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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 30 May 2001

Mercredi 30 mai 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 30 May 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 30 mai 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): The Ontario College of Art and Design is Canada's oldest and largest post-secondary institution dedicated to advanced education in art and design. In the year 2001, OCAD celebrates 125 years of contributing to growth and change in Canada's visual culture.

The college is going through a period of transition and growth. A new president has been appointed to provide leadership for all academic aspects of the college's operations, with particular emphasis on the college's proposal for degree-granting status. The college has applied for degree-granting status and has also received a \$25-million start-up investment through the SuperBuild growth fund to create a new centre for design.

This new centre will be named the Sharp Centre for Design, in recognition of the largest personal gift to the college in its 125-year history. OCAD graduate Rosalie Sharp and her husband, Isadore Sharp, founder of the Four Seasons Hotel chain, are contributing \$5 million to the college's capital campaign.

It is obvious that the college has laid the foundation for a stronger curriculum and resource base that will lead to a new future for arts and design education in Ontario. The college has proposed changes in its governance which will enable this goal to be achieved.

As a graduate of the college and a former vice-president, I urge all members to support the enabling legislation, which I expect and hope will be introduced in the near future.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to thank and congratulate the volunteers and volunteer organizations in Perth-Middlesex for the contribution they make to the economic vitality and social well-being of their communities.

Last night in Stratford I took part in the Ontario Volunteer Service Award ceremony, where 60 volunteers from my riding, representing 15 different groups, were

recognized for up to 50 years of commitment and dedicated service.

The highlight of the evening was the three songs performed by the St Marys Children's Choir, under the direction of their music director and volunteer award recipient, Eileen Baldwin. For 20 years the St Marys Children's Choir has been performing at venues around the world and has received numerous awards.

Last week I also attended a volunteer recognition reception for the Stratford Area Association for Community Living. I also attended a tree-planting and park bench dedication ceremony in Listowel to honour and recognize the volunteers of the Perth-Huron Victorian Order of Nurses.

The recent volunteer recognition ceremonies in my riding are timely, as the United Nations has declared 2001 as International Year of the Volunteer. Ontario's theme is "Everyone counts." This theme accurately describes the volunteers in my riding who dedicate their time and energy to help others in their communities.

Please join me in recognizing and celebrating the achievements of the volunteers in Perth-Middlesex.

SPEEDING OFFENCES

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): We've all heard of the term "road rage." I want to speak to the Minister of Transportation about something that I call "road madness."

Just last Saturday, if you can believe it, three Michigan men riding motorcycles were each fined \$1,500 for reaching speeds in excess of 200 kilometres an hour in a 60-kilometre zone on E.C. Row Expressway in Windsor. The day before, an 18-year-old Michigan man was nailed with \$1,500 in fines as he was clocked travelling 100 kilometres an hour over the speed limit. That was on two occasions on Highway 401 in the Chatham-Kent area.

The problem and the real crime of it is that we probably won't collect those fines. They'll go scot-free because they get a summons, they head off back to Michigan and they just don't come back. I think we should do what they do in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio: give our officers a credit card device and collect it on the spot, or you lose your licence until you show up for your summons.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr Crozier: Absolutely. I think it's a crime that this government is letting these criminals get away on our highways. I'm going to speak to the Minister of Transportation about it.

INVESTMENT FRAUD

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Over the past few months, my community office in Etobicoke North has received dozens of phone calls about bogus investment scams. These scamsters are an inventive lot, some netting the fraudster nearly \$2 million. Scams include unlicensed individuals selling securities; affinity group fraud targeting religious, ethnic and professional groups; and business investment scams involving pay telephones and automatic teller machines. In addition, beware Internet fraud in the form of “callable” certificates of deposit, Ponzi, pyramid schemes, Internet stock price manipulations and insider trading.

What kind of help is available for Ontario investors? If you suspect a securities representative is not registered, contact the Ontario Securities Commission at 1-877-785-1555. Second, check out the Small Investors Protection Association at www.sipa.to.

Finally, trust your instinct when it comes to investment approaches and always remember: if it sounds too good to be true, you can be sure it is. *Caveat emptor*.

1340

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): It sounds like the member from Etobicoke North has offered good advice for the government’s budget.

Ontario Liberals are opposed to private school vouchers and in favour of a strong system of public education. Earlier today, almost all the members of the Liberal caucus and our leader, Dalton McGuinty, took to the streets of the greater Toronto area our strong commitment to public education. At 46 subway stops this morning and at 28 GO train stations tomorrow we’re delivering a strong message to the people of Ontario in favour of public education. But we will not stop there. Over the next number of days and weeks and months, we intend to take this campaign to the heartland of Tory support.

On Saturday morning we’re going to take a big group of people to campaign in the riding of Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge, because we know there are strong supporters of public education in that riding.

Just yesterday morning our education critic was in the riding of Port Perry, where 75 people showed up on one day’s notice to express their strong commitment to public education and their opposition to the views of their government member, who has been supporting this private school voucher system.

So to all those Tory members who hide out here and say they’re doing the work on behalf of their constituents, we’re going to work hard to represent the views of the vast majority of people of Ontario who stand in strong support with us in favour of a strong system of public education and against private school vouchers. We urge people who want to come and bring that campaign to the Minister of Education’s riding on Saturday to meet with us at 10 am.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): New Democrats stood proudly with OPSEU members today in front of this building. We stood there shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm with Leah Casselman and women and men who work in our public service and who represent thousands of others across this province who have provided the very best of public service over the course of decades and generations.

We stood there in solidarity and in contempt of this government. I want the Premier to know he hasn’t fooled anybody out there. We know, public sector workers know and people in communities across this province know, Mr Premier, that your attack on the public service is very much about privatization of every facet of the public sector here in Ontario. It’s about handing over all those institutions and services that have been built by working Ontario people—women and men, parents, grandparents and their kids—over the course of decades and generations. It’s about turning them over to your corporate friends, inevitably American. It’s about converting public tax dollars into private profits, not a penny of which will even remain in this province or this country. You’ve sold out the province. You’re selling out public sector workers in an attack on unions that is unprecedented but so very much typical of your style, Mr Premier. Your disdain for working people, your disgust for professional, committed public service workers, I tell you, is generating their contempt for you and the contempt of the public of this province.

CANADIAN AMPUTEE HOCKEY TEAM

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): As the Stanley Cup final between the New Jersey Devils and the Colorado Avalanche is well underway, many Canadian hockey fans are searching for a Canadian team to support. A Canadian team that is truly worthy of our support is the Canadian Amputee Hockey Team.

Thornhill became the proud host of the Canadian Amputee Hockey Team and the CANAM event that took place on the weekend of May 25 to 27. Canadian amputee athletes from across Canada played a similarly physically challenged team from the United States on Saturday at the Thornhill Community Centre. This is the first time such an event has been held in Canada. Many NHL old-timers were in attendance to sign autographs before the game on Saturday to lend their support. On Sunday, players from each team travelled to the Hockey Hall of Fame to hang the actual signed jerseys and inaugurate a display from the first-ever amputee hockey game held in Lake Placid at the first CANAM event.

The Canadian Amputee Hockey Committee is a committee of the Canadian Amputee Sports Association organized for the sole purpose of promoting ice hockey for all amputees. The committee continues to encourage other amputees to rehabilitate and participate as elite athletes and to have amputee hockey become a Paralympic sport.

On behalf of the residents of Thornhill, I would like to wish the Canadian Amputee Hockey Committee and all their athletes the best of luck in the future, and may the courage they exhibit be an example to all athletes.

FATHER CHARLES ARMSTRONG

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Yesterday my community and indeed Ontario lost a great teacher and friend, Father Charles Armstrong. "Army" Armstrong, as he was known by his friends and students, began teaching in Ontario with the Basilian Fathers in 1934. Father Armstrong brought high school football to Ontario, coached generations of young people in our community and was a tribute to the Basilian Order and all it stands for. Indeed, the Basilians' motto of goodness, discipline and knowledge was incorporated well in Father Armstrong's life. He had a profound impact on thousands upon thousands of young people in our province. He taught me and served as a friend and inspiration and a mentor in so many ways.

