronto—when called on to do so and when they are able. Given that the past year has been one of challenges for our farmers, can you provide me with an update on the status of the agri-food industry in Ontario?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): I thank the member from Perth-Middlesex. Despite a year of depressed commodity prices, poor weather and unfair international subsidies, our agricultural sector continues to show its competitive spirit. In fact, in 2000, Ontario led the country in agricultural production, with total farm cash receipts of over \$7.5 billion. That translates into more than 23% of Canada's total production. Furthermore, Ontario accounted for 26% of the national total for investments in agricultural operations.

We continue to work with them. We have such a competitive agricultural sector that they're taking advantage of some new opportunities, value added into their product, and continue to be leaders now and on into the future in terms of the marketplace.

1510

Mr Johnson: My riding of Perth-Middlesex is made up of the city of Stratford, a lot of good farmland, and small towns, communities such as Komoka, Listowel, St Marys, Milverton, Mitchell, Ailsa Craig and Thorndale. I note that there are more than 1,200 food processing establishments in Ontario. Has this segment of the agri-food industry fared as well?

Hon Mr Coburn: I'm pleased to tell you that in addition, in agri-food exports Ontario leads all other provinces as well, in the year 2000 shipping almost \$6.8 billion worth of products. This is a \$200-million increase over 1999.

Ontario's industry leaders are well on their way to reaching the 2005 target of 25% of Canada's exports, which translates into 1% of world trade. As the member knows, Ontario is a good place to invest. The recent budget announcements by the Minister of Finance only make it an even better place to invest. In fact, Ontario accounted for about 41% of the national total of new investment in the food and beverage sector.

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT STAFF

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. As we approach the anniversary of the Walkerton tragedy, your own ministry staff, in a report to the inquiry, says there is not enough staff to do the work, that the piles of work on

their desks keep coming in faster than they can do it. They say, "We can only pick our battles to the detriment of other violations we find." They say that when your government closed the labs in London, Kingston and Thunder Bay and privatized municipal water tests, it cut the heart out of the MOE. They say staff are being asked to write briefing notes which don't just give facts, but also have to put the correct political spin on it. Your staff tell you, Minister, "We fight fires instead of taking a preventive approach."

This is pretty serious stuff. I'm asking you, why are you ignoring your own experts and continuing to put Ontario's drinking water at risk?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): The member knows full well that any information that is presented to the commission is information that cannot be discussed. Certainly we are looking forward to receiving the recommendations from the commission at the end of the day.

But let me say that in response to the information that certainly is of utmost interest and concern to all of us, and that is the protection of our water system and the provision of safe water, this government has done what you never did. We have put in place a drinking water protection regulation. It is the toughest water standard in all of Canada, and as a result we have hired additional staff. We have ensured that people are testing water, they are sampling water, and they—

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

Ms Churley: Minister, that was an amazing answer. Your ministry tried to stop us from getting FOI requests. The Walkerton inquiry lawyer said that there is nothing stopping those requests coming to us. Furthermore, nothing's stopping you from discussing anything that's been discussed there.

Minister, under your watch seven people died, and you got applause for that answer. What you're being told today is to hire more staff, improve the training, give them legislation they need to do the job, like the Safe Drinking Water Act, not just regulations. Be proactive instead of moving from crisis to crisis. Put the money back into solid infrastructure for Ontario's drinking water, and stop making them put your spin on their reports. That is what the staff is asking you today.

I'm going to ask you, when will you give your experts the support they need to protect Ontario's drinking water?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite obviously has absolutely no idea of what is going on or what is happening. We have a very strong enforcement presence. We are ensuring that we are moving forward. We have hired 130 new enforcement and investigative-related staff to ensure that we can protect the health of people in this province and also the environment. I'm very pleased to say that the number of charges that were laid in 2000 increased by 25% from 1999. I am also very pleased to say that the fines issued in 2000 cost the polluting industry more than \$2.6 million, which was a 74% increase

from the years prior to 1999. The number of orders issued from 1999 to 2000 increased by—

The Speaker: Order. I'm afraid the minister's time is up.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I have a question for the Minister of Education. You have cut \$1.2 billion from the education budget. We pointed out earlier today that you have cut it out of things like heating for schools and textbooks. In communities right across this province, from Windsor north to James Bay and from the Lakehead to Kingston, you're closing schools. Boards are being forced to close schools because of a lack of funding from your government. You are ripping the heart out of public education.

How can you stand here and deny you have cut \$1.2 billion when you have? The record is clear: you've cut \$1.2 billion. What do you say to those school boards that cannot provide adequate heating, that cannot provide enough textbooks and cannot provide an adequate ratio of teachers to students in elementary schools across the province? How do you defend your intransigence on that issue of your \$1.2-billion cut to public education in this province?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I'm not in the habit of denying things that are not true.

When this government assumed office in 1995 the expenditures for public education in this province were \$12.8 billion. Today they are \$13.9 billion. Even in the old math, even in the new math, that is an increase. We have been funding far and beyond enrolment growth. That is an investment I support. That is an investment I think is necessary for a public education system. That is an investment we are going to continue to make each and every year for the public education system.

I understand the position of the honourable member's party on this. He thinks we should let school boards go out and raise property taxes in order to put money into the public education system. We do not agree with that position. We are continuing to fund public education. We are continuing to put in legislation that ensures classroom dollars stay in the classroom, legislation that the honourable member and his party opposed, quite frankly, but we thought it was an important accountability measure for the public—

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

Mr Duncan: Minister, you have said repeatedly that your government this year is going to spend \$13.8 billion on education and that you have not cut \$1.2 billion from education. In this House on May 4, 1999, then Education Minister David Johnson said, "I assure the member opposite that over \$15 billion will be spent this year for all school and education programming in this province." Who is right, Minister? Are you right today when you say you haven't cut \$1.2 billion? Are you right, or was

Dave Johnson right two years ago when he said you spent \$15 billion? What number is right, his number or your number? Or was John Snobelen right on September 11, 1997, when he said your government spent \$14 billion?

You're contradicting your own predecessors in your own government. Who's right? Were Dave Johnson and John Snobelen right or are you right? Which one of you is right?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The facts are very clear. If you compare apples to apples, instead of the Liberals' favourite trick of comparing apples to oranges, the investment in the public education system is very clear: \$12.9 billion to \$13.8 billion in this coming school year, an investment of over 360 million new dollars in this new school year because we agree that is needed. Secondly, the Liberals like to discount the other money that school boards had, specifically for teacher compensation, for heating and fuel costs, for special education, which they received on top of the 360 million new dollars they got for this coming school year.

Our investment in public education is important, it's continuing and it's increasing, because we know that those hard-working teachers, those students, those parents, deserve that investment in the public education system.

1520

ONTARIO INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The news of the creation of the OIT, Ontario Institute of Technology, was very well received in Durham riding, and indeed all across Durham region. I should mention that over the past decade, Durham College president Gary Polonsky, the board and the entire community have worked tirelessly to make this dream a reality for our young people.

Durham College has earned a solid reputation for delivering high-quality education. I think that the large number of students who have found employment after completing their education speaks volumes for the success of Durham College's teachers and administrators as well as students.

Minister, what relationship do you see between Durham College and the new Ontario Institute of Technology?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): The member rightly points out that Durham College has an excellent track record, and we hope to build on that through the launch of an Ontario Institute of Technology.

A major feature of this new degree-granting institution will be the strong collaboration between a university education and a college education for our students. In many fields the job market is asking for a combination of theory and practice. It's the best way to make sure, to

ascertain that our students acquire both the knowledge and skills that the employers in our province are increasingly looking for.

It will be a polytech education that is provided at this new institution of technology. I will say that I see a very close relationship between Durham College and the Ontario Institute of Technology in the years ahead.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Minister, for that. I want to publicly thank you for making a dream come true.

Durham region is one of the fastest-growing areas of North America and demand is certainly there for post-secondary institutions. Last spring, many of my constituents let me know of their support for a university in the east part of the GTA, people like Diana Williamson, Gerry Taylor, Helen Smith, John Phillips, Leanne Donnelly, Stephanie Walker, Paul Scott, the Erwin family, Diane Milonas and Brett Puckrin, just to name a few.

This new institution will clearly offer a unique and integrated educational experience that will no doubt appeal to students across Ontario; in fact, it's one-stop education. What role do you see for the Ontario Institute of Technology in our greater post-secondary education system?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: Our vision supports a leading-edge institution that will focus on providing our students with a seamless transition between our college and university system.

This institution will also link education and skills training with the needs of the marketplace, which is so important, to ensure responsive and up-to-date education for our students.

Much of the skilled labour shortage problem or challenge in our province is faced in the eastern greater Toronto area. We have every expectation that this new institute of technology will help address the problem.

It will also serve the community and our students in ways that use our resources wisely to accommodate—and I underline—the schedules that our students and the employers' needs. That's very important. This is a wonderful opportunity to combine employer demand and skills training with existing resources to maximize this opportunity for our students.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. As you no doubt are aware, Professor Robert Bish, in an urban paper commissioned for the C.D. Howe Institute, referred to your government's "tendency towards amalgamation as using discredited 19th century ideals in the 21st century." Specifically, he noted that "amalgamation tends to eliminate the very characteristics of local government that are critical to the most successful and least costly governance systems." He also noted that small local governments generally provide better local government at less cost than monolithic amalgamations.

Minister, do you agree with the Bish analysis that amalgamated municipalities are more costly, and is that why your government has now gone on record as saying there will be no further amalgamations without the consent of municipalities and the citizens they represent?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I would like to thank the member for the question, and I'd also like to thank a busload of residents from the city of Kawartha Lakes who travelled to Toronto to be part of question period. I look forward to meeting with them after question period.

I do want to just make a few comments. One is that there have been a number of restructurings and amalgamations in this province, particularly since 1995-96. Till now we've gone from over 800 municipalities to about 447. I find it passing strange, the Liberal position on amalgamation now. Let me quote some of the positions that I've heard in the past from your party.

"A single city will save tax dollars, reduce bureaucracy and streamline services. It will put Ottawa on a more even footing with other cities around the world when it comes to competing in today's global economy for investment and jobs." That was from Dalton McGuinty, Liberal Party.

We've also got two other quotes from an area of the province that you're quite familiar with. "It's time this government took some action toward municipal restructuring in Hamilton-Wentworth. They have been sitting on the issue for too long. We"—

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

Mr McMeekin: Mr Minister, I appreciate your acknowledgement of the over 100 people who are here from Victoria county and your reference to meeting with them after question period. I think they would appreciate that.

They understand, as Professor Bish has highlighted in his paper, that, "Single governing councils and large organizations are simply incapable of dealing with the diverse range of issues that governments must deal with." Frankly, they're here today to express their annoyance with the very process that has led to the forced amalgamation of Victoria county.

I'm very familiar with forced amalgamation without consent, unfortunately. People in my riding are still livid with how your government failed to listen to us. The process, frankly, was a disgrace.

Minister, we've now got some recent evidence that it hasn't worked. Are you serious about your commitment to meet with these good people after? Because if you are, I'd love to be there and hear the conversation.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As I mentioned, the municipal amalgamation referred to in your area was encouraged by the local Hamilton members. They criticized us for not acting quickly enough. In Victoria county they've been studying restructuring since 1974. And for the members of the House who aren't familiar with my area, they came very close to a local solution. Under Bill 26, for the first time in the province's history, Queen's Park could not dictate what took place in the local rural areas. It had to

be asked for by a democratically elected council. Two councils—the township of Emily and the town of Lindsay—requested a commissioner.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Hodgson: The facts are the facts. I met with the clerks, I met with all the local councils of the 17 municipalities and told them to find a local solution. Two thirds wanted change. If they had wanted no change, that was fine with this government. But of the two thirds that wanted change, they couldn't agree on what the new structure should be, and two townships requested a commissioner. We encouraged them to find a local solution. They came within two votes of doing that and—

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

LAKE RESTORATION

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, two weeks ago I had the pleasure of visiting your district office in Sudbury where I was treated to a demonstration of the canine unit and shown the reintroduction of elk in the Burwash area and also shown the shelter-wood forestry program. I was also given a package with respect to a presentation called the northeastern lake trout enhancement project.