All of us in Windsor and Essex county, and indeed across Ontario, are saddened at the loss of Father Armstrong who, in my view, stood for everything that's good in education in this province and stood for a better way for all of us. He was a remarkable man.

This morning I had the opportunity to speak to Father Ronald Cullen, another legend in the Basilian community and in our community. He said to me that as we celebrate Father Armstrong's life we're all fortunate today because we have another friend in heaven. He was a great man and a real inspiration to all of us.

EVENTS IN RIDING OF NIAGARA FALLS

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise to present a statement on behalf of the member from Niagara Falls, Bart Maves, who was unable to make it.

"I'm pleased to announce to this House an award that has been received by a high school in my constituency, St Paul High School. For the second year in a row they have won a Golden Web award. St Paul's was recognized for its professional and informative Web site. I have visited this site and encourage all members of this House to take the time to take a look at it as well. This site can be found at www.niagararc.com/spchs/index.htm.

"I extend my congratulations to the designers of this site," and I apologize for any mispronunciations: "Christopher Ainsley, Corrado Coia, Adam Dunn, Mr Dipersio, Mr Mechelsie, Francis Ambrosia, Janet Leung, Adam Jackson and Dan Costabile, and St Paul High School for their innovative work.

"While speaking of St Paul's Catholic school, I would like to give my condolences to the family, colleagues and former students of Fred Bilanzola. Mr Bilanzola was an art teacher at St Paul High School. He died in a tragic car accident when he lost control of his car on a curve on a

snowy road. Mr Bilanzola was a well-liked teacher, and his passing is indeed a great loss to the school."

VISITORS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I hope all members will join me in welcoming students from Brian Public School who have come to visit us here today.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): It's not a point of order, but we welcome our friends.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sending to you via a page the text I will be referring to as well as the references. I'm standing on a point of order with respect to Bill 57, the Government Efficiency Act, 2001. It is our respectful position that the bill is out of order, and we're calling upon you to rule as such. I would like, as briefly as possible, to outline the reasons why.

First, as you know, there's no reference to omnibus bills in our standing orders. We have to refer to Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms, page 192, and I quote, "Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill"—and this is very important—"there should be a theme of relevancy amongst the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill." The theme of relevancy and the terminology of the long title of the bill are significant, then, and very operative.

1350

By my count, Bill 57 amends well over 50 different statutes. It repeals several others. It amends acts under the aegis of 15 different ministries. While some of the proposed amendments are admittedly housekeeping in nature, like the changes in keeping with the proper names of the courts, the bill also, and this is very much the focus of our argument, contains very controversial amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act that will undermine some of the most basic rights enjoyed by millions of working men and women in Ontario.

Mr Speaker, the cumulative changes proposed in the 100-plus pages of this legislation, I submit to you, lack a theme of relevancy. In fact, upon reading the bill, one discovers that they are completely different from one another. The minister has given the bill—it was Minister Sterling, you'll recall, who was the author of the bill—the broad and very non-definitive title of An Act to promote government efficiency and to improve services to taxpayers by amending or repealing certain Acts, in an attempt to encompass vastly different changes under one umbrella.

Unlike so many of the bills with similar names introduced by this government, Bill 57 is not merely a public relations exercise. That is apparent from reading it. It represents yet another effort on the part of the Tories to limit

the democratic functioning of this Legislature by sweeping many diverse and controversial matters under one rug. Once again the government is seeking to ram legislation through this House that contains vastly different changes to unrelated statutes, thereby preventing full and focused debate. It's simply not possible to adequately deal with the myriad of issues included in this bill in its present form. Members of the Legislative Assembly cannot do justice to all the important components of this legislation, because it is simply far too broad.

There are parts of Bill 57 that I would agree are properly dealt with in an omnibus bill. I refer to schedule D, which amends 37 different statutes to change the reference to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations to the new title of the Minister of Commercial and Business Services. That's in itself benign and consistent with the theme of what is an acceptable omnibus bill. It makes sense to accomplish these kinds of benign housekeeping matters by means of omnibus legislation and the New Democrats have no objection to that, of course.

However, there are other elements of Bill 57 that are substantively different from these housekeeping amendments. The previously mentioned changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act are the most striking example. These amendments represent, respectfully, substantive changes, Mr Speaker. Frankly, they have nothing to do with the efficient operation of the government of Ontario, as the bill's long title would suggest, and it's very relevant to refer to, as a matter of fact it's imperative to refer to, the long title. These amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act of course are buried deep within the 15 schedules and the 100-plus pages of the bill. They will never be afforded the appropriate scrutiny and debate if the bill goes forward in its present form.

Mr Speaker, I call upon you to allow the people of Ontario to hear how the changes in this bill will affect their working lives. Members of this Legislature are entitled, in fact I submit we're obliged, to speak to these important, substantive changes that are inconsistent with the other aspects of Bill 57. Quite frankly, when one reads those amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, one discovers that workers will be put at risk and lives will be lost.

I ask you to consider as well what committee hearings would look like. I acknowledge that the Speaker doesn't have to necessarily entertain the prospect of committee hearings because they may not be provided for. But should they be provided, I ask you to look at what committee hearings would look like if the bill were to be referred in its current form: the number of bureaucrats and presenters needed to address and carry its components would be unwieldy; the cost to the taxpayer of trying to adequately address every aspect included in this bill would be staggering; there would be the time wasted in juggling dozens of speakers in several venues.

The New Democrats are proposing a solution that would bring true efficiency and accountability to the process. We are asking that Bill 57 be broken into relevant

parts so that we don't have to waste time on what are, again, these mere housekeeping amendments that can be dealt with quickly, and so that we can focus on what are the most dramatic, striking and contentious parts of the bill.

Moving to the matter of the precedents that I know you are aware of, Mr Speaker, we know there have been precedents at the federal and provincial levels to suggest that the severance of an omnibus bill is something that ought to happen at the political level. For instance, when the New Democratic Party was the government of this province, it agreed with the other two parties, after their raising the matter by way of objection, to divide Bill 29, a budget bill that was introduced on June 1, 1993, and Bill 60, introduced on May 18, 1994, because it was acknowledged there were certain bits of legislation in those two bills that were contentious and that warranted being removed from the broader bill. I would remind the Speaker that this was at the request of what were then the two opposition parties, the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party, respectively.

The government of that time listened to the concerns of the opposition parties of the day and accommodated those concerns, but when that can't or won't happen, and that hasn't happened in the context of Bill 57—that is to say, there hasn't been a political solution—we then rely upon the Speaker. I put it to you that every member of this assembly relies upon the Speaker. You are the only recourse we have.

I want to pay particular attention to the rulings of Speakers in both the House of Commons in Ottawa and in this Legislature. Previous Speakers have agreed with points of order that address the absence of a theme of relevancy in various omnibus bills, but have not supported those points of order on procedural grounds, have denied them on procedural grounds. This scenario, I submit to you, is very different. Indeed, Bill 57 lacks the necessary theme of relevancy among its amendments.

I argue with you that I am raising this point of order at the appropriate stage in the life of the bill. Bill 57 has been given first reading. We haven't commenced second reading. So this is the appropriate time to consider its orderliness and determine if this Legislature would be better served—and that, I submit, is one of the tests. Would the Legislature, would this assembly, be better served by splitting this bill into more manageable pieces?

The ruling made by Honourable Lucien Lamoureux, Speaker of Canada's House of Commons, on January 26, 1971, and this is with respect to a point of order about an omnibus bill: "Where do we stop? Where is the point of no return? [The honourable members] said that we might reach a point where we would have only one bill, a bill at the start of the session for the improvement of the quality of life in Canada which would include every single proposed piece of legislation for the session. That would be an omnibus bill with a capital O and a capital B. But would it be acceptable legislation? There must be a point where we can go beyond what is acceptable from a strictly parliamentary standpoint."

He then continues, "There must be a point where an omnibus bill becomes more than an omnibus bill and is not acceptable from a procedural standpoint.... the government has followed these practices that have been accepted in the past, rightly or wrongly, but that we may have reached the point where we are going too far and that omnibus bills seek to take in too much."

I respect and understand the previous rulings made by you, sir, and your predecessors in this Legislature. I also suggest to you very respectfully that we've reached the point referred to by Speaker Lamoureux. Bill after omnibus bill, time allocation motions, one after the other: I put to you, Mr Speaker, that today is the day where you are being called upon to bring democracy back to this Legislature.

1400

In that vein, carrying on with Speaker Lamoureux's ruling, because it speaks to the procedural question that prevented previous Speakers from ruling in favour of splitting or severing an omnibus bill, Speaker Lamoureux stated that in his view, "It should be the responsibility of the Chair, when such a bill is introduced and given first reading, to take the initiative and raise the matter for the consideration of the House by way of a point of order." He advised that when another omnibus bill was proposed, "It should be scrutinized at first reading stage, when honourable members will be given the opportunity of expressing their view and the Chair can express its view either that the bill goes too far or that it is acceptable from a procedural standpoint." Here again, Speaker, I'm submitting to you the phrase "goes too far": does it cross that line?

Clearly, Speaker Lamoureux understood that it was within his power to rule an omnibus bill out of order, and based on this precedent that it must be raised after first reading but not before the Parliament has commenced second reading, we are raising our point of order at this stage in Bill 57's course through this Legislature after first reading but before second reading has commenced or before it's been called for second reading.

There's more. I ask you to refer to page 618 in the text House of Commons Procedure and Practice, where it is written, "The Speaker has expressed deep concerns about the right of members to make themselves heard properly, and so has occasionally felt the need to suggest what remedies members have to deal with the dilemma of having to approve several legislative provisions at the same time." The issue again is, what remedies do members have to obtain relief from what I put to you is the very issue in Bill 57, several legislative provisions at the same time?

James Jerome spoke to this concern on May 11, 1977: "[Omnibus legislation] still leaves ... some very deep concern about whether our practices in respect of bills do in fact provide a remedy for the very legitimate complaint of the honourable member that a bill of this kind gives the government, under our practices, the right to demand one decision on a number of quite different ... subjects.... I think an honourable member ... ought to

have the right to compel the House to vote on each separate question." A very important reference. Speaker Jerome, 1977, House of Commons, spoke very specifically to the right of members to vote on issues or themes standing independent of each other and not to be compelled to cast one vote when in fact there should perhaps be many votes. Again, have some regard for what Speaker Jerome said: a member of the House—with respect, that's us, Speaker—ought to have the right to compel the House to vote on each separate question.

Speaker, you yourself registered your concern about omnibus legislation when you, sir, told this House on December 2, 1999, "I have found that omnibus bills cause me great concern.... The opportunities for members in this place to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation should be respected and evolving practice over the last few years has tended to work against that." You, sir, as Speaker, recognized this evolving practice, this trend, this tendency. You expressed your concern about omnibus bills. You expressed your concern about the ability of members of this Legislature, each and every one of us, all 103 of us, to give due and sufficient consideration to legislation.

I ask you to look at Beauchesne's sixth edition, page 3, which defines in a very fundamental way the principles of Canadian parliamentary law: "To protect a minority and restrain the improvidence or tyranny of a majority; to secure the transaction of public business in an orderly manner; to enable every member to express opinions within limits necessary to preserve decorum and prevent an unnecessary waste of time; to give abundant opportunity for the consideration of every measure, and to prevent any legislative action being taken upon sudden impulse."

Finally, Speaker, I refer you to standing order 1(b), again of fundamental consideration in the course, I submit to you, of almost every ruling you might be called upon to make. Standing order 1(b), which very much ought to set the standard, ought to set the tone, for every ruling by any Speaker, concerns the democratic rights of members and the right to speak on all matters before the House.

I'm asking you, sir, to consider the cumulative negative effect on the democratic functioning of this House if we allow Bill 57 to be debated and passed in its current omnibus form.

Since this government was first elected in 1995, it has introduced an unprecedented number of omnibus bills in this Legislature. I refer you back to your own observation of 1999 when the Speaker referred to a trend, an evolution of practice, and expressed regret and concern about it.

The House spends much less time, sometimes no time at all, examining legislation in committee.

This government—and the record speaks for itself—uses time allocation motions more frequently than any of its predecessors and on virtually every bill of substance that is brought before the House.

Speaker, because I feel it's within your mandate, within your jurisdiction to do this, I ask you to consider

the implication of the government's actions with respect to democracy, very fundamental small-d democracy as people across this province understand it in very much a day-to-day sort of fashion. I ask you to note that we are not elected to simply rubber-stamp the government's every whim. Every one of us is elected to speak on behalf of our constituents and, hopefully, on behalf of all Ontarians to create a better provincial community. I put it to you that if our voices aren't heard, then the people's voices have been silenced, and that is not democracy by anyone's definition.

I submit to you that a member's right to speak to a bill and, most importantly, to address all the components within a bill adequately is a matter of great importance to this House and to the democratic process. I'm asking you to intervene in order to preserve the limited rights of members to fully address bills before this assembly by ruling that omnibus Bill 57, Government Efficiency Act, 2001, is out of order in its present form.

You see, Speaker, it's not a matter of whether the bill is long enough. Mere volume doesn't determine whether or not a severance ought to occur. A bill could be a rather short one, but if a bill contains disparate themes where one vote wouldn't adequately represent a given member's support for one significant part of it as compared to their opposition to another significant part of it, that's what creates an omnibus bill. I submit, with respect, it's not enough to say, "Well, this bill isn't as long as another omnibus bill about which a point of order was denied on the issue of severance." That's not the test. The test is as has been outlined in the rules and the precedents.

I submit that you, sir, this Speaker in 2001, have an opportunity to do something good, indeed great, for democracy.

You have acknowledged and there is no issue, sir, about the capacity, the jurisdiction, the mandate of a Speaker to sever a bill. Just as you, Speaker, spoke about the evolution of practice and the regret you had about it and how it has snowballed, I'm concerned about the successions of precedent which acknowledge the Speaker's right to sever but box it in so that the framework of that right to sever becomes minuscule. When you carry on with precedent that narrows it and narrows it, you maintain the Speaker's right to sever only as a theory but make it impossible to ever put in practice.

1410

Speaker, I respectfully submit, on behalf of the NDP caucus, that the amendments to acts under the Ministry of Labour, especially the Occupational Health and Safety Act as included in Bill 57, be exposed to the scrutiny of full debate both in this Legislature and in public hearings. To allow Bill 57 to move forward in its present form would be to allow the government to carry out what would be a hidden and sneak attack on working people by denying them the opportunity, through their representatives and in their own right at the committee level, to fully address changes that will have a profound impact on the safety of their workplaces.

I'm asking you to look at the totality of the bill. I submit to you it's critical that one reads the bill in its

totality. I'm asking you to consider the intent of the acknowledged power of a Speaker to sever and the interests of this Parliament as a body. I am asking you to take into account your observation of that evolution of omnibus bills becoming more omnibus, I suppose, in their nature, and I'm asking you to draw a line and to make it clear that you, sir, will protect the rights of individual members, as indicated by, among other things, standing order 1(b), and that you will exercise a power that you have to sever.

I ask for, I anticipate and have no doubt that there will be on your part a careful review of the bill, of the standing orders, of precedent and of our submissions. I ask you to take the time, Speaker, to carefully consider this point of order and I look forward with some enthusiasm and anxiousness to your response.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I certainly appreciate the honourable member's very lengthy dissertation, but I would like to respond to what he's saying because, first of all, this piece of legislation, the style of this bill, is neither unusual nor unprecedented and there is a theme of relevancy that runs through its content. Therefore it would be our submission, respectfully, that the bill is in order.

I turn to Beauchesne at page 192, where it states, "Although there is no specific set of rules or guidelines governing the content of a bill, there should be a theme of relevancy amongst the contents of a bill. They must be relevant to and subject to the umbrella which is raised by the terminology of the long title of the bill." The contents of this bill, Mr Speaker, we submit do meet these criteria: An Act to promote government efficiency and to improve services to taxpayers by amending or repealing certain Acts.

Omnibus bills—legislation that has different items but items that are very closely related—are not new to this House and have regularly been found to be procedurally acceptable where they've conformed to the theme of relevancy in their long titles, as laid out in Beauchesne, and rulings by Speakers of this Legislature and precedent in the federal House of Commons do support the practice of using one bill to demand a decision on a number of different although related subjects. That is certainly our submission.