Minister, lake trout are one of the premier sport fish in northern Ontario, and this project is of great interest to me and of great interest to the people of northern Ontario. Where is the funding coming from for this project, and why would we be doing this project now?

1530

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I want to thank the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka for the excellent question today and for taking the time and the effort to visit the district office in Sudbury and to find out about the things that are happening in that part of Ontario.

Ontario has some 25% of the world's lake trout areas. Almost half of those are located in northeastern Ontario. Lake trout populations are subject to a variety of stresses, including the acidification of lakes, overharvesting and the introduction of exotic species.

I'm proud to say that our government is launching, under Ontario's Living Legacy, a five-year project to protect and restore northeastern Ontario's lakes and to enhance this globally significant lake trout resource. We're doing that in partnership with Laurentian University, the northern Ontario—

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

Mr Miller: In follow-up to some of the points you made, lake trout were not successfully reproduced in acid-damaged lakes. Are you saying to the House today that those lakes have recovered from the acid damage that reached record levels in the 1980s and that those lakes which had virtually died as a result of acid rain can now sustain a healthy lake trout population?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm pleased to inform the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka that after hard work by many, many people in northeastern Ontario, some of the acidification damage to those lakes has in fact been reversed and those lakes now hold and harvest lake trout once again. Reversing acid rain damage in these lakes is a significant achievement, and it shows how well we can protect and preserve the environment. That's what Ontario's Living Legacy is all about, and I'm proud to make that statement in the House today.

HEALTH CARE CONTRACT

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Acting Premier. Why does the Harris government believe the public of Ontario does not have a right to see the contract with the private, for-profit operators of the cancer care clinic at Sunnybrook?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): As the honourable member knows, there are many rules around the tendering process. I'd be very happy to take up her concerns with the minister.

Ms Lankin: Minister, your backroom deal with the operators of this private, for-profit clinic is proving to be very costly to the taxpayers. We know, from what we've been able to learn, that we are getting less for paying more money than we would in the publicly accountable, not-for-profit system. Despite your government's repeated rhetoric about openness, transparency and accountability, you refuse to make the contract public. Despite repeated requests from the New Democratic Party for the right of the public to see how taxpayers' dollars are being spent, you have refused to make that contract public.

The question is very clear: why does the Harris government believe the public does not have a right to see that contract?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I refer this to the associate Minister of Health.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): I know that the Ministry of Health and the Minister of Health have informed the member opposite that she has the ability to go to one of the parties to the contract and see the contract. That has happened. We know that in the province of Ontario we've had a backlog in cancer treatment, and now that backlog is being taken away. The people of Ontario are getting quality care. They're getting it at home, as they need it and as quickly as they need it, and that's good news for all Ontarians.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): Yesterday I rose to highlight several of our government's new initiatives to support and improve post-secondary education in our province. In the course of my remarks, I informed members that we will be

supporting the Premier's Platinum Awards for research excellence by spending \$10 million over three years. I would like to advise the House that in fact this sum is to be spent over six years.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition that reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas cancer patients in Ontario requiring radiation treatment face unacceptable delays and are often forced to travel to the United States to receive medical attention;

"Whereas many prescription drugs which would help patients with a variety of medical conditions such as macular degeneration, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, diabetes and heart failure are not covered by OHIP;

"Whereas many residents of St Catharines and other communities in Ontario are unable to find a family doctor as a result of the growing doctor shortage we've experienced during the tenure of the Harris government;

"Whereas many assistive devices that could aid patients in Ontario are not eligible for funding from the Ontario Ministry of Health;

"Whereas community care access centres have inadequate funding to carry out their responsibilities for long-term and home care;

"Whereas the Harris government has now spent over \$235 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television and radio ads;

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Conservative government of Mike Harris to immediately end their abuse of public office and terminate any further expenditure on political advertising and instead to invest this money in health care in the province of Ontario."

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have petitions from the people who came to Toronto from Victoria county today, who are still with us in the galleries. The petition I'm reading today has 457 signatures, but there are thousands more. I shall read it now.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the citizens of Victoria county had no direct say in the creation of the new city of Kawartha Lakes; and

"Whereas the government by regulation and legislation forced the recent amalgamation, against the will of the obvious majority of the people; and

"Whereas the government has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local

government, nor the provision of better services at reduced costs; and

“Whereas the promise of tax decreases has not been met, based on current assessments; and

“Whereas the expected transition costs to area taxpayers of this forced amalgamation have already exceeded the promised amount by over three times,

Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario immediately rescind this forced amalgamation order and return our local municipal government back to the local citizens and their democratically elected officials in Victoria county and remove the bureaucratic, dictatorial, single-tier governance it has coerced on all local residents.”

For shame. I will affix my signature to this petition.

ELECTRICITY GENERATING STATION

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South):

Again, I rise with this very important petition that affects the riding of Oakville, of the member Gary Carr, and myself in Mississauga South and, as a matter of fact, wherever the wind blows with emissions.

It's a petition 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.”

I happily add my signature to this petition, and I'm going to give it to Thomas, our page, to take to the table.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

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

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

“Whereas there is a distinct deficiency of services available in the private sector, including 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 is signed by a number of residents from Charing Cross, Chatham, Wheatley and Blenheim and I affix my signature to this petition.

1540

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I've got a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the citizens of Victoria county had no direct say in the creation of the new city of Kawartha Lakes; and

“Whereas the government by regulation and legislation forced the recent amalgamation against the will of the obvious majority of the people; and

“Whereas the government has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of better services at reduced costs; and

“Whereas the promise of tax decreases have not been met based on current assessment; and

“Whereas the expected transition costs to area taxpayers of this forced amalgamation have already exceeded the promised amount by over three times;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario immediately rescind this forced amalgamation order and return our local and municipal government back to the local citizens and their democratically elected officials in Victoria county and remove the bureaucratic, dictatorial, single-tier governance it has coerced on all local residents.”

That's signed by Warren Grant and Peter White, both of Kirkfield, and by hundreds of thousands of others as well as by myself. I serve it upon the Clerk now.

DIABETES TREATMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'm proud to stand here with the fabulous people of Fenelon Falls and Bobcaygeon to read this wonderful petition about Victoria county.

“Whereas the citizens of Victoria county had no direct say”—can you believe it?—“in the creation of the new city of Kawartha Lakes; and

“Whereas the government by regulation and legislation forced the recent amalgamation against the will of the obvious majority of the people; and

“Whereas the government has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government, nor the provision of better services at reduced costs; and

“Whereas the promise of tax decreases have not been met based on current assessment; and

“Whereas the expected transition costs to area taxpayers of this forced amalgamation have already exceeded”—shameful—“the promised amount by over three times;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario immediately rescind this forced amalgamation order and return our local and municipal government back to the local citizens and their democratically elected officials in Victoria county and remove the bureaucratic, dictatorial, single-tier governance it has coerced on all local residents.”

I am proud to affix my name to this petition and stand proud with the citizens of Victoria county—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is the word “shameful” in that petition?

Mr Colle: No, “pride” in Victoria county—

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr Colle: They have nothing to be ashamed of, Mr Speaker. They are proud taxpayers—

The Acting Speaker: Order. I wish I could say the same for you.

I want to direct to the member that petitions can be presented, and there are certain expectations, and they do

not include adding words in the verbatim thing, if that's the way you choose to present it.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: The member from Eglinton-Lawrence will bring himself to order.

Further petitions.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I side with the people of Victoria county, many of whom are here to make their point and to listen to the petitions as we read them.

“Whereas the citizens of Victoria county had no direct say in the creation of the new city of Kawartha Lakes; and

“Whereas the government by regulation and legislation forced the recent amalgamation, against the will of the obvious majority of the people; and

“Whereas the government has not delivered the promised streamlined, more efficient and accountable local government nor the provision of better services that reduces costs; and

“Whereas the promise of tax decreases have not been met based on current assessments; and

“Whereas the expected transition costs to area taxpayers of this forced amalgamation have already exceeded the promised amount by over three times;

“Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario immediately rescind this forced amalgamation order and return our local municipal government back to the local citizens and their democratically elected officials in Victoria county and remove the bureaucratic, dictatorial, single-tier governance it has coerced on all local residents.”

I attach my signature in support.

The Acting Speaker: Further petitions. The Chair recognizes the member for Durham.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. I have no intention of standing up all afternoon warning people to do things that they already know aren't allowed in here. If you decide that you would like to shout across, please consider that this is your last warning, the very last.

I apologize for interrupting the member for Durham.

PROTECTION OF MINORS

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Thank you, Mr Speaker. It may explain why I introduced the bill on decorum earlier today.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I am pleased to endorse and to sign in support of this petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham.

1550

ROAD SAFETY

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the safety of our communities is of the utmost importance; and

"Whereas in February of 2000 an automobile left the exit ramp after losing control at Highway 401 and Victoria Park Avenue in Toronto and struck a residential building located at Farm Greenway; and

"Whereas many families who live in the Farm Greenway community have children who play in the backyards next to the Highway 401 and Victoria Park Avenue exit ramp; and

"Whereas the provincial government has taken corrective action in a similar circumstance in the Song Meadoway community, namely Highway 404 and Steeles Ave, after a fatal accident at that location; and

"Whereas the safety, well-being and peace of mind of the residents can only be restored by the presence of a proper safety barrier;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Minister of Transportation to take corrective action immediately by erecting a safety berm or proper barrier to protect the families of Farm Greenway from potential catastrophe."

I wholeheartedly endorse this petition and have affixed my signature to it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2001 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 15, 2001, on the amendment to the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I want to take the opportunity to comment on the budget the government has brought in. I want to say a couple of things to the members across the way that need to be said from people who live in a part of the province that is quite far from here: northern Ontario. This government could have chosen, in its budget, to make statements about principles that would have been important for the people of northeastern and northwestern Ontario, that could have gone a long way to addressing a number of the issues that

we, in our special part of the province, think should have been raised.

The government, for whatever reason, decided not to say anything in this budget for northern Ontario. There's nothing in this budget that says, "We, the province of Ontario, are going to make some major investments when it comes to programs or services in northeastern or northwestern Ontario." The government made no mention whatsoever in the budget about anything that could have helped.

I want to suggest, by way of this debate, some of the things the government could have done when it comes to the budget that was read in the House last week. For example, many members of the Legislature would know that right now the government is undergoing a massive process to privatize the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission, which was set up by the provincial Legislature almost 100 years ago to be one of the most important things to northeastern Ontario when it comes to the development of our economy and of northeastern Ontario. Many people would know that if it had not been for the creation of the TNO railway some years ago, much of the economic spinoff we've seen in northeastern Ontario would never have happened. We wouldn't have seen Cobalt developed; we wouldn't have seen what happened in the communities of Kirkland Lake or Timmins or Kapuskasing or Hearst or many other places across northeastern Ontario if it hadn't been for that.

This government has decided, all of a sudden, that it's going to move unilaterally, against the express wishes of the people of northeastern Ontario, to privatize the ONTC. I say to this government that you could have used your budget as a way of saying, "Yes, we will make the proper investments in northern Ontario to make sure we help that special part of the province to develop its economy and provide services to the people of northeastern and northwestern Ontario." But no, you decided to be silent. Now we look at what's happening in the economy across the north and this government says they wonder why the economy in northern Ontario is slowing down. I'll tell you, it's frightening.

This morning, we met with the community of Elliot Lake, which has basically seen over 4,500 jobs leave over the past 10 years because of what's happened with uranium prices. This government could have made investments in places like Elliot Lake. They could have made investments in places like Timmins or Hearst or Kapuskasing. But no, they made none of that, no mention of that whatsoever.