The scope of the legislation is not as great in this particular bill as in other ones. For example, I would point to Bill 175 under the former NDP government, of which the member opposite was a member. Points of order raised when that bill was called for second reading expressed doubt about whether the contents of the bill demonstrated a theme of relevancy, and it was noted that the matters covered by that bill ranged from automating the land registry office to allowing alcoholic beverages to be sold in provincial parks. This was ruled acceptable.

The bill before us today certainly does have different items but they are related, we believe, under the title of this bill. So it would be our submission, respectfully, that the precedents are clear. The bill is in order and in this

case the umbrella, the long title, demonstrates the coherence among the bill's components. I would respectfully request that you rule this bill in order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): The member for Niagara Centre has raised, I think, an extremely valid point of order. He quoted your own ruling in December 1999, which was a response to a similar point I had raised. My recollection of the various rulings of Speakers both in the federal House and here is that there has been an increasing tendency to be concerned about the nature of omnibus bills, the relevance of everything that is contained in them and the linkages between them. It's apparent to me, sir, and I know to many other members in this House, that increasingly bills have become, to use the member for Niagara Centre's words, more omnibus; that is, the scope and breadth of the legislation contained in them is less related, except in very loose fashion, than it had been in the past.

Accordingly, I believe it's up to Speakers today to look very closely at how this has evolved—indeed, going back to Speaker Jermone's rulings in the 1970s, when he expressed concerns, and your own concerns—in order to protect the privilege of members here in this House, the ability to debate items that are in their essence deserving of the attention of the House and ought not to be lumped in.

Accordingly, we in the official opposition support the point of order raised by the member for Niagara Centre. We look to you, sir, to take the rulings in this area, the whole area of omnibus legislation, which has changed dramatically, indeed in the short time I've been a member of this assembly, and we urge you to take us to the next step and protect our rights as members.

The Speaker: I thank the member for Niagara Centre for his submission, as well as the government House leader, as well as the House leader for the official opposition. I will reserve my judgment.

VISITORS

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We often have a chance to honour those pages who serve here, but today I'd like to honour five who are prospective pages, who haven't been successful in their quest yet, from my riding who joined me for lunch today. They're in the east gallery: Alison Zimmerman, Jason Yeung, Christopher Henry, Ronald Matey and Danielle Inglis. Perhaps all members would join me in welcoming them.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to introduce to you and other members of this assembly some constituents of mine from Kingston and the Islands who have joined me here today to see the proceedings at question period at Queen's Park. They're sitting in the west gallery.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): That's not a point of order, but while we're introducing some special guests, today we have with us in the Speaker's gallery some

special guests. The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association study group on public accounts committees, comprised of parliamentarians from Commonwealth countries, has been meeting here to study the role of the public accounts committees. Please join me in welcoming our special guests.

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): On a short point of order, Mr Speaker: I too would like to welcome several special guests to the members' gallery today. We are honoured to have representatives from the Canadian Snowbird Association, with over 70,000 members in Ontario. Bob Jackson, their president, is a former cabinet minister in the province of New Brunswick; Ellen White is the association's secretary and Ontario director; Mark Simone is policy adviser to the Canadian Snowbird Association; and Heather Nicolson-Morrison is here. They're in the gallery.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to welcome anyone who has felt left out.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister of Labour, for that.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the fifth report of the standing committee on government agencies. Pursuant to standing order 106(e), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

1420

ORAL QUESTIONS

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My questions today are for the Minister of Finance. I want to speak to you further about your private school voucher program found in your budget. You have now provided Ontario's working families with a couple of assurances. First of all, you told us your private school voucher program will cost no more than \$300 million, and secondly, you have told us it will result in no loss of funding to public education.

Yesterday in the Legislature you said the following: "We don't have to rely on theory, on speculation, on might-have-beens.... We know the reality of it."

"For example, in Manitoba, independent school enrolment as a percentage of the total increased only marginally from 5% to 6.6% from 1999 to 2000.... That's what we anticipate happening in Ontario."

Minister, I shouldn't have to tell you that an increase from 5% to 6.6% in just one year is not marginal. In fact, it results in a 32% increase in enrolments. Your private school voucher program isn't going to cost \$300 million for the existing enrolment; it's also going to cost, according to your 32% projection, another \$115 million.

My question to you is, why have you hidden this additional \$115-million cost from Ontario's working families?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): If the Leader of the Opposition had looked into the research correctly, he would have known that the figures with respect to the province of British Columbia and the province of Alberta are over 10 years, not one year.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, in my question, I made no—
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member take his seat. Order.

The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, in my question I made no reference to BC or Alberta. I made reference to the province you referred to yesterday. You talked about Manitoba. This was information that you provided to this Legislature just yesterday, and I'll repeat it for you. You said that independent school enrolment "in Manitoba, as a percentage of the total, increased only marginally from 5% to 6.6% from 1999 to 2000.... That's what we anticipate happening in Ontario."

As Minister of Finance, you will know that is not a marginal increase. We're talking about a 32% increase in just one year, based on information you have provided to this House. What that means is, we're not looking at a \$300-million cost; we're looking at an additional 33,000 students enrolling in private schools, at a cost of \$115 million.

Minister, why did you hide that information from this House and from Ontario's working families?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I see now how the Liberal government managed to tax and spend its way and increase the public deficit. Quite frankly, the member can't count. If he wants to know what the increase is over the period of 10 years—in the 10 years of Manitoba's program, independent school enrolment as a percentage of the total increased only marginally from 5% to 6.6% from 1990 to 2000. In other words, only one out of every 60 public school students moved to an independent school. Those are the Manitoba figures. If the Leader of the Opposition can't do the arithmetic over the six-year period from the commencement of our program next year through the five-year maturation, then I'll do the arithmetic for him, but I thought it was relatively easy to do that to get to the \$300-million figure.

Mr McGuinty: Then I guess, to this minister, what's another \$100 million? We happen to believe that's a lot of money. We happen to believe that money should be better spent in public education for smaller classes and lighthouse schools and turnaround teams. Those are the

kinds of investments we think we should be making in public education.

Mr Minister, why don't you just fess up now? Why don't you admit that you have done this on the back of an envelope? That's one of the reasons you have not been present here to take our questions. You have been unable to defend this policy. Why don't you tell us that you're making this up as you go? Tell us that you have no idea what this is going to cost Ontarians in terms of losses to public education and additional costs to private schools. Why not just admit that?

Hon Mr Flaherty: The estimate, of course, is based on the anticipated enrolment in Ontario over that period of time. We don't need theoretical studies. We have the realities of what has happened in the other five provinces in Canada that have already moved forward in this area. We know what the experience is in British Columbia and Alberta over a 10-year period.

So the cost will be approximately what I have said it would be over the maturation period. It may be a little bit less and it may be a little bit more, but we have that experience. We don't need the theoretical musings of the Leader of the Opposition. You can look at the reality of what has happened in British Columbia, the reality of what has happened in Manitoba. The Ontario figures are reliable based on actual Canadian experience.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr McGuinty: My question is again for the Minister of Finance. Minister, what we want to know on behalf of Ontario's working families, and we feel we're entitled to this information and we have a reasonable expectation that you, sir, as Minister of Finance would have this information, is, can you tell us exactly how much your private school voucher program is going to cost?

Yesterday you told us it was going to result in a 32% increase. Now you're telling us, "No, that was really over a 10-year frame and not a one-year frame," and then just a moment ago you said, "Approximately \$300 million." We think we're entitled to know in a much more specific way how much your program is going to cost Ontario taxpayers. Can you tell us exactly now, based on your calculations, how much your private school voucher program is going to cost Ontario taxpayers? What does "approximately" mean?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I'll go over the same ground again to try to assist the Leader of the Opposition in understanding what's going on in Ontario. If the Leader of the Opposition looks at the budget bill, he will see that the proposal is a 10% tax credit for each year, starting in 2002, building up over the five years to 50%. Let me help him with respect to what has happened in Manitoba. This is not over five or six years, I say to the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Take your time and listen and then you'll be able to understand; at least I hope he'll be able to understand: 10 years is not five years. Ten years is twice as long as five years. That's true in British Columbia and it's true in Ontario. So take your time and

follow along: over the course of 10 years, not five years, independent school enrolment rose from 7.1% to 8.3%—over 10 years.