I would say that one of the investments this government could have made by way of this budget was to say, "We are prepared to assist the ONTC. We are prepared to put the type of money that's necessary in the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission to make sure we upgrade the infrastructure so it becomes a train that is conducive to providing good service and speed to move people a little quicker from northern Ontario to the south and back again." They could have made those investments so we could have looked at the Ontario Northland

train as a train that could have been there in order to help develop and promote tourism in northeastern Ontario. Instead, this government decided to be absolutely silent when it came to the types of investments that could be made.

I want to say to this government, "Shame." I want to say to the government that you could have made a choice to invest some of the money from the budget of Ontario in the ONTC in order to provide the kind of funding they need to upgrade the infrastructure and do the kinds of things that need to be done at Ontario Northland in order to be able to promote and build on the successes they've had in the past and to build toward the future.

For example, we know in northeastern Ontario that tourism can be and should be a very important part of our economy, as well as the natural resource industries that are there now. What is needed in order to really spark the economy of northeastern Ontario on the tourism side is some leadership on the part of the provincial government, because there is no one community, either Kapuskasing or Cochrane or Cobalt or Timmins, that has the wherewithal to do it on their own. They are looking to their senior level of government, in this case the provincial government, and saying, "Why don't you invest with us? Why don't you work with us as northeastern Ontario municipalities to develop that part of the economy that could be a real boon for the northeastern Ontario economy?" Instead, this government decided not to.

Here are some of the things you could have done:

One of the things that we know we need is an investment in the track system. We need to be able to upgrade the rail bed for the passenger rail service so that when the train leaves Cochrane on the way to Toronto, that train is able to roll at a higher speed in order to cut the amount of time it takes to go from Cochrane to Toronto and back again. That way it would encourage more people to take the train, not only from northern Ontario but quite frankly for people to utilize the train when coming back into our part of the province.

The government could have decided to invest money—I would argue not a lot of money; it probably doesn't take tens of millions of dollars—to give Ontario Northland the ability to go out and hire some private sector public relationists or people who understand how to pull together the type of campaign that we need in northeastern Ontario to be able to promote the tourism destinations across northeastern Ontario. Imagine if we'd use the Northlander as a vehicle to bring tourists into northeastern Ontario. Imagine what we could have done.

We would be able to, for example, go into markets like southern Ontario or the United States and Europe and promote the destinations that are offered to people to come and visit our very special part of the province. Because what is really needed, I feel and a lot of other northerners feel, is for the government to give the ONTC the kind of money it needs to first of all take stock of what tourist destinations we have available to people who want to visit our part of the province, all the way up to Peawanuck and down to Parry Sound, to take stock of

what tourist destinations there are and take a look at how we're able to try to attract private investment into those areas to augment those tourist destination areas so that there are things for people to do when they come as far as good facilities and being able to enjoy the destination.

We need to be able to take stock of that and to then put it into a package that says that if you come to northeastern Ontario, come on the Northland Express and visit our very special part of the province, we would have had the money to be able to attract tourists from not only the southern part of our province, but also from the United States and Europe.

Instead, the government decided to do nothing. Their only response up to now has been that they are wanting to cut the services that are—Mr Speaker, is there a quorum present? I just wondered.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Would you like me to check and see?

Mr Bisson: Please.

The Acting Speaker: Would the table check and see if there is a quorum present.

Clerk at the Table (Ms Lisa Freedman): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: A quorum is present.

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. That was very useful.

I just want to say to the government by way of this particular speech that you could have made the type of investments that are necessary to be able to invest here in northern Ontario, to be able to utilize the Ontario Northland to help develop not only rail passenger service for the people of northeastern Ontario, but also to utilize the Northlander to develop the tourism sector.

While I'm at it, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to allow my friend Tony Martin, the member for Sault Ste Marie, to split the rest of my time.

1600

The Acting Speaker: It's a reasonable request, but it's unneeded. You don't need it. If you'd like to split your time, feel free.

The Chair recognizes the member for Sault Ste Marie.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Thank you very much, Speaker. I want to thank my colleague from Timmins-James Bay for being so generous with his time and for the comments that he just made here this afternoon regarding the budget.

I wanted to put on the record while I have a chance just a few thoughts on that now-infamous document that was delivered here last week to this Legislature. In doing that, I wanted to focus on a couple of things: one, yes, what was in the budget, because it will have a very dramatic and immediate effect on the lives of all of us who call Ontario home, but I want to also talk a little bit about what wasn't in the budget. That was any reference whatsoever to the plight that so many families are feeling across this province these days as the agenda of this government unfolds and its impact is felt most directly on families who are at the bottom end of the income scale, families struggling to keep things together, families

struggling to put food on the table for their children, families trying to access the services that over so many years were available in this province that either are no longer available or that you have to pay for now out of your own money, and that's important.

The other thing I want to focus on is the seeming lack of any incentive or support or interest by this government in stimulating the economy of areas outside of the GTA and the 905—rural Ontario and northern Ontario—and the very amazing revelation in the budget document that this government failed to get out the door some \$157 million of the northern Ontario heritage fund. That's a fund that was set up by their predecessors, a Conservative government of past times, in order to take that very cyclical nature out of the economy of northern Ontario and put something in place that would be available to the entrepreneurs of that very important part of this province to help them over some challenges. When the bottom fell out of the economy in a particular area, as it so often does when you are resource-based in terms of what you do, there would be some support there to get into another line of work, protect your investment, or actually extend what you do to help the community in which you live.

This budget will once again increase the depth of poverty that exists in the province in that there is nothing in it at all to speak to the very debilitating circumstances in which so many of our families find themselves out there. There is nothing in here that gives us reason to believe that this government understands even the very difficult circumstances many of our fellow citizens find themselves in.

You will remember that one of the first initiatives of Mike Harris and his cohorts when they got to be government in 1995 was to reduce the amount of money available to the most vulnerable and at-risk of our families in our communities by some 21.6%. It was continual and continues to be the focus of this government and the Minister of Community and Social Services to this date to reduce even further the supports and services that are available to these families as they struggle to keep their kids in school, to make sure they have the food they need before they go to school so they can maximize their potential to learn, to make sure they have the clothes they need to wear to keep them warm, in the winter particularly, that they can participate in all those extra things that schools do to add some colour to the school experience for students, such as pizza days and field trips. Nowadays, because schools are lacking in the more basic of the resources they need to provide even textbooks for their students, they now have to charge for these events so that these families can provide for their children to do that.

A lot of the supports and services that were put in place by our government and by previous Liberal and Conservative governments were systematically done away with by this government. Not only that, but they then moved forward to make the criteria that need to be in place for people to actually qualify to receive assistance from the government narrower and narrower.

As a matter of fact, something I pointed out to the Legislature here very clearly before Christmas was that this government has turned the delivery of those most fundamental of services to the most needy among us over to a multinational corporation. It was at that time called Andersen Consulting and now is a morph to try to get rid of some of the baggage it carried from other jurisdictions by way of court cases and lost court cases, as it morphs into Accenture, the new name for the corporation.

This corporation was hired by the government to be ever more clever in how they make it less and less possible for poor people to access the system and get the supports they need to support themselves and their families, to actually participate in some of the education and training programs that are out there for themselves and their children so that they might participate in those programs.

This government in this budget has failed once again to answer the dilemma that's out there, presented by those circumstances. They had an excellent opportunity to respond to an initiative I've been pushing for for over a month now, which is to say they're going to stop the clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement, the most disgusting of initiatives I've seen since I've been here some 10-plus years.

The federal government gives to low-income families some \$80 to \$100 per month per child to help with food costs, rent and clothing. This government has determined it is part of their agenda to actually claw back that money dollar for dollar when the provincial cheque goes out at the end of the month, so these families are not being helped by this federal program that was put in place to go a distance to reduce the level of child poverty in this country. That will not be helpful to the poor residents of this province.

Not only does your budget not stop the clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement, not increase support to people living with disabilities, not invest in affordable housing that is so desperately needed around the province, not invest in an economic development strategy to help dying communities in the north, but your budget does so much more than simply not helping the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people in Ontario; your budget goes a long way toward making their lives much worse.

With this budget you have introduced a new twist where the funding of education is concerned in this province. You've introduced funding to private schools. As you are very well aware, this will lead to a mass exodus from the public education system you have so carefully devastated since you came to power. In short, you are creating a second-class public school system that only the poor will have no choice but to attend.

With this budget you have introduced the privatization of Hydro. As we've seen with the privatization of natural gas and telephone companies, this will only lead to huge rate increases. Who will be able to afford the 650% increases that have been experienced by Albertans, who only recently saw their system privatized?

The list goes on, but before my time runs out I must move an amendment to the amendment tabled by Mr McGuinty the other day.

1610

I move that the amendment moved by Mr McGuinty to the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 9, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words after "Recognizes that this budget fails our families and our future by" and substituting thereto the following:

"Taking inspiration from the provincial Liberal Party's policy of creating 'more choice' in the school system and by using the code word 'choice' as an excuse to implement a 'voucher' system for private schools—jeopardizing the future of public education in Ontario;

"Recognizing that this budget is driven by the Conservative government's strategic commitment to sell off Ontario through a systematic agenda of privatization, beginning with the privatization of electric power generation—with the support of the provincial Liberals;

"Recognizing that the deregulation of Ontario's Hydro system is a dirty deal that will create chaos in our electricity system and raise electricity prices;

"Recognizing that selling out our public schools system for private vouchers and selling off Hydro and the province's bank is part of a long-running and dangerous competition by the Conservative government to outdo the Ottawa Liberals' tax cuts for the wealthy, putting the interests of corporations ahead of the interests of working families;

"This House has lost confidence in this government."

The Acting Speaker: Mr Martin moves that the amendment moved by Mr McGuinty to the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 9, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words after "Recognizes that this budget fails our families and our future by" and substituting thereto the following:

"Taking inspiration from the provincial Liberal Party's policy of creating 'more choice' in the school system and by using the code word 'choice' as an excuse to implement a 'voucher' system for private schools—jeopardizing the future of public education in Ontario;

"Recognizing that this budget is driven by the Conservative government's strategic commitment to sell off Ontario through a systematic agenda of privatization, beginning with the privatization of electric power generation—with the support of the provincial Liberals;

"Recognizing that the deregulation of Ontario's Hydro system is a dirty deal that will create chaos in our electricity system and raise electricity prices;

"Recognizing that selling out our public schools system for private vouchers and selling off Hydro and the province's bank is part of a long-running and dangerous competition by the Conservative government to outdo the Ottawa Liberals' tax cuts for the wealthy, putting the interests of corporations ahead of the interests of working families,

"This House has lost confidence in this government."

Comments and questions?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Unfortunately the budget debate is coming to a close today at a quarter to 6. That will not give those of us who wanted to say something about this the opportunity to do so, so I'll just take the minute and a half I have here to do so.

Let me make three points very quickly. I think the people of Ontario have to realize that this government is cutting corporate taxes by \$2.2 billion. When you think what just a smidgen of that money could do in order to better the public health care system and in order to better the public education system, then we wonder why the government made the choice it did.

On the other hand, you may recall that last year the government really trumpeted the notion that it was going to introduce a lot of personal income tax cuts. This year we've seen they're not really doing that at all. They're not advancing with that theme; they are cutting corporate income taxes. That is the wrong thing to do at this stage.

Let me say one other thing very quickly. The government loves to talk about the fact that we're spending so much more money on health care spending than we did five years ago, when in actual fact—

Interjection.

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

Mr Gerretsen: —the amount of the gross domestic product of this province that was spent five years ago was 5.7%; this year it'll only be 5.3%. So the government in actual terms is spending less of our gross domestic product than it did five years ago. To indicate to the general public that our that our health care system is in total chaos, that we cannot continue to spend the kind of money that we traditionally have spent on that, is totally, totally erroneous.

I would just ask the people of Ontario to condemn the government for what it's doing in initiating and instituting the corporate income tax cuts that it is trying to accomplish in this budget.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Just quickly to the member for Kingston and the Islands, I happen to agree with the remarks you make around the issue of income tax cuts and how they have hurt us. In the 1999 election, we were waiting for the Liberals to join New Democrats when we said, "We've got to get rid of those income tax cuts that go to the top 10% of income earners in Ontario." The bulk of that money went to the richest people in Ontario. We were waiting for the Liberals to join us in that campaign, and you said, "No, that's not our campaign." But day in and day out, you rail against those tax cuts.