Based on the Ontario figures, that would be about \$300 million in terms of the tax credit. I hope that's clear. I hope the Leader of the Opposition wants to understand—

The Speaker: Supplementary.

Mr McGuinty: I will remind the Minister of Finance what his own ministry officials informed us of on budget day. They told us that your assessment of the \$300 million costs was based on zero growth. The question I now have for you, Minister of Finance, is, do you believe there will in fact be zero growth in enrolment in private schools after you have introduced your \$3,500 private school voucher incentive?

Hon Mr Flaherty: I again can't understand why the Leader of the Opposition has so much difficulty understanding a gradually brought in tax credit. It's not 50% next year, Leader of the Opposition; it's 10%. It's not 50% in year two; it's 20%. It's not 50% in year three; it's 30%. It's not 50% in year four; it's 40%. In year five, then it's 50%, which is still less, for example, than in Alberta, where the figure is 60%. When you do the arithmetic, the figure you get to, Leader of the Opposition, is \$300 million.

1430

Mr McGuinty: I remind the minister that his own officials told us that the cost of this program when fully implemented would be \$300 million on an annual basis, and they projected zero increase in enrolment in private schools. What I'm asking you, Minister of Finance, is whether you agree with that. Do you agree that your private school voucher incentive program will result in zero increase in private school enrolment? I need an answer.

Hon Mr Flaherty: Over time, as I've indicated, the figure would be about \$300 million. It depends, of course, on the number of students who transfer from one system to the other. Having said this, I say that if there is any significant transfer from the public school system, if we're talking about the accounts—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance take his seat. Order.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Did he forget to tell you—

The Speaker: Order. The member for Windsor West, come to order, please, or we'll start with the warnings right off the bat. It's getting a little too loud in here. We can have our fun.

Hon Mr Flaherty: The tax credit costs will be approximately \$300 million over that period of time, and we stand by that figure.

I do ask the Leader of the Opposition why, in his latest pamphlet about our school system, he mentions a whole number of items but fails to mention his promise to repeal the tax credit for independent schools. I wonder if

he's serious about the statement he's made publicly and, if so, why isn't it here?

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. Your decision to hold public hearings on your private school tax credit scheme in the greater Toronto area only is simply discrimination against people across Ontario. The greater Toronto area does not define the rest of Ontario.

An author, Jules Verne, travelled around the world in 80 days and wrote a book about it. The people of Ontario want public hearings across Ontario over 80 days. The question is, will you stop discriminating against everyone else in Ontario and hold real public hearings into your private school tax credit scheme so that people can have a say?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the New Democratic Party's concern and interest in making sure the public is heard. I share that concern. I know the Liberals have never asked me about it, so I guess they don't or perhaps, like when we had the hearings in Sault Ste Marie, they asked for them and never showed up. Maybe they don't like travelling the province; I don't know.

So I do appreciate the New Democratic Party's—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Premier take his seat. It's getting too loud in here again. I can't hear. If you're going to keep it up, we're going to start to warn people and name people. Sorry, Premier, for the interruption.

Hon Mr Harris: I do appreciate the New Democratic Party's interest in making sure the public is heard. We too share that concern. There are lots of vehicles, lots of opportunities. I think House leaders undoubtedly will be discussing this on Thursdays. Committee members themselves, once we've finished second reading and the bill's referred out, will have an opportunity to discuss ways they can make sure the whole province is consulted.

Mr Hampton: The question is very simple: are you prepared to hold public hearings across the province or not? If you're not, it is clearly discriminatory.

But that doesn't end this discrimination. I want to take you back to something you said yesterday. You said there would be no discrimination by private schools in the use of public money. You said the Human Rights Code would not permit that. Well, Premier, you should read section 18 of the Human Rights Code because private schools are exempt. It means they can and they do discriminate, and it is permitted. Premier, before you use public dollars to fund private schools that can discriminate, don't you think the people of Ontario deserve real public hearings across Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member might want to be a little cautious in talking about discrimination. There is discrimination, like the discriminating buyer, that's a positive discrimination. I don't know whether the member is opposed to the Catholic schools' right to discriminate, as it is given a partial exemption under the Human Rights Code to conform with the Constitution of Canada.

They can in fact, as you know, discriminate, and that form of discrimination is deemed to be acceptable by the Constitution of Canada, the courts of Canada and the Human Rights Commission. But it is clear that no institution, that no group or individual within the province of Ontario, can promote or incite hatred or violence against any identifiable group or person. The Ontario government does not and will not tolerate that promotion of hatred in any form.

We stated in the budget that there are a number of policy issues concerning implementation, and we welcome the member's input into implementation of this tax credit for working families, whom it's designed to support. We welcome that kind of input.

Mr Hampton: Premier, this is what section 18 says: "Special interest organizations," and it allows them to engage in discrimination. We finally got you to admit that. My point is, before you use public money to fund discrimination by private schools, don't you think the people across Ontario deserve a hearing on this? When public money was extended to separate schools, your members demanded 80 days of public hearings across Ontario. You said it was absolutely necessary. You said it had to happen before public money could be used in this way. Well, Premier, it's the same occasion. We're asking for 80 days of public hearings across Ontario before you extend discrimination by private schools using public money. What's your answer, Premier? It was a good answer then; let's have the same answer now.

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate knowing the NDP's position, and it's very important. This will be something that will be sorted out by the House leaders and by those committee members, to make sure there is an appropriate opportunity to hear the legitimate views of Ontarians.

I'm not sure I would compare the two. I can tell you, if you want to get into comparisons, that in the 36th session of Parliament, 43% of government bills were sent to committee. In this session, currently 53% of government bills have been sent to committee. Under the NDP only 38% of government bills went to committee, and under the Liberals 19% of government bills went to committee. So I say to you that we take absolutely no backseat on public consultation, to sending government bills out for hearings. In fact our record is far more exemplary than that of your party or the Liberal Party.

1440

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: To the Premier: We met with Ministry of Finance officials yesterday and we asked them about all the standards that apply to our public schools: standards regarding the Safe Schools Act, teacher testing, teacher credentials etc. We said to them, "Before you extend public funding to private schools, are you going to ensure these same standards are met?" They said, "No. This isn't educational policy. This is simply a tax credit for private schools. They can go on and continue to do whatever they do."

Premier, before you extend public money to private schools, when your own officials say there are no guide-

lines, don't you think you should do the same thing you demanded in 1985: public hearings—real public hearings—for people across this province so they can examine what you're doing, can understand what you're doing and can have a say? It was fair then, Premier. Why isn't it fair now?

Hon Mr Harris: I think we made it very clear yesterday. We think that's a good idea.

Mr Hampton: If the Premier thinks this is a good idea, then stand on your feet and commit that there will be real public hearings, not by electronic media, not by video camera, but real public hearings across this province, that you'll go to Timmins, to Sault Ste Marie, to Sudbury, to Ottawa, to Kingston, to Peterborough, to Windsor, to Sarnia, to Thunder Bay, that you'll go across this province and you'll hold real public hearings. That's the issue. I'll tell you there is rally after rally being held across this province by people who understand what you're doing, but who also understand you won't hold public hearings. We're having a rally here tonight at Queen's Park.

Interjection: Tomorrow night.

Mr Hampton: If you're not prepared to come to that rally tomorrow night, if you're not prepared to defend your policy, then guarantee public hearings—real public hearings—across the province and do it now.

Hon Mr Harris: Let me simply, by way of responding to the final supplementary, congratulate the New Democratic Party on finding an issue they can get their teeth into, on standing up for public hearings, which we've already committed to doing. That's something the Liberal Party doesn't seem to care too much about. Let me also say that I appreciate knowing there's going to be a rally tonight and I assume that the leader of the New Democratic Party will be at that rally. I think it's important the media know that. I hope I get a good accounting. Maybe somebody can attend and let me know what you say and how it goes. I think these rallies are an important part of public democracy, and I'm excited that you're getting involved and are enthusiastic and excited about the parliamentary process as we've laid this agenda before the people.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Premier. Your government set up Cancer Care Ontario just four years ago to coordinate cancer care across the province and to set standards of treatment for cancer patients. Over the past four years, Cancer Care Ontario has been an advocate for higher standards of cancer care. They've told us all clearly what needs to be done. They've told us of unacceptably long waiting lists for radiation treatments. They've told us we don't have enough cancer doctors. They've told us we're facing a crisis in chemotherapy treatment. They've told us we need to put more money into prevention. They've provided the coordination and they have shown you, the government, where the gaps are. Cancer Care Ontario has been doing exactly what it was set up to do.