Gerry, come on. Which side are you guys on? Are you on our side, or are you just blah, blah here, and then when you go out there you take a different position? Come on. I agree with you, but take a consistent position before the election and after the election. Don't say, "We are against tax cuts," but then go into the election saying, "but don't tell anybody."

“We wouldn’t touch that tax cut if we got elected.” Please. It’s not the way to behave as a political party. Come on. I get tired of this politics of the Liberal Party. I like clarity; I like consistency. I demand it of the Conservatives, I demand it of you, and I demand it of ourselves.

I support the comments of my colleagues from Sault Ste Marie and Timmins-James Bay because we are witnessing that the role of the Conservative government is to facilitate privatization, to facilitate the selling off of all the assets we have. They’re selling off the Province of Ontario Savings Office: a money-making bank that belongs to the Ontario public, and they’re giving it away. They’re saying, “We don’t want those assets any more. We’re giving it away.”

They say governments don’t raise money. Why? They take it from us and then they give it away to the private sector. Some \$2.4 billion is going to the private sector, and they are taking \$2.4 billion from the public school system. It’s wrong, citizens.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I’d like to speak about the comments made by the member for Sault Ste Marie. Perhaps the member wasn’t here in the House the other day when I asked the Minister of Northern Development and Mines about the \$157 million in northern Ontario heritage funding that hadn’t been spent this year. The minister did answer my question and he did say that all this money will be spent in future years. I’m very happy in Parry Sound-Muskoka to be seeing the northern Ontario heritage fund doubled from \$30 million to \$60 million. It is certainly a benefit not just for Parry Sound-Muskoka but all of northern Ontario.

I’m also very pleased to see in the budget the \$55 million annually being spent for people with developmental disabilities increasing to \$197 million a year. That’s something that is of utmost importance to me. I was very pleased this past weekend to make announcements to community living of large funding increases for respite services. I’m very pleased to see that there is \$67 million over the next five years to construct facilities for people with developmental disabilities. This is something that I consider very important and that my constituents consider very important.

What this government is really doing in the budget is something that neither of the other parties does, and that is to create an environment of opportunity for the people of this province to succeed. I’m very pleased to see that.

I was also pleased to see the capital tax increased to \$5 million, because I had small credit unions in my riding coming to me and asking for that to happen. I’m glad to see the government listened and took this onerous tax off the small credit unions like the ones in Parry Sound-Muskoka.

1620

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I’m pleased to comment on the comments by the members for Timmins-James Bay and Sault Ste Marie.

I refer to page 15 of the budget. The budget says “Housing Outlook Healthy.” I wonder how a government

can actually say that when we have a vacancy rate in Ontario of 1.6%; in the city of Ottawa, 0.2%, the tightest rental housing market in the country.

We have a housing crisis, and yet this budget proclaims “Housing Outlook Healthy.” What utter nonsense. It’s really a shame that members of the government would try to put this kind of information, which is clearly untrue, into a public document.

To make the record very clear, we have a housing crisis. The housing outlook is not healthy. I know that the member touched on the affordable housing crisis that we have in every corner of the province.

I had the opportunity as well to ask a question of the Minister of Education about the budgetary priorities and policies of this government. The government spends \$16 million on capital expenditure for schools and for school boards across Ontario. To put that into some kind of context—I used to be a public school board trustee—we could not build one school for \$16 million. It is that expensive. So this is a ridiculous figure.

The minister said that there is unprecedented building going on. What the minister failed to say was what the government’s policy is doing. There is \$500 million of debt that they are putting on to the books, on to the operating expenses of school boards in Ontario today; \$500 million per year taken away from the kids in the classroom that they are not going to have the ability to use. So it is a little accounting trick that they’re using, but it’s the students of Ontario who are paying for the budget priorities and policies. This budget should be condemned for this and a whole host of other reasons.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Sault Ste Marie has two minutes to respond.

Mr Martin: I want to first of all thank those people who responded to the comments of myself and the member for Timmins-James Bay and to reiterate that the bottom of the amendment we made was: “This House has lost confidence in this government.”

This House has lost confidence in this government’s ability to understand the challenges that confront so many people out there in Ontario today, in particular in northern Ontario and, most particularly, those citizens who are at the low-income level.

The member for Parry Sound-Muskoka got up talked about the contribution this government is making to northern Ontario and made the announcement, for probably the 12th or 15th time, that they’re going to increase the amount of money going into the northern Ontario heritage fund by some \$30 million, to \$60 million. That’s fine. They could increase it to \$200 million, but if they’re not spending it in northern Ontario, what the hell is the point here?

We have in the budget here a clear indication of the commitment this government has to northern Ontario, a clear indication of its lack of understanding of the very desperate circumstance that many communities find themselves in where their economy is concerned in northern Ontario, by underspending the northern Ontario heritage fund by some \$157 million. The minister can get

up on his feet and say he's going to spend that tomorrow or next week or a year from now or 10 years from now, but who is to believe him when we know that he hasn't even spent the money he indicated he was going to spend over the last two or three years up to this point?

They announced two or three years ago that they were going to spend something like \$60 million per year in northern Ontario. If you multiply \$60 million by three, that's \$180 million dollars over three years. They couldn't get \$157 million out the door last year. Who is to believe you when you make promises any more, when in fact you couldn't spend \$157 million on northern Ontario in the past year?

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak in support of yet another balanced budget. That's the third in a row, and that's quite amazing in a province where former governments' budgets were judged by how much the deficit had grown from the previous year.

Everyone has to make choices that affect their lives on a daily basis. To be healthy, happy and successful, those choices need to be responsible choices. Government is no different. This budget is all about making responsible choices.

Ontario has come a long way since 1995. The economy has grown a staggering 25%. Almost 850,000 new jobs have been created, and tax revenue is up by \$15 billion. Last year we paid down the provincial debt by the largest amount in history: \$3 billion. In our Blueprint plan, we promised to reduce the debt by \$5 billion. After just two years, we're already 80% of the way. That means just another billion over the next two fiscal years to meet our commitment in the Blueprint. Some people say the money could have been better spent elsewhere. Well, currently 15 cents of every dollar the province spends goes to pay interest on the debt. That's \$8.8 billion a year. That is money that could be better spent elsewhere.

Credit rating agencies have recognized the government's balanced budget achievements and commitment to debt reduction. On January 29, 2001, Standard and Poor's upgraded the province of Ontario's debt rating to AA from AA-. This is the first upgrade since 1998.

The growth Ontario has experienced in the last six years did not happen by accident. Our government had a very deliberate plan to cut taxes, reduce barriers to growth, reduce the size of government, do better with less and balance the budget. The things we did to bring about that unprecedented growth will ensure we can better withstand whatever global economic changes come our way.

The business cycle is a fact of life. The best anyone can do is be well prepared. Thanks to the hard work and difficult decisions of the last six years, Ontario's economy is expected to grow by 2.3% this year and 3.6% in 2002. The cornerstone of our plan is to keep Ontario's economy strong, and the number one issue remains job creation. The more people we have working and spend-

ing, the more money we will have available to protect the things that are important to all of us: reliable health care, good schools and safe communities.

We believe that the best way to create jobs is to cut taxes. The tax cuts already implemented and those proposed in this budget mean that a family of four, with both parents working and earning \$60,000 a year, would pay \$2,345 less in Ontario personal income tax to spend however they see fit.

Every taxpayer has benefited from tax cuts, and the people earning the least have benefited the most. Some 660,000 low-income earners have been completely removed from Ontario's tax rolls since 1995. With the changes in this budget, an additional 75,000 people will pay no Ontario income tax. That's great news, but I'm sorry to say those 660,000 people will still have to pay federal income tax and I think that's a shame.

We're also proposing to eliminate the personal income tax surtax for 340,000 people. This tax currently kicks in on people earning \$50,000 a year, not exactly high-income earners—the middle class—and it is an unnecessary burden to those taxpayers.

Keeping Ontarians working means we must keep Ontario competitive. A package of initiatives in the budget, which we call Ontario's Edge, will give Ontario's businesses the edge they need by cutting corporate taxes, reviewing tax initiatives and protecting Ontario's quality of life. There are four key components to enhancing Ontario's Edge:

We will legislate the full schedule for corporate income tax cuts between now and 2005, to give businesses certainty so they can plan for the future. Businesses need to know how much extra money they will have each year in order to expand their businesses and hire new people.

We will begin to eliminate the job-killing capital tax by proposing a \$5-million capital tax deduction. This would increase the capital available for reinvestment, simplify the tax system and remove the capital tax liability for over 11,000 small and medium-size businesses.

We will review tax incentives to make sure they are effective. We want to ensure that our tax incentives are useful and relevant. An example would be the tax for fuel conservation, otherwise known as the gas-guzzler tax. This is brought in to encourage people to buy vehicles that use less gas. Is that tax doing what it was supposed to do? Does it need to be changed? We need to review it and see.

We will build on the quality of life in Ontario through clean air, good schools, efficient transportation and quality hospitals.

Budget 2001 looks to the future by ensuring that Ontario's growth is smart growth. To assist with smart growth, we will invest the remaining \$500 million of our billion-dollar SuperBuild Millennium Partnerships, and it will be dedicated to transportation and environmental initiatives, including \$250 million to address gridlock in the GTA and surrounding Golden Horseshoe region. We will also invest \$250 million in strategic infrastructure, including transportation and environmental projects to

support smart growth in eight other major urban areas across the province. The budget will invest \$609 million in provincial highways this year, including \$290 million in northern Ontario, and planning the strategic transportation corridors for tomorrow.

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It will provide \$25 million more this year to ensure that our drinking water is safe and our air is clean. This means that we will have increased the operating budget for the Ministry of the Environment by 51% since 1997-98.

All told, the Ontario government will spend \$60 billion this year. That's over \$5,400 for every man, woman and child in Ontario, yet \$4,300 of those dollars will be spent not by the Ontario government itself but by individuals and organizations in what is called "the broader public sector": schools, universities, hospitals and municipalities.

We believe that taxpayers deserve to know that every dollar they turn over to government is spent carefully and responsibly and for its intended purpose. To that end, the finance minister introduced the new Public Sector Accountability Act, which would require all major organizations receiving public money to balance their budgets every year and publish their planning objectives and track their progress against those plans.

Despite our own success in keeping government efficient, we acknowledge that we can still do better. That's why we will be undertaking a value-for-money review of all government spending. The review will ask questions like: is the government service meeting its original objective, how important is the service, who in fact should be delivering that service, and how can we do better for Ontarians?

These questions will apply equally to our most costly program: health care. People have told us that their highest priority is health care, and we agree. We have increased investment in health care by almost \$6 billion since taking office. This year alone we are increasing health care operating spending by \$1.2 billion. Health care not only consumes more dollars than it did in 1995, it consumes a greater share of the budget pie. In 1995, 38 cents of every program dollar we spent went to health care. This year it will be 45 cents. If we fail to correct the inefficiencies, in five years it could be 60 cents. The current rate of increase in health care spending is not sustainable.

We need to address the health care challenge on two fronts.

We need to reform federal funding to ensure Ottawa funds at least 50% of the increase. Currently their commitment is only 14 cents on the dollar.

We need to reform the health care system to make it work better and ensure sustainability. We need an honest and open dialogue with the people about the future of our health care, a dialogue that will explore all the options, and we can't wait 18 months for the federal government's royal commission report. That's why our accountability initiative will include hospitals and other health

care spending to see how we can spend more efficiently. It's also why we will be engaging in our own dialogue about the future of health care. We will ask doctors, nurses, patients and administrators to help identify the best way to deliver quality health care.