Now, Premier, you have decided that you don't want coordination, that you don't want advocacy, that you want to go back to the piecemeal situation we had before. Will you tell us today why you have decided to end the independence of cancer care centres across this province?

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

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can say to the honourable member that nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, we are working with Cancer Care Ontario and its board, as she may be aware. She probably has read the news release of the Cancer Care Ontario board of directors today indicating they are perfectly with us when it comes to integrating cancer care services to better service the cancer patients in Ontario. This was an original goal of the Health Services Restructuring Commission that they signed on to from the very beginning. This has nothing to do with cancer care funding, which will continue to increase. It has nothing to do with not having a unique envelope for cancer care in our province. It has to do with delivering better cancer services to the people of Ontario.

Mrs McLeod: Your government gave them marching orders. Your government called last week and informed Cancer Care Ontario that you were going to accelerate the integration of cancer centres with hospitals. Minister, I remind you that hospitals in this province are facing \$750 million in deficits. How do you expect hospitals to take on the responsibility of dealing with the waiting lists for cancer care? I can suggest to you that you're not going to solve the problem of the lack of cancer surgery in hospitals, if that's your goal, by making cancer patients compete with heart patients for hospital dollars.

I wonder what's going to happen to cancer patients when they can't get treatment in a reasonable amount of time because you no longer have a coordinated cancer treatment system. No one likes the idea of referring people away from home for care, but you can't get rid of the problem by burying it. You may not want to count the number of cancer patients on a waiting list for treatment, but the cancer patients don't go away.

Minister, Cancer Care Ontario is asking you exactly these same questions. They want you to appoint an independent panel, not one that marches to the directions of your Premier's office, and they want that independent panel to answer questions about how standards can be maintained, how coordination can be maintained. Will you commit to establishing that independent panel to look at the future of Cancer Care Ontario and the care of cancer patients today?

Hon Mr Clement: I indicated to you that the board has indicated to us and to the public of Ontario that they want to work with us for a long-standing goal. I don't know why you're talking about rushing around. This goal has been around for four years, and they have agreed with us that this goal is worthy of moving on at this point in time.

Then you talk about the cancer care budget. You fail to mention how it has increased year after year, by over

40% over the last four or five years. You didn't mention that in your question, but that's the reality of the situation. Nothing in this will cut any budget of cancer care for the people of Ontario, nothing in this somehow integrates the budget with other hospital requirements or spending. We are protecting the budget, we are protecting cancer care in this province and we are doing it so that it is integrated with the other hospital functions to deliver better cancer services. To suggest anything else would be fearmongering.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. As you know, my riding of Cambridge is home to one of the most advanced automobile manufacturing facilities in the world. The Toyota Motor Manufacturing Canada plant is home to the Toyota Corolla, Toyota Solara and the Solara convertible models and recently was again awarded J.D. Power recognition for quality.

In recent months there has been speculation that the production of a new Lexus model would be announced for this plant. I understand that this announcement was made on Friday. This would be the first time a Lexus automobile would be built outside Japan.

Minister, could you share with the House what this announcement included and what it will mean for my community of Cambridge?

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Economic Development and Trade): Toyota has been, I think it's fair to say, dropping hints for some time now that the new Lexus SUV model would soon be announced for the Cambridge plant. As the member indicated, last Friday they confirmed that the company will spend more than \$200 million over the next two years to create a new paint shop for this facility. The paint shop is part of a \$650-million effort to prepare for the production of the high-end Lexus RX300 sport utility vehicle, which will begin rolling off the assembly line in 2003. This investment will create up to 800 construction jobs at peak times and another 300 permanent jobs once construction is complete.

Mr Martiniuk: This is more good news for the riding of Cambridge and is contrary to a lot of the pessimistic talk coming out of the automobile industry in the past few months.

Though this is great news for my riding, I would ask what it means for the rest of the province and what our government is doing to ensure that more investments of this kind come our way.

Hon Mr Runciman: The Cambridge Toyota facility is recognized as one of the best in the world. This plant is the first one outside Japan to assemble any of the luxury Lexus models, and Cambridge won the contract because of its outstanding record for quality.

A high-quality workforce and top-of-the-line facilities are what we expect here in Ontario. Our government has committed over \$16 million through its strategic skills

investment program to train young people in the design, testing and production of automobiles—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Runciman: The members from Windsor, I would think, should be interested in this, the Liberal members who seem to be heckling at a question dealing with the auto sector, which should have prime importance to them.

Interjection: Shame, shame.

Hon Mr Runciman: Very much shame.

Maintaining these high standards and reducing the cost of doing business help to create an environment that will help companies interested in investing in our province.

1450

AUTOPSIES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Solicitor General. Minister, you will know that since mid-April your government has been transporting bodies for medical-legal autopsies from several points in Ontario, such as Sudbury, Thunder Bay and North Bay, to mention only a few, to Toronto because your government refused to honour an agreement reached between the chief coroner, who negotiated on your behalf, and the Ontario Association of Pathologists.

By renegeing on this agreement, your government has forced a situation whereby bodies must wait in a home community for a number of days, then are sent to Toronto for an autopsy and finally are returned home for interment. This process is causing undue hardships on bereaved families who have just lost loved ones, people like Nicole Pilotte, whose son drowned on May 19. His body had to be sent to Toronto and didn't return until May 22. In Nicole's words, "Our son was not recognizable." When will you settle your dispute with the pathologists for the sake of grieving families?

Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General): The honourable member raises a tremendously important issue, one which obviously we're dealing with, but the premise of the question is incorrect. You suggest that in fact there was an agreement made. There was no such agreement; there were some discussions. Progress, I'm pleased to say, has been made on this issue but it isn't completely solved yet. We're monitoring the situation, and discussions are continuing between the Office of the Chief Coroner and the Ontario Association of Pathologists. In the meantime, you are correct: alternative arrangements have been made to handle this very serious issue.

Mr Bartolucci: An agreement had been reached between the two bodies and it was nixed at Management Board and then cabinet. Clearly, Minister, aside from the human perspective, aside from demonstrating a morbid indifference to families, you must recognize the financial implications of this policy. The cost of shipping bodies across Ontario is far higher than the reasonable fees requested by pathologists and rejected by your government. In my community alone, up until this past Monday,

the Sudbury regional police had to accompany every body to Toronto. The fiscal and human resource costs associated with this cannot be understated. Unlike the northern health travel grant, which only pays 34 cents a kilometre one way, it is costing your government \$1.35 per kilometre for mileage to ship bodies to and from Toronto.

Minister, will you finally honour all of your government's commitments which were part of the original agreement? Will you agree to respond to the pathologists' concerns over outdated equipment and facilities? Will you agree to go ahead with the regional forensic centre in northeastern Ontario and, above all, will you agree to stop putting grieving families through hell by making them endure needless delays?

Hon Mr Turnbull: First of all, let me say to the honourable member that clearly it's a very sad situation and one where my heart goes out to those grieving families.

However, having said that, I want to be very clear with the honourable member that there was no such agreement. You are inaccurate in your statement. Furthermore, we have made a very generous offer, which is in the process of being negotiated at this moment, and we are very determined to solve the situation.

But I do not believe our government will ever return to the old Liberal way of tax and spend. We live within our budget. That's the difference between you and me.

INVESTIGATION INTO CHILD ABUSE

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): My question is for the Attorney General. Mr Minister, Klancy Grasman of the Ontario Provincial Police has announced the end of Project Truth on four different occasions. The first was in February of 1999 and the last in December of last year. At the moment of the last announcement, Project Truth's office in Cornwall was closed and it was moved to the Long Sault detachment of the OPP.