One thing that government needs to be involved in is caring for the most vulnerable people in our society. The initiatives in this area in the budget include \$67 million over five years to build new facilities for adults with developmental disabilities; \$55 million this year, growing to \$200 million by 2006-07, to enhance services for people with developmental disabilities and attract more quality caregivers; a \$20-million annual increase in funding for children's treatment centres; \$26 million over the next four years to improve the safety and security of abused women and their children in crisis by adding 300 beds to shelters and refurbishing another 100; \$3 million this year, growing to \$9 million annually, for counselling, telephone crisis services and other supports; an additional \$3 million this year and \$4 million annually in future years to expand education supports for children and youth in institutions; \$26 million over three years to upgrade, renovate and build or purchase new facilities for community mental health organizations; an additional \$8 million annually for children's aid societies; \$15 million annually to break the cycle of youth prostitution and punish those who exploit young people.

Building on growth in our economy requires an investment in our people, especially our young people. To that end we are increasing our commitment to the early years program by \$114 million this year, for a total of \$193 million. The early years program is an initiative that supports families and their children before they enter school. These programs are not about government replacing parents; they are about government helping parents. A step beyond that has already been done by setting up a system of local early years centres throughout the province.

Since 1995 the education budget has gone from \$12.9 billion to almost \$14 billion. This year we will increase it again by \$360 million. We are increasing the funding by more than the increasing current enrolment. This government remains committed to guarantee funding for the public education system. We have always put students and parents first.

Now it's time to address the concerns of parents whose children attend independent schools, often for religious or cultural reasons. This budget proposes a tax credit for parents paying and choosing to educate their children in independent schools. The equity in education refundable tax credit provides relief of 50% of tuition up to a maximum of \$3,500 for each child. The tax credit starts at 10% and rises by 10% for five years. This initiative is not about taking money out of the public education system. It is about fairness, equity and a parent's fundamental right to have input and choice in their child's education.

In the fall of 2003 a record number of new university and college students will arrive on campuses across

Ontario as all grade 12 and OAC students graduate together for the first time as the adoption of the new high school curriculum matures—one of those will be my daughter, hopefully, if she can make it from grade 11—commonly known as the double cohort. To deal with this increase the minister announced one of the largest investments ever made in Ontario's post-secondary system. Support for colleges and universities will be increased by \$293 million by 2002-04 to provide for facilities and staff. Through the SuperBuild fund and our partners, \$1.8 billion will be invested to create 73,000 new student spaces.

We need to continue to find creative ways to educate our young people and prepare them for the working world beyond college and university. Therefore the government will invest \$60 million in the start-up of the Ontario Institute of Technology which will provide a mix of university and college programs and one-stop shopping for students looking for a mix of academic and hands-on experience.

We will provide \$50 million over five years to update equipment and facilities for college apprenticeship programs, invest \$33 million by 2002-05 to double the number of entrants into apprenticeship programs in the skilled trades, and provide \$12 million to help foreign-trained professionals enter the Ontario workforce faster.

This budget, like all others, is about choices: choosing to trust people with more of their own dollars, choosing to keep paying down the debt, choosing to challenge the status quo in health care, choosing to demand an accounting from anyone who spends even one hard-earned taxpayer's dollar. I believe that our choices have been responsible, our commitment has been strong and, as a result, our successes will continue to be real.

Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak to this budget today, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Questions and comments?

Mr Gerretsen: I would just like to pick up on one point that the member made at the very beginning and at the very end of the speech, and that deals with the public debt. As the member well knows, his government was directly responsible for adding an additional \$10 billion to the public debt of this province by having premature tax cuts. This government chose about three or four years ago to give individual tax cuts to people when we were still running an annual deficit.

The members across the way can laugh about it. It was a choice that you made. You allowed the public debt of this province to go from \$85 billion up to \$114 billion, a \$30-billion increase over a five-year period of time, and \$10 billion of that was specifically to pay for your tax cut that you implemented about three or four years ago. That's a choice they made. Wouldn't it have been a lot better if today we were not saddled with \$110 billion worth of debt but rather with \$100 billion worth of debt? It's a choice you made and it's an unwise choice because, as the member pointed out, the amount of money that we spend on interest on the public debt, which according to

the government's own figures this year amount to \$8.7 billion, is more than the government spends on community and social services.

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We all know that the most vulnerable in our society—the people who are involved with the Association for Community Living, the people who are involved with problems with autism, the people who are involved with and need special education assistance in schools, and I can go on and on: the people who are involved in Ontario Works and the social assistance program of this province—in effect have been denied their proper due because this government decided three or four years ago to implement the tax cut. That will be the last \$10 billion we'll ever pay back in this province. They made choices and they were the wrong choices for the people of Ontario.

Mr Martin: To listen to the member for Oxford, you'd think that this budget was the best thing since sliced bread. Let me tell you a little of the truth about what the budget is about.

The personal income tax cuts will yield very little. For most taxpayers, it'll be less than the \$200 cheque Ernie Eves gave them last year. This year's total in tax cuts, \$4.2 billion, is premised on an optimistic economic growth forecast. If the economy tanks, we'll sink into deficit in a hurry, and as early as next year.

Make no mistake: a budget that reduces funding for hospitals, a budget that favours private schools over public, a budget that ignores affordable housing and a budget that ignores public transit means Ontario taxpayers will pay more user fees and higher costs for private services, such as health care.

Hydro privatization could send Ontario into chaos. People will pay more for their electricity—a lot more. This year, California's electricity costs will be 10 times higher than only two years ago. We heard today from our leader that it's gone up even today, when deregulation took effect. Alberta deregulated its electricity sector, and power prices this year are projected to be 650% higher than in 1996.

While your bills are going up, the Tories refuse to raise minimum wage and they refuse to raise social assistance or to even simply stop the clawing back of the national child benefit supplement from our poorest children. The Tories say they're taking a few more families off the tax rolls with this budget. Most working families simply ask for a wage they can live on, a decent minimum wage that will keep the bills paid.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to make some comments on the presentation made by my colleague the member for Oxford. First of all, I'd like to congratulate Finance Minister Flaherty on his first budget. I believe he deserves a lot of credit. I think this is a budget that, as he says, is based on growth, on good management, on effective use of taxpayers' dollars.

But why I'm really pleased to be here today is the fact that this was the third balanced budget in a row, I understand for the first time in almost 100 years. We've

seen the hard work done by our former finance minister and how he actually took a plan, the Common Sense Revolution, outlined that and laid that out to the people of the province of Ontario. Yes, that did include adding debt, but we inherited \$11 billion. I don't know if you remember that. Remember the \$1 million an hour on the backs of the working families of the province of Ontario? You should be really proud of yourself for making those kinds of comments.

What I'm very proud of is the fact that I was one of seven new members of this caucus. In 100 years, to be part of a group of seven people who took part in their first three balanced budgets in your first term of government, I'm very, very, very proud of that. I hope my colleague from Muskoka-Parry Sound, who will be here for a number of years, will follow the pattern that this government has laid out, which means balancing budgets and making good use of the taxpayers' money of the province of Ontario.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'd like to congratulate the member for Simcoe North for actually admitting that you did increase the debt. Some of your members don't want to hear that.

I want to respond to the member for Oxford. His daughter is in the double cohort. I wish her luck. I'm sure she's a good student, but she will need luck with this government, as far as post-secondary education is concerned.

Your announcement for post-secondary, for addressing the double cohort, was commented on as a landmark yesterday. In 1995, when you got in, you cut operating grants to colleges and universities by 15%. You can't deny that. The announcement by Minister Flaherty last week increases operating grants by just 1.8% after inflation. Let's compare 1995 and 2001. This hardly puts back the money you took away, never mind addressing in full the double-cohort issue.

If you don't believe me—and I don't blame you; we are the opposition—you should believe your own task force, Portals and Pathways, which said at least \$500 million is needed to address the double-cohort issue.

The other aspect on which I'd like to disagree with the member for Oxford is infrastructure. In the budget, \$100 million was put aside for infrastructure maintenance for colleges and universities. Your very own task force said many more millions are needed, that these deferred maintenance costs are huge.

In fact, this government has spent less overall on infrastructure than any government in the last 20 years. Tuition has more than doubled, and student debt is at the highest level it's ever been in the history of this province. SuperBuild, although it did add needed dollars to infrastructure, was a competition that left some institutions without the buildings they needed. Furthermore, what is the use of having buildings if you can't hire professors to teach the students in those buildings? This is hardly a landmark budget.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Hardeman: I want to extend thanks to the members for Hamilton Mountain, Simcoe North, Sault

Ste Marie and Kingston and the Islands for their kind comments and their total agreement with my presentation.

There may have been a couple of areas where they drew out a few questions, and maybe we'd like to address a few of them. I would say to the member for Kingston and the Islands that the tax cut is what helped create the almost 850,000 new jobs that have been created—new taxpayers that have been created in the province to help us support the infrastructure we need.

I think it would be somewhat foolhardy not to continue down a successful road but go back to the road the member from Sault Ste Marie talked about, that the answer was just to keep spending more and more and increasing the deficit. He suggested that his leader had made some comments today. I can assure him that because the leader of the third party makes a comment, that does not make it gospel. Sometimes what he is saying is something I wouldn't agree with, and this happens to be one of those days.

As for the comments of the member for Hamilton Mountain, I can assure the member that I will take her best wishes to my daughter. She has a couple of years to go yet. In fact, she's one of the ones who have to go five years. She has to go the extra year to OAC. I suppose she is one of those who are the most disadvantaged in the change, because she is in the double cohort and also has to spend five years getting there. I will extend your best wishes to her.

I think the other comment about how we should spend more money, again, goes back to the NDP philosophy that where you get it doesn't matter; we just keep spending more and more money. Everyone knows that if you have a deficit, you will increase the debt.

I won't comment on the comments of the member for Simcoe North, but just say I—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Further debate?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on the budget. For me, at least, the budget document should kind of prepare Ontario for the future. I'm our party's finance critic, and my interest is heavily in the economic and financial area.

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There's no doubt, as we look ahead at preparing Ontario to be a world-class economy, that this budget fails in a number of areas. I'd like to go through each of them.

Let's recognize that Ontario is the most export-oriented jurisdiction in the world. Nobody relies on exports as much as Ontario. I'm thrilled that we have been able to compete so effectively around the world, but heavily in the US. Ten years ago, about 85% of our exports were to the US; today it's 94%. As I say, we now are the most export-oriented jurisdiction in the world. Ten years ago, exports were the equivalent of about 28% of our gross domestic product. Today, according to the government, they're the equivalent of about 55%. So our future very much depends on how well we can compete,

not just among companies here in Ontario, but among companies particularly in the US.

I'd like to go through a number of concerns I have about the budget. If you talk to the business community, as we all do, they will say that probably the most important thing for their future is the quality of our workforce. I've been watching on TV the state of Pennsylvania trying to attract industry to come and build in Pennsylvania. What is the single message they have in their commercial? It is about the quality of their universities and colleges. Then Governor Ridge says, "That's why you should be coming to Pennsylvania."

I don't think there's any question that that is going to be fundamental to our future. In this budget, we're spending \$300 million less on colleges and universities than Ontario did when Premier Harris became Premier. Every other jurisdiction in North America—all 50 US states and the other provinces—has recognized in the last five years that this is an area for investment. I don't call it spending; I call it legitimate investment. But we've cut spending here, and I say it was a mistake. There is money in here for the double cohort, to use the jargon, but that is merely to fund the incremental students; it's not to provide more and better resources per student. That's my first point on the future economy.

The second thing I would say: I went back to 1983-84, 16 years ago—I'll spend some time going back further. Ontario has never spent less money on capital, on infrastructure, than we are in this budget. The province of Ontario is spending about \$1.9 billion on infrastructure. It's a lot of money, but according to the government's own calculations it comes nowhere close to providing the funding to refurbish our infrastructure. As I say, you can look in the budget document. The budget document does go back 10 years, and any viewer can get the budget out. I'll just run through 10 years: 1992-93, \$3.6 billion on capital; 1993-94, \$3.6 billion; \$3.8 billion; \$3.6 billion—new government: \$2.6 billion; \$2.5 billion; \$2.2 billion; \$4.8 billion; \$2.1 billion; and, this year, \$1.9 billion.