Mr Grasman, whom I've never met—I really don't know whether he's a civilian or an officer—is the individual who was quoted in the press release on Christmas Eve 1994, saying, "We have left no stone unturned." More important to this government, I suggest, he is the individual who was quoted in the press release and the announcement of the Walkerton criminal investigation when he said, "We shall leave no stone unturned." But, Mr Minister, I contacted your office or the office of your predecessor of happy memory in January of this year and also the Solicitor General's office to inquire as to whether or not this was a closed investigation and whether the matter was coming to a close, and I was assured that it was and that there were no other charges being contemplated. Imagine my surprise yesterday when the Solicitor General told me it wasn't a closed book and that we were contemplating charges, pending the legal opinion from your office.

Sir, an estimate, if you would, please, of how much longer we should wait—reasonably wait—before the final answer comes forward.

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Let me say at the outset that I do understand how difficult the past few years have been for the people of Cornwall. I'm appreciative of the fact that these questions, these matters, are of great concern. They should be of great concern and they are to me, and they're being taken very seriously.

We have a responsibility to do everything we can to protect society's most vulnerable members from sexual exploitation. As the member knows, as Attorney General I cannot and I will not comment on any specific case. When the police are satisfied that they have reasonable and probable grounds, they lay charges. The Attorney General does not; crown attorneys do not. There are matters that are currently before the court, both civil and criminal matters. In addition, the police and the crowns continue to review various additional and related matters. It would be inappropriate for me to comment at this time on whether or not there will be any further charges laid. For an Attorney General to do so, I say with respect to my friend, would be tantamount to interfering with the court process and may well be viewed as a violation of the charter.

Mr Guzzo: I accept that answer and I agree with it totally, but I'm not asking you to interfere; I'm just asking you to give me an estimate of the amount of time your people will require to give the legal opinions that the OPP apparently are waiting for. Is it a matter of weeks? I tell you, I asked the question, at the time of my last bill, of your predecessor, Attorney General Flaherty, as he then was. He suggested at that time that it would be a matter of weeks, in his opinion.

Let me also just make it very clear: I find the fact that we learn now that these matters—we are still dealing with an open door, and they are waiting for additional opinions. I find that a very positive sign and I want to underline that, but I have to tell you, sir, that the people of Cornwall are becoming frustrated. They're losing confidence in the justice system and they're losing confidence in this government.

All I'm asking for, and I'll repeat it: I want an estimate of the time. How much time would you reasonably expect? Is it a matter of weeks? Is it a matter of months, sir? Never mind interfering or suggesting any interference with the investigation of the police. How much more time for your lawyers to give them the advice they've requested?

Hon Mr Young: Let me repeat at the outset that Attorneys General don't lay criminal charges, crown attorneys don't lay criminal charges; the police do so when they are satisfied that they have reasonable and probable grounds to support a criminal charge.

I appreciate that my friend doesn't have the same encumbrances that I do as Attorney General. However, I am not in a position to offer my personal opinion or my guesstimate as to how long it should take or will take for a particular charge to be considered or for evidence or information to be considered. I say to you that it is my opinion that for me to do that at this time would be in-

appropriate, that it may jeopardize a fair trial for those who may be charged, if anyone is charged. My interest is that no guilty person go free because of something that is said in this Legislature. By the same token, I certainly don't want to interfere with an innocent person's right to a fair trial. So I say to you, I cannot and I will not comment further on this matter at this time.

1500

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Health. In response to my question yesterday, you said you were still in communication with community care access centres about additional funding to their base allocations. I've been in contact with CCACs in Sault Ste Marie, East York, Hamilton, Niagara, Scarborough, Ottawa, Kingston and Kitchener, and their story is very different from yours.

Sault Ste Marie is facing a projected deficit of \$3.2 million. Ottawa-Carleton needs an additional \$10 million just to maintain the same services they provided last year. East York is being cut by \$2 million. Kitchener-Waterloo has been ordered to reduce expenditures by \$4 million. Kingston is running short by \$3.3 million. Hamilton-Wentworth, Niagara and many others are going to have to cut in order to do away with projected deficits to maintain existing service levels.

CCACs tell me they've been told there is no additional funding coming, only their base allocations, no more discussion. Yesterday, you said you're still having discussions about adding money to their base allocations. Minister, which of those two statements is accurate?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Let me reiterate the history of CCACs since 1996. Of course, the honourable member will be aware that base funding has increased by over 70%, so there has been a history of funding to the demands of the CCACs in our communities.

I would say to the honourable member that we're in the process of discussion. Of course the CCACs have put forward their proposed budgets, which quite frankly are part of our discussion. We have an obligation, on behalf of the taxpayers and on behalf of the citizenry, not only to meet the demands that should be met by the CCACs but also to ensure that those budget allocations and projections are done in a cost-effective, meaningful way and that there is no waste and no duplication. We're going through that process right now, and the process is ongoing.

Ms Lankin: Minister, what you just told me is that the CCACs still have an opportunity to get additional money to their base funding. They have not been told that by their regional managers. They have been told, "Bottom line: no more money." On that basis, and planning to do away with the deficit, they have had to start sending out notices of service reductions. Minister, some of those service reductions begin this coming Monday, June 4. In all the different CCACs there are deadlines for notices

going out and the various levels of service reductions—home care, nursing, personal care. Minister, it includes cuts to things like IVs, chemo and antibiotics. Do you know where those patients will end up? They'll end up continuing their stays in hospital. They won't be discharged to the home. You've got hospitals that are facing a \$700-million deficit. You're going to cause more people to stay longer in the hospital because the CCACs are cutting their budgets.

Minister, in order to get rid of their deficits, those cuts have to start Monday. You're saying you're still discussing. When will you report to this House what the actual budget allocations for CCACs, one by one across the province, will be?

Hon Mr Clement: I know it's not the honourable member's intention to jump to conclusions, but she is repeating the fallacy of yesterday, which was that the choice before CCACs is to either get more money or cut services. We believe in a third way. Our way is to work with the providers to see whether there is any waste, any duplication, any overservice in some area that doesn't need it, to pay for underservices in other areas. Those are the choices we make as a government, rather than automatically writing a cheque or automatically cutting services. When they were in power, maybe they had a different point of view. But our point of view is: work with us, make sure we see all the facts. If we have a particular problem with a particular CCAC that she knows about, tell us the problem. I challenge them: have a value-for-money audit and we'll live by the results too.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is for the Minister of Labour, and I don't see him around. He was here a few minutes ago.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock for a moment. The Minister of Labour is here; we'll just wait for him. The member may continue.

Mr Lalonde: Minister, you often talk about fairness and that fairness is a two-way street, as spelled out in Bill 17. Today, the city of Ottawa, as well as the electricians and plumbers of Ontario, don't think you are fair. When the city of Ottawa didn't move fast enough for you and your Quebec counterparts, you had your Minister of Municipal Affairs on May 7 amend the Municipal Act for Ottawa only. That amendment removes the power of the city of Ottawa to regulate master licence certification. This now allows anyone from Quebec with an RBQ licence to obtain a master licence to work in Ottawa without having to try an exam.

Are you aware that many Quebecers who hold RBQ licences have written no exam at all, not even in Quebec, and are certainly not familiar with the Ontario building and electrical codes? Ottawa councillors are not nuts, and you are not being fair to Ontario electricians and plumbers who still have to write exams to obtain a master licence to work in Ottawa.

So I ask: will you direct the Minister of Municipal Affairs to once again amend the Municipal Act to level

the playing field for all Ontario electricians and plumbers working in Ottawa, or are you once again going to cave in to Quebec's demands, which could have an impact on the health and safety of Ottawa people?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I appreciate the question from the member opposite. Let's be clear about the exam process: we met with the mechanical association and the electrical association with respect to the exam. We were given an undertaking from both those associations that said the exams are fundamentally the same. An Ontario contractor who goes into Quebec has not been forced to rewrite the exam in Quebec since 1996. By the reciprocal agreement under Fairness is a Two-Way Street, we simply removed that barrier in Ontario because Quebec removed the barrier in 1996. That was a fair ruling. That's the kind of ruling we made.

For you to stand in this place and suggest this government didn't do anything to represent the workers in Ottawa, and your government somehow did, is beyond the pale of reasonableness. This government introduced Bill 17, the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act. We got Ontario workers into Quebec to work. You did nothing to facilitate those workers. To stand here and criticize us on that is absolutely, patently absurd.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I want to follow up on a question about health and safety and a change this minister, this government, is sort of trying to sneak through under Bill 57. As it now stands, if a worker believes the workplace is unsafe, they can refuse to work. They can call the ministry, and an inspector will visit the work site in their presence to determine whether there's a safe working condition.