Again, when we meet with the business community, the thing they tell us is that our physical infrastructure—our roads, our municipal infrastructure, our hospital and school infrastructure—is fundamental to the future. The government has chosen to spend less money in this budget than, certainly, all the way back to 1983-84 and perhaps even earlier.

The budget talks a lot about the SuperBuild Millennium Partnerships. This was going to be a sort of centre-piece of the government's plans. People in Ontario may remember that just last year Premier Harris announced, with a lot of fanfare, the billion-dollar SuperBuild Millennium Partnerships fund, and announced that we would begin this project with \$200 million per year for five years—\$1 billion. Guess what? The budget comes out, and in terms of the importance of these projects, how much do you think actually was spent in the fiscal year that just ended? Of \$200 million budgeted, \$4 million.

No government should ever spend money because they budgeted it, but I assume the government budgeted

it because they felt it was crucial and because these SuperBuild millennium partnership plans were fundamental. It didn't happen. This year they've budgeted \$100 million. By the way, the government is out having press conferences announcing these things, and they're not happening. So I say the second thing for our future economy is, how well are we refurbishing our infrastructure?

By the way, the government will often hold the 407 up as an example. Well, when the government announced the 407 sale, they said, "We're going to make sure that you don't get ripped off on the tolls. After 15 years, tolls could go up three cents a kilometre." That's not three cents a kilometre in a year; after 15 years, an increase of three cents a kilometre. Guess what? Most of the tolls have already gone up four cents a kilometre. They've had a price increase on the 407 three times in the last 15 months. They used to have a rush hour fee, which was a higher fee than at other times. Guess what the rush hour is now. It used to be 6:30 until 9:30 and 4:30 to 6:30. Now it's from 6 in the morning until midnight, seven days a week. It would be like the Air Canada Centre saying, "We're going to charge the platinum rate on all of our seats except the top 10 rows."

I just mention that because that's the second area where, in our opinion, the budget fails us.

The third area is in health care. In my opinion, Premier Harris is creating almost a crisis around health care to convince people there is only one solution, and that is that we're going to have to move away from our one-tier health care system. Yes, health spending is under pressure, and yes, health spending in this budget goes up I believe by 5.4%, but I would just say this. Since Premier Harris became Premier, health spending per year has gone up an average of 4% a year; that's been the average increase. So this thing is not wildly out of control. As a matter of fact, the Premier himself said it should be going up 5% a year just to account for an aging population.

My colleague from Kingston just mentioned in his remarks health spending as a per cent of gross domestic product, which is one measurement. It happens to be the measurement that most jurisdictions around the world use. It's the measurement we use when we're comparing Ontario to other jurisdictions, Ontario to the US. Provincial health spending as a per cent of our gross domestic product when Premier Harris took over was 5.7%; today it's 5.3%.

So I say to all of us, let's work to fix our health care system, but let's keep it in perspective. Let's not frighten the people of Ontario into thinking the sky is falling. It's not falling.

I would also say to the minister over there that the businesses that I deal with point out, as the government does in its documents, that employers in Ontario save \$2,500 per employee versus an employer in Michigan or New York or Pennsylvania or Illinois because of the way we fund our health care system. In Ontario and Canada—thank goodness, in my opinion—we've chosen to make

sure that regardless of your income, regardless of whether you are a senior or whether you are a young person who is not in the workforce—regardless of all of that—you are going to have access to universally accessible, quality health care. That saves every single employer in this province \$2,500.

On the revenue front, the government has announced that corporate taxes in the province of Ontario will be 25% lower than for our neighbours in the US. I say to us, why? Is it because our companies can't compete unless they are 25% lower? By the way, the 25% lower corporate taxes in Ontario are a substantial sum of money. It would be a minimum of \$2.5 billion, closer to \$3 billion. We've chosen to say we're going to have corporate taxes 25% lower than in the US. Why? Is it because we can't compete unless we have 25% lower than the in US? I frankly don't buy that.

I'd like to know from the government why it has made that decision. If we've decided we've got to be 25% lower, mark my words, the bordering US states will watch what we do and we are almost challenging them to cut taxes. We're almost saying, "You had better start cutting your taxes, because we're 25% lower." If we've got to be 25% lower, they cut, we cut, they cut, we cut.

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Interjection.

Mr Phillips: The member says, "More jobs." I say, if you accept the view of many business people and, by the way, the view of the government itself when it's attracting business, why would you locate somewhere? How are you going to build a long-term, sustainable business? The business community will say, and I agree with them, "You need competitive taxes. You can't have taxes out of line." I accept and support that. But you also have to have a quality education system, not \$300 million less. We have to fund our health care system, where our companies are saving—\$2,500 less per employee. You have to have an infrastructure that's sustainable. So I say to us, "What is the policy reason for taxes 25% lower than in the US?" I don't see the policy reason for that. If the business community says, "Listen, we can't compete unless we get a 25% lower tax cut," then I'd like to hear that. I don't hear that from the business community.

I appreciate that in the short term many people in the business community will applaud this, but there's no magic to this. The budget points out that our personal income tax rates now are at the same rate as in the US, in some cases a little lower than some states and in some cases a little higher.

Let's figure out how we are going to fund the things we want to do. Corporate taxes 25% lower? All right, we've got to make up \$3 billion there if we're competing with neighbouring US states. Personal income tax is equal. It won't come from there. Capital gains tax is now equal to the US. There's no magic. We are not as an economy dramatically more productive than our neighbouring US states. So it will come from consumption taxes, I assume. I assume that's where the government is going to have to find the money. I surely don't think we

are going to be able to compete long-term without investing in our education system, our health care system and our infrastructure.

I want to touch briefly on the personal income tax. Here I find it interesting. The government announced in the 1999 budget that it would be cutting personal income tax rates by 20%, a \$4-billion cut. As I suspected—in fact I asked the minister in the Legislature a few times, "Where are you on that tax cut?" and never got an answer—the government decided to kind of back off that one to the tune of about \$1 billion, I might add. This budget had about \$1 billion of personal income tax cuts in it. The second budget had about \$1 billion and this one had about \$1 billion. It wasn't the \$4 billion.

So the government recognized they were getting into a revenue crunch and they backed down on the 20% cut. They also said they would fully implement whatever cuts they were going to have in this budget year. It's now been dragged out for two years. I applaud them for that particular part, because I believe we do have a significant challenge on the revenue side, and I think it was a wise move to back off on some of it and to delay some of it. But it was an interesting move. I think they started to try and throw in some of the deindexation in the equation now and sort of play with—

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Capital gains, exactly. Capital gains they do put in. They play with the numbers a little bit.

On the corporate tax one, I think Ontario needs a very serious debate around the policy issue. If we are going to attract businesses to locate and build in Ontario on the promise of a 25% lower corporate tax—"That's why you should be here"—I think it's foolish. I don't think it's sustainable. I think it's easily trumped by Mississippi and Arkansas, and it doesn't allow for a balanced approach to our total business environment.

I go back to the government's own documents on why you should come to Ontario. If you read those documents, they will say because of the quality education system. They used to talk a lot about low tuition fees, universally accessible post-secondary education. They talk about the enormous savings that you can have as an employer here in Ontario on your health costs. Make no mistake, one of the reasons—not the only reason—why we've done so well in the auto sector is because they have an enormous cost advantage, and a significant part of that is our health coverage.

On infrastructure, as I say, this budget has the smallest investment in infrastructure, at least going back to 1983-84, and the big project that the Premier often trumpets—the Minister of Finance actually had a press conference all about this—the SuperBuild millennium partnership fund, something that was supposed to be a centrepiece of it, last year they got \$4 million. As I say, I don't advocate spending money because there's money there, but if this was so central to our infrastructure theme, you question it.

So the debate is, and should be, around how Ontario ensures that we have a sustainable, viable, growing econ-

omy. Make no mistake, we've got a terrific environment here for it. We've been lucky over our history to have invested so much in our human infrastructure, our colleges, our universities, our hospitals, our health care system, our municipalities. But we're undermining those things.

I think all of us understand that it's like in our own personal life: if you start to let your house crumble, year by year it accelerates the deterioration and then it takes you an enormous investment to get it back up to speed again. That's what we're doing: we're letting our human and our capital infrastructure deteriorate. And for what? Again, I don't mean to make the business community angry here. I would just ask them, is it a good long-term strategy to say, "Come to Ontario and build in Ontario because corporate taxes are 25% lower," when it's at the expense of our human and physical infrastructure? Furthermore, a company that will come here for that reason will leave here for that reason. That is not a long-term, sustainable competitive edge. In my opinion, it's short-term and a bad policy.

For all those reasons, I think the budget simply doesn't prepare us well for the next decades.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions, comments?

Mr Martin: I'm always happy to follow the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. His thoughts are generally thoughtful, reflective and worth listening to. He covered a whole array of areas here in his critique of the budget that was presented last week. I'd just like to highlight a few of those.

In our view, the Tories are selling out our public system in favour of the slippery slope to privatization, which will not serve us well in the long haul, as the member just said. Tax breaks to private schools at the expense of the public system. Hospital underfunding, hospital deficits and a new law requiring balanced books put public hospitals in an untenable situation. So what they're saying to the hospitals is, "We'll help you with your deficit. We're going to pass a law to make it illegal." A knee-jerk reaction. Really dumb.

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Hydro privatization, selling off the Province of Ontario Savings Office, giving up another revenue stream for public funding. Tories are committed to tax cuts at all costs and this latest round will cost us dearly. The \$2.4 billion in corporate tax cuts equals \$2.4 billion taken out of our public schools. Hospital underfunding equals more private costs for patients and will put the system in peril. Hydro privatization means higher bills and possibly the chaos that we're now seeing in California. The sell-off of the Province of Ontario Savings Office equals \$2.8 billion on deposit that could fix up ailing infrastructure. Six million dollars for clean water equals failure to learn any lesson from Walkerton.

So this government doesn't seem to understand, doesn't seem to get it, doesn't seem to want to know or to take advice in terms of where it is we need to go. This budget will fail us big time.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I think the member from Scarborough-Agincourt touched on what's obvious-

ly a very important issue and that is, how do we attract jobs and investment to Ontario? I think he offered some of the answers. I think quality health care is important; I think a quality education system is important; a good quality of life is important. The United Nations, after all, says that Canada is the best place in the world in which to live.

There are a couple of other things that he didn't give as much emphasis to that are equally important. One is a good regulatory framework, and as the members of this House are aware, our Red Tape Commission has been working to give us the best regulatory regime in the world. I think that we are, if you'll pardon the term, competitive with any other jurisdiction in terms of good regulation.

Another thing that he didn't touch on was sound financial policies by the government. We cannot have high-tax and high-spending policies. They just don't work because they lead to big deficits and they lead ultimately to higher taxes again. I think the government has managed over the last six years to get our public finances in order, and that's quite important.

Another issue that he touched on, but I think perhaps he didn't manage to get to the right answer, is the question of taxes. Low taxes create jobs. It's as simple as that. High taxes drive jobs away. I would invite our friends in the opposition, and particularly in the Liberal Party, to perhaps widen their horizons and increase their ambitions for this province. I think what we should think of is what we've had for the last few years: a higher growth rate than that of the United States. I think we should think in terms ultimately of a stronger economy in Ontario than that in the United States. Higher growth means more opportunities, more jobs and a much higher quality of life.

I would hope the Liberals would abandon the old Liberal and NDP policies of tax and spend and do what's right for the people of this province in the 21st century.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): Tax and spend? This is the highest-spending government in the history of Ontario. I listened very carefully to the comments of the member from Scarborough-Agincourt and, government members, there is incentive for us to look at the budget and to get into the budget like my colleague has done. I've heard a lot of criticism about comments from our side of the Legislature, but rarely do I hear criticism about the information that the member from Scarborough-Agincourt brings to this House. It's reasoned thought.

In fact, I would suspect—and this may not be fair, but it's just an assumption on my part—that there are government members who don't get into the budget in detail, who perhaps—and I only suspect this—take the information that's given to them by the Ministry of Finance and because you are government members and because you have faith in that, you then espouse it. But we have an incentive to look into the budget and to ask questions. That's what this place is all about. I think the member from Scarborough-Agincourt does that as well or better than anybody, or most, in this Legislature.

I just want to suggest to the members across, I listened to the 4 o'clock CBC Radio news, and I suggest that you listen to the 6 o'clock news, because your Finance Minister today has conceded that the \$300 million for private support for the likes of—what's the college down the road here?

Mr Gerretsen: Upper Canada College.

Mr Crozier: Upper Canada College—he admitted today on the radio, may be a low estimate. I think it's starting to come out now, and you should listen to the 6 o'clock news.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): North.

The Deputy Speaker: Etobicoke North. I apologize.

Mr Hastings: I knew you'd get it right, Speaker.

It's interesting to hear from the finance critic, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt. I'm not sure whether it's muddled thinking; I would hope it isn't. He says that he's very concerned that we're not putting enough money into infrastructure. If you look at the budgets of other years and you look at the amount of money: half a billion from the previous year, into highways in this province. All you have to do is talk to people from northern Ontario as to how far apart and behind—previous regimes had forgotten and neglected highway construction in northern Ontario, let alone in the rest of the province.

Also, the member for Agincourt bemoans the fact that we shouldn't be giving any more money for corporate tax reductions or the capital tax reductions.

Mr Gerretsen: He didn't say that.

Mr Hastings: He did. He clearly points out that the \$2.5 billion is too much and he wants a rationale as to why that is occurring. Well, we'll give him a rationale. All you have to do is go and talk to some of the small business people who are trying to compete with the US market, or any other market for that point. But in point of fact, there are many US states that are up here on a daily basis trying to lure our companies down to the US with all kinds of incentives. One of the best antidotes, one of the best ways of dealing with that subject, which is not talked about very much in this House, is to have a competitive tax base that will keep our companies here, will hire more people. That is the primary rationale for the reduction in corporate taxation. It's not something to bemoan, it's something to celebrate.

Also, we got down the major debt reduction in the last three—

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Phillips: I just want to respond to the various members. To the last member who spoke, the member for Etobicoke North, the muddled thinking is from the Premier. He said we should be spending at least \$4 billion a year on capital. That's what he said. Now you've got less than \$2 billion. I'm just the messenger. He has the thinking that says we should be spending \$4 billion. I agree with him. But you're spending \$1.9 billion.

Why have we had, by the way, substantial economic growth in the province of Ontario over a considerable period of time? The government says it's because we have a superior work force. We've got enormous talent here. It's because the auto sector has chosen, over the last 20 years, to locate here because of the way we fund our health care system and the quality of the work force.

On the tax front, I am 100% supportive of competitive tax rates. We cannot be out of line with the US. But I don't understand for a moment why the only way we can compete is with 25% lower taxes. I have a lot more confidence in our business community and I believe in what they tell me, and that is, "Listen, if you want us to be successful long-term, you've got to make sure that we have people coming out of our colleges and universities that have had a great educational environment," not starved with \$300 million less than they had five years ago. We need a health care system that continues to be excellent. The first thing Harris did was to cut about 18% out of hospital budgets.

If you want to have a long-term, sustainable economy—by the way, this is fundamental. Anybody can compete by saying, "Listen, I'll have 25% lower corporate taxes," but nobody believes that alone will sustain it. Competitive taxes, investment in the things that matter to long-term economic well-being is what we're all about.

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The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Don't you just love it, Mr Speaker? Here we have a budget document and the members of the opposition take little pieces of that budget, take it out of context, put their spin on it and make it sound like something altogether different.

I'd like to read just a couple lines here. When the finance minister stood up last week, he said, "Mr Speaker, the budget is balanced for the third year in a row." Shortly thereafter he said, "In the past fiscal year we reduced our debt by the largest amount ever in the history of the province of Ontario—\$3 billion."

I spent four months, between the end of December until we came back here at the end of April, talking to my constituents, finding out what they want, and when I saw that budget I found myself asking, "What do Ontarians want from this government, and are they getting it with the budget document?" I looked at how closely the budget matched up with what I perceived to be the expectations of my constituents who, I feel, are rather representative of Ontarians at large. They want two things. They want stability and they want opportunity, the two cornerstones on which Ontario is based, on which this government is based.

Stability in the eyes and in the minds of Ontarians is jobs—maintenance of existing jobs and creation of new jobs. The creation of new jobs is provided through opportunity, whether it be opportunities for the corporations through tax cuts or an encouragement of consumer spending through personal tax cuts. That consumer

spending increase creates a demand whereby corporations can increase profit, can increase investment and increase jobs.

You'll notice I haven't said that government should provide those jobs. That's the philosophy of the Liberals and the NDP. From the discussions I've had with my constituents, I believe that the role of government is to facilitate the creation of jobs.

Facilitate job creation and job maintenance: did the budget do that? Let's go back, as the Liberal finance critic did, let's go back to 1995. When we came to power in 1995, there was this cycle of spending and taxing that was sapping the energies from the average Ontarian. I remember going door to door during the election campaign in 1995, and I heard from more and more constituents at that time that they encouraged tax cutting because they felt they needed some kind of an increase in their stability, in their confidence, and they felt that the tax decreases would do just that.

Again, in the 1999 election campaign, I found the same thing. I didn't find one constituent in 1999, I didn't find one constituent in the last four months among the hundreds that I spoke to, who said, "Please increase my taxes." I didn't hear that. I didn't hear one of them say, "Increase my taxes so that you can provide better educational opportunities," because they looked at the amount of spending in education by this government in the last five years and they didn't believe what the Liberals and the NDP were saying. They looked at the amount of the spending increase by this government as an investment in health care between 1995 and 1999, which has contributed to a tremendous increase in health care facilities. I might add that the increase in health care spending has continued from 1999 to this budget here.

Do you remember that in 1995 the government was spending \$17.4 billion on health care? Do you remember that in 1995 the Liberals had a red book—it was their election policy, their party platform—and they said in that book that they were going to continue spending at \$17.4 billion? I think you remember that, Speaker.

What are we spending now—\$23.9 billion on health care? That's a tremendous increase—a \$6.5-billion increase in just six years. That's a huge increase. The health care facilities in my riding are far better than they were in 1995. Do you know that the people in my riding had to go to London or Hamilton or Toronto in order to get any kind of cancer or cardiac care? My riding is located in one of the most important economic regions of Canada, and we had insufficient health care. We had a horrible shortage of doctors. We still have a shortage of doctors, but we've made great strides—far greater strides than had ever been even attempted by the NDP or the Liberals.

Our educational facilities have increased dramatically as well. We've increased education spending to \$13.8 billion per year. The Liberals and the NDP tried to say that we have decreased education spending. If you look at the dollars being spent, I don't know how anybody can

say that's a decrease. If you look at each budget, year over year, there's an increase in spending.

The post-secondary system alone is benefiting. We have, of course, as you're aware, an elite post-secondary system in this province. We have world-class universities that can compete with any university in the world. We have technical colleges which are absolutely fabulous. The one in our region, Conestoga College, is so good that recently they had two teams of engineers who beat out the engineers from all the universities that were competing in a contest.

The budget document has announced an additional operating funding grant of \$293 million for colleges and universities. That's good news to them. They're quite pleased with that. We know we have an increase in the number of secondary school students who want to go to university. We know we're going to have a double cohort in the year 2003. We made a commitment to them—to the universities, to the colleges and to the students—that those spaces would be available, and the funding has been provided. The commitment is there. There will be 73,000 new post-secondary spaces to meet that enrolment.

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But not only that; we've added an exciting new component to post-secondary education. It's called the Ontario Institute of Technology and it's going to be located on the campus of Durham College. It will focus attention on the new realities of education. It will focus the attention of a marketplace which demands a strongly combined level of integration of academic and hands-on education and experience. In speaking with John Tibbits of Conestoga College, he felt this was a tremendous move on the part of our government. Not having spoken yet to other executives of post-secondary institutions, I'm still sure that they think this is a very welcome move.

We have a high-tech sector. The Liberal critic talked about the automotive sector, but we have a high-tech sector. Despite the doom and gloom that the media is painting lately, we have a high-tech sector which is creating thousands upon thousands of jobs in this province. The three boom areas in the high-tech sector of course are Ottawa, the Metro Toronto area—Markham is a big area, and Brampton, of course—and the Kitchener-Waterloo region. We have literally thousands of new jobs being created in the high-tech sector in Waterloo region.

Why is this taking place? It's taking place largely because we are providing some corporate tax cuts to encourage investment on the part of these companies, investment into machinery and equipment. This investment right now is taking place at a record pace. Right as I speak, right now, this investment in new machinery and new equipment is taking place at a record pace that provides thousands upon thousands of jobs. That's what corporate income tax reductions are doing.

Let's look at the area of personal income taxes: 95% of Ontarians as a result of this budget will find that their personal income taxes have been reduced at least 20% since 1995; 100% of Ontarians will have had a reduction

in personal income tax, but the vast majority of the money in tax cuts is going to the lower- and middle-income earners. That's not just me, Wayne Wettlaufer, saying so; those are the facts. Some 735,000 low-income earners have been told by our government since 1995, and including this budget, "We don't want your tax money." Ontario is no longer collecting tax money from these people.

Paul Martin—you know him, Liberals; he's the federal Liberal finance minister—said that the best thing we as a country can do is to not collect taxes from the low-income earners. So why don't the Liberals approach the finance minister and say, "Put your money where your mouth is"? Ontario has done it, but the feds haven't. Do the Liberals have the intestinal fortitude to go to Ottawa and ask the federal finance minister to put his money where his mouth is?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Why don't you run federally? All you do is yap about the federal Liberals. Run federally.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'm really happy the minister from St Catharines—the member from St Catharines—

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: A former minister, yes. I'm glad the member from St Catharines has chosen to join us because I can play off him and I'm starting to run out of material.

Mr Bradley: There's lots of room in the Alliance.

Mr Wettlaufer: Oh no, the Alliance isn't my game; member from St Catharines, you know the Alliance isn't my game.

The Deputy Speaker: We would know that the comments need to be addressed through the Speaker. This is not a dialogue; it's a monologue.

Mr Wettlaufer: Thank you, Speaker. I'm glad you drew my attention to that, but I must come back on topic.

I would like to point out another thing. The Liberal finance critic was talking about the strength of the other world economies. Do you know that since 1995 our economy is the fastest-growing and strongest of any jurisdiction in any of the nations of the G7? What does that bode when we have a slowing economy? Will that still take place? According to the Royal Bank, Ontario is very well positioned in the slowing economy. We are still going to have a very healthy growth rate. What will that growth rate be? It's been projected at 2.3%. Could it be any lower? There is a very remote possibility, but highly unlikely, that it could be ever so slightly lower.

We are still one of the strongest of all the economies in any of the G7 nations. We are told, "Oh, our economy is only so good because of the US economy." If that's the case, then why have we in Ontario outstripped the growth in GDP of the American economy every year for the last six years? They don't want to answer that. The Liberals don't want to answer that; the NDP doesn't want answer that; the critics don't want to answer that. Thank heavens there's not too many of them there. Most financial experts out there like our performance from 1995, they like our performance from 1999, and they like this budget.

I really have to talk about independent schools. Why do we want to provide tax incentives to parents who want to send their children to independent schools?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): Tell us why.

Mr Wettlaufer: I'm going to do that, I say to the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. In 1999 the human rights commission of the United Nations said we should be providing that money. Remember? The Liberals remember because they asked at that time when we were going to respond to this United Nations ruling. OK, so now we've responded.

In Ontario we don't just have a publicly funded education system any more. We have 102,000 children in the province attending 734 culturally or religiously based private schools. These parents want to educate their children with their values, with their language, in their culture. This is very important in a racially, ethnically, religiously diverse province like Ontario. This is very important to these people. We either open our doors to these people and welcome them with open arms or we tell them, "No, we don't want you. We don't want your values." I'm not willing to accept that and the people in my riding are not willing to accept that. We are going to provide them with the ability.

When they pay taxes to fund the publicly funded system and then have to make the ultimate sacrifice, if you will, financially—many of them on low incomes and many of them on lower middle incomes—and pay tuition, we have to give them some break.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?
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Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): The people of Ontario must not be fooled by the ads and statistics that are being thrown at us. What each citizen in Ontario should do is ask, "Is my education system better than it was in 1995? Is my health care system better than it was in 1995?"

This budget provides \$100 million less to hospitals when they're already running massive deficits. Rural communities like Belleville and Picton and Quinte West are in dire fear of losing essential services they now have. I was in the emergency ward in one of the hospitals in my community yesterday, where emergency beds are in the hallways with numbers on the wall and patients are being treated in the public setting of a hallway. That wasn't the case five years ago. There has been an absolute deterioration in the system.

Is our education better than it was in 1995? We are seeing school boards forced to close libraries. We're seeing school boards unable to purchase sufficient textbooks. This government is saying, "Why are our students not reading well just because they don't have libraries and textbooks?" Well, duh. It's pretty obvious that as you cut what everyone else would consider to be essential services, there's going to be deterioration.

Lastly, with the mantra of tax cuts, I note with interest that all the municipalities in Ontario are virtually being forced to raise their property taxes. That is an insidious

tax transfer. For low-income people or people on fixed incomes—retirees, for example—traditionally if they paid it in income tax, when their income went down they paid less tax. With property tax, no matter what the income—if they lose their job, if they retire—they are still committed to paying the property taxes, whether they own or whether it's included in the rent. As we see ambulances and social housing foisted on to municipalities, people with reduced incomes are going to be forced to pay more in their retirement years, rather than less.

Mr Martin: It's interesting to hear my friend from Kitchener Centre, up on his feet again, all puffed up and so impressed with the initiatives of his own government. Let me tell you what's really going on. This government went ahead with large tax cuts, primarily for corporations and the wealthiest few. This year's budget announcements, once fully rolled out, will total \$4.2 billion. Some \$2.4 billion of that will be in corporate tax cuts. That's not counting the previously scheduled small business tax cuts and beer tax cuts. Most of the government's new spending this year is going to tax cuts, not to health care, to education, to the environment and to our future.

This member bragged a little bit about what they're doing for post-secondary education. The Conservatives have slashed and burned our colleges and universities, to the benefit of their corporate friends. Their goal is privatization and two-tier college and university education—there's no doubt about that. They've announced \$293 million by the year 2003-04, but this year universities and colleges will only get \$30 million. That \$30 million doesn't come close to the \$500 million recommended by the Investing in Students Task Force.

Capital funds have fared even worse. They've been cut by \$154 million. Ontario already ranks 10th among Canada's provinces in operating funding for colleges and universities. Ontario ranks 59th of 61 North American jurisdictions. Today's budget means Ontario is speeding ahead in its race to the bottom. Ontario students are already feeling the squeeze. The Conservatives have increased across-the-board tuition by 60%. For professional and graduate programs, increases are as high as 520%. Student debt has increased with tuition. The average student debt is now \$25,000.

Mr Frank Mazzilli (London-Fanshawe): It's interesting to join the debate. I thought we were speaking about the budget. We hear criticism. The one way to stop the criticism is to put yourself in the finance minister's shoes—I know the member from Durham wishes he were the finance minister when he gets up, but we all envision ourselves as finance ministers—and envision what kind of budget you would want to deliver. I know I would want to start with the first line in this budget: "The budget is balanced."

I can hardly wait for the day some other people get the opportunity to say that, because the Liberals never had the opportunity to say that. They pretended it was balanced, and then when they went to the electorate, they actually found there was a \$2-billion deficit. That's the

world they live in. Of course the NDP took it out to a \$12-billion deficit.

If I were the finance minister and looked at this budget, what else could you change? Tax cuts for middle-income earners; \$1.2 billion in additional funding for health care, a priority, something our working families have been calling for; and more tax credits for private and religiously based schools. These are schools that are attended by children of working families.

Where are Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals? They're not quite sure. They take their marching orders from teachers' unions. It'll be interesting how their caucus votes on behalf of working families in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'm saddened to have to respond to this budget. I'm saddened as the Ontario Liberal critic for agriculture, because two of the words that were lacking in this budget—I didn't hear them from the member for Kitchener Centre today and I didn't hear them from the Minister of Finance—were the words "agriculture" or "farmer." It's a sad day when the number two industry in this province has seen the neglect and contempt shown to it by this government. This government claims they've added \$40 million to the budget for agriculture, but this is not new money; this is recycled, re-announced, unspent money that has been carried forward from a previous year.

It should have been spent in the previous year investing in the agricultural community in this province, but no, that didn't happen. So it's a numbers game, to try to make it appear there is a commitment to agriculture from this government, but we've certainly seen the lack of commitment to agriculture from this government.

There is another glaring aspect of what is lacking in this budget when it comes to agriculture. We know that the grains and oilseeds industry in this province is going to continue to see record low commodity prices. But there's nothing. I'm extremely disappointed they've failed to allocate any funding for additional emergency grain stabilization payments, or not budgeting for an increase in the market revenue program.

You know there's going to be a crisis faced in the agricultural community in this coming year; it's there. We know we're competing against the subsidies in the United States and against the subsidies in the European Union.

This government has failed to recognize this in looking ahead to the budget of 2001-02. This is strictly unacceptable. This is a government that campaigned in 1995 for no cuts to agriculture. We have seen the budget cut by over 40%. We have seen the emphasis disappear from agriculture and rural affairs. It's a sad day for the agricultural community in Ontario with what this government has done to it.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Wettlaufer: I'd like to thank the members for Prince Edward-Hastings, Sault Ste Marie, London-Fanshawe and Elgin-Middlesex-London for participating in this.

I'm really disappointed in the response from the member for Sault Ste Marie. He read from some spin doctor's opinion, and I'm not used to that member reading a comment. He mentioned that the average student's debt is \$25,000. I think that's high, based on my information, but even if that were accurate, I can remember that in 1995 when my daughter graduated from university—with very good marks, I might add, extremely good marks, and a lot of her class also had extremely good marks. We're talking about A students here. They didn't have a job to go to. They had no opportunity. What was my daughter's debt at the end of four years of university? Do you know, gosh darn it, it was \$20,000, and she didn't have a job. Now they've got jobs, they've got opportunities and they've got good-paying jobs with which to pay off that debt. So he doesn't know wherefrom he speaks.

In our government, tax revenue is up, spending is up. It's interesting to listen to the Liberals. One says that we're not spending enough. During question period they say, "You're not spending enough on this, you're not spending enough on that and you're not spending enough on this." Do you know that in the past week over \$1 billion was spent by those people who are saying we're not spending enough on this, that or the other thing? Yet the member from Essex stood up today—

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Order.

On Wednesday, May 9, 2001, Mr Flaherty moved, seconded by Mr Harris, that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

On Thursday, May 10, 2001, Mr McGuinty moved that the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 9, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words after "That this House" and adding thereto the following:

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

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

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

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

"This House has lost confidence in this government."

On Wednesday, May 16, 2001, Mr Martin moved that the amendment moved by Mr McGuinty to the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on May 9, "That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government," be amended by deleting the words after "Recognizing that this budget fails our families and our future by" and substituting the following:

"Taking inspiration from the provincial Liberal Party's policy of creating 'more choice' in the school system and by using the code word 'choice' as an excuse to implement a 'voucher' system for private schools—jeopardizing the future of public education in Ontario;

"Recognizing that this budget is driven by the Conservative government's strategic commitment to sell off Ontario through a systematic agenda of privatization, beginning with the privatization of electric power generation—with the support of the provincial Liberals;

"Recognizing that the deregulation of Ontario's Hydro system is a dirty deal that will create chaos in our electricity system and raise electricity prices;

"Recognizing that selling out our public schools system for private vouchers and selling off Hydro and the province's bank is part of a long-running and dangerous competition by the Conservative government to outdo the Ottawa Liberals' tax cuts for the wealthy, putting the interests of corporations ahead of the interests of working families;

"This House has lost confidence in this government."

The first question to be decided is the amendment to the amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr Martin's amendment to the amendment to the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1754 to 1804.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Martin's amendment to the amendment to the motion will please rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Hampton, Howard	Marchese, Rosario
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Martin, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please rise at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Gill, Raminder	Newman, Dan
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Parsons, Ernie
Bartolucci, Rick	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hudak, Tim	Phillips, Gerry
Boyer, Claudette	Jackson, Cameron	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Johns, Helen	Runciman, Robert W.
Bryant, Michael	Johnson, Bert	Ruprecht, Tony
Caplan, David	Kells, Morley	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Kennedy, Gerard	Smitherman, George
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Snobelen, John
Coburn, Brian	Kwinter, Monte	Spina, Joseph
Conway, Sean G.	Marland, Margaret	Sterling, Norman W.
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mazzilli, Frank	Tilson, David
Duncan, Dwight	McGuinty, Dalton	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	McLeod, Lyn	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	McMeekin, Ted	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gerretsen, John	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David
Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 8; the nays are 74.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

The second question to be decided is the amendment to the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

All those in favour of Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion will please stand one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	McMeekin, Ted
Boyer, Claudette	Hampton, Howard	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Smitherman, George
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Hastings, John	Newman, Dan	Young, David
Hodgson, Chris	O'Toole, John	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 32; the nays are 50.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the amendment to the motion lost.

We now come to the motion of Mr Flaherty that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a 10-minute bell.

All those in favour will please rise one at a time until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Baird, John R.	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Clement, Tony	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tilson, David
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Turnbull, David
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Gill, Raminder	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth
Hardeman, Ernie	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Hastings, John	Newman, Dan	Young, David
Hodgson, Chris	O'Toole, John	

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	McGuinty, Dalton
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	McMeekin, Ted
Boyer, Claudette	Hampton, Howard	Parsons, Ernie
Bradley, James J.	Hoy, Pat	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Lankin, Frances	Smitherman, George
Conway, Sean G.	Marchese, Rosario	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 50; the nays are 32.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being well past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1816.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Gerard Kennedy
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Alvin Curling
Gilles Bisson, Alvin Curling,
Gerard Kennedy, Frank Mazzilli,
Norm Miller, John R. O'Toole,
Steve Peters, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Marcel Beaubien
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Doug Galt
Marcel Beaubien, David Christopherson,
Doug Galt, Ernie Hardeman, Monte Kwinter,
John O'Toole, Gerry Phillips, Joseph Spina
Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Steve Gilchrist
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Norm Miller
Marie Bountrogianni, Ted Chudleigh,
Garfield Dunlop, Steve Gilchrist, Dave Levac,
Rosario Marchese, Norm Miller, Marilyn Mushinski
Clerk / Greffière: Anne Stokes

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: James J. Bradley
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Crozier
James J. Bradley, Bruce Crozier,
Leona Dombrowsky, Bert Johnson,
Morley Kells, Tony Martin,
Jerry J. Ouellette, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Justice and Social Policy / Justice et affaires sociales

Chair / Présidente: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Carl DeFaria
Toby Barrett, Marcel Beaubien,
Michael Bryant, Carl DeFaria,
Garry J. Guzzo, Peter Kormos,
Lyn McLeod, Tina R. Molinari
Clerk / Greffier: Tom Prins

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: R. Gary Stewart
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Vacant
Ted Arnott, Marilyn Churley,
Caroline Di Cocco, Jean-Marc Lalonde,
Margaret Marland, Jerry J. Ouellette,
R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N. Tascona,
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: John Gerretsen
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John C. Cleary
John C. Cleary, John Gerretsen, Raminder Gill,
John Hastings, Shelley Martel, Bart Maves,
Julia Munro, Richard Patten
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et des projets de loi d'internet privé**

Chair / Présidente: Frances Lankin
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Garfield Dunlop
Gilles Bisson, Garfield Dunlop,
Raminder Gill, Pat Hoy, Frances Lankin,
Frank Mazzilli, Ted McMeekin, Bill Murdoch
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

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