Under Bill 57, this government is now trying to sneak in a change where, if a complaint is laid, an inspector can simply assess whether there is a safe or unsafe workplace over the phone.

The Speaker: You know that the supplementary has to be related. Could you come to the point about it? It's almost the end of question anyway.

Mr Agostino: Speaker, both questions are related to health and safety and to a continuous attack on working women and men by this government.

Interjections.

Mr Agostino: The members across the floor may think it's humorous when you expose people to unsafe working conditions. They may think it's humorous when men and women get injured on the job. We don't believe that to be the case on this side of the House. When the members and the minister can stop laughing and realize that this jeopardizes the health and safety of people across—

1510

The Speaker: Order. The member has 10 seconds to ask the question. I'll be up in 10 seconds and he won't even get it out.

Mr Agostino: Can the minister answer why he has changed the legislation under Bill 57 and now requires an

inspector to assess by phone rather than in person why or why not a workplace is unsafe, and will you take responsibility the first time a person is killed or injured on the job—

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

Hon Mr Stockwell: OK, if that's the supplementary to the original question. First off, let's be clear. We weren't laughing at the issue at all. We were laughing, quite candidly, at the questioner, but we weren't laughing at the issue of health and safety.

What we are saying on the issue of Bill 57 is simply this: the inspector makes a decision. Some of those inspections and stop-works in health and safety can sometimes take a day or two of travel for the inspector to get to the workplace in order to inspect the site. When it's a very straightforward issue, on consent by the inspector, who works for the government, he or she may say, "I was there very recently. I know exactly what you're talking about. I can take the request on the phone and I can deal with the health and safety concern." But only the inspector may be allowed to do that. Only the inspector may determine whether or not that's the appropriate approach. If they decide it's not, they'll say, "Stop work. I'm going to have to head up there. It may take a day or two and you can't operate."

So let's be clear. No government is saying they won't inspect. Of course they will. But in certain circumstances, in certain situations, the inspector makes a decision whether or not they need to actually visit the site. That's a reasonable way to do business. That's a reasonable approach to take and it's only a common sense approach that we understand—

The Speaker: New question.

ACCESS TO PROFESSIONS AND TRADES

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Ontario is home to more than half of all immigrants who choose to come to Canada. Some 72% of working-age immigrants arrive here with at least some post-secondary educational training and many of them choose to settle in my riding of Scarborough Centre. Many of them are unable to practise because the education and experience they earned abroad may not correspond with the standards and requirements we have here in Ontario. This is happening at a time when several employers are concerned about the supply of available, skilled labour. I'm wondering, Minister, what steps you are taking to help foreign-trained professionals enter the workforce and contribute to Ontario's economy.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I thank my colleague from Scarborough Centre. I would just like to say that for too long many foreign-trained specialists have found themselves in this great province with the qualifications and we haven't moved them quickly into jobs. So in the budget

of 2001 we will provide an additional \$12 million in new spending to help foreign-trained professionals put their skills to work in Ontario. The funds will support new bridging programs—we already have some—that build on the previous experience of immigrants and focus on preparing them to write the exams to qualify, to take courses in areas where they may have some gaps and to get these great jobs. This will build on the \$3.5 million we announced last year, where we supported bridging programs for foreign-trained pharmacists and nurses.

Dr Joseph Wong of the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care, the nurses at his centre, in co-operation with the St Michael's Hospital care project, are really moving to make this happen.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that response, Minister, but as you know, skills shortages have a very negative effect on our province's economy and threaten our economic competitiveness. After several years of exceptional economic growth and job creation, several sectors are concerned that they will have trouble maintaining their rate of growth without access to more skilled and educated workers. While all foreign-trained professionals who meet Ontario's standards should be able to practise, this seems to be a particularly acute problem in high-demand fields. Minister, would you not agree that we should be paying special attention to these areas where our province is facing skills shortages, and will these funds be targeted to address these specific needs?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: My answer is, absolutely. The supply of our skilled and knowledgeable workers is important to our economy. The importance of our foreign-trained citizens here in Ontario is extremely important to us and we will target these funds to where we have the greatest needs. The \$12 million will support the bridging programs that have already started, some of which I've been able to describe. They will do health care, which is nursing and pharmacists, information technologies, engineering, wherever we can target these shortages and have the bridge programs that will support them.

I know the members in this House are appreciative of the academic credentials assessment service, which is up and going and helping all immigrants find the qualifications they need. Our ministry's access to professions and trades unit is focusing on promoting these fair registration practices to get it done faster with speedy access into the markets.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question is to the Minister of Health. I'd like to get back to the critical funding issues related to community care access centres. You know, Minister, that many frail and elderly people and people who need care are not getting it right now or are going to be denied care because of your directives and new regulations that have come out.

As you've heard earlier, in Kingston \$3.3 million has to be cut from the budget. As the chair of the board says,

“This will be extremely difficult in the face of the community’s growing needs and increasing costs of services.” Their budget has not been substantially increased in the last five years. The problem is compounded by the fact that Kingston General Hospital is a tertiary care institution, and therefore people are being released much sicker and needing much more care. People who used to stay in the hospital to recuperate now basically have to go home to do the same.

What I’m asking you is quite simple. When you closed your hospitals, Duncan Sinclair, the chair of the restructuring commission, was quite adamant that before you closed hospitals, before you closed beds, there should be enough community care funding in place so that the people in effect could be taken care of in their own homes. That’s not happening. What are you doing about it? When are you going to tell the community care access centres that their funding will be restored so they can—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member’s time is up. Minister of Health.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Mr Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to correct the record of the opposition member because, indeed, long-term community care services have increased by 58% in the last few years in this government. When you look at all of the long-term-care financing, that’s increased by 73%. In 2001-02, the budget year he is so concerned about, we are spending approximately \$1.6 billion on long-term-care community services, a majority of it going to CCACs. Since 1998-99, since he is so concerned about facts and figures, we’ve announced \$550 million of multi-year expansion in this area. That is our record, a record of which we are proud.

Mr Gerretsen: Minister, people want to stay in their own homes longer. It is more cost-efficient; it is much less costly than if they were in long-term institutions. The community care access centre in Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has been forced to distribute questionnaires asking people how they want to see the services cut in order to meet your demand to cut \$3.3 million from their services.

Nancy Sears, the CEO, states, “The planning parameters changed suddenly and recently.” As a matter of fact, your ministry official said, “Tell us what would happen if you only have \$25 million.” That is no way to look after the health care needs of the people out there. If we want to release them from hospitals quicker, then why don’t you live up to the commitment you gave to Duncan Sinclair to fund community care access centres so that people would have the necessary community health care services available because they could no longer stay in hospital? Why don’t you live up to your commitment?

1520

Hon Mr Clement: I say to the honourable member, you show me where Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington have not participated in the 73% increase in community care access centre money; then I’d be on your side. You show me where they have not had an increase

in home care, not had an increase in utilization, not had an increase in the provincial budget with respect to this issue; then I’d be on your side.

The fact is that they have participated. The fact is that they are part of our expenditure increases in this area. If they still have a problem with utilization—if they still have a problem—I’d like to get a value-for-money audit, he and I can take it out together and then we’ll see whether they are utilizing properly, whether they’re delivering the services properly, and we’ll all learn together.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My privileges as a member have been abridged. Yesterday, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities went to the Yee Hong Centre for Geriatric Care in Scarborough—

The Speaker: If it’s a point of privilege, we do need to have some notice of that in writing unless it arose from today. If you’re referring to yesterday, I would ask the member to put it in writing and give us notice and then we will take a look at it. I thank the member for Davenport for that.

PETITIONS

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

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

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

“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 promises of tax decreases have not been met, based on the current assessment;

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

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

I will also sign the petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I’ve got hundreds of concerned citizens who want to stop the tax

credit because it's hurting public education. Here's what they say:

"Whereas the Harris government is planning to take funds that our public schools desperately need and funnel them to private schools through tax credits; and

"Whereas the government's plan is to give parents a \$3,500 entitlement to pull their kids out of public schools; and

"Whereas this initiative is in effect a voucher system and is the beginning of the end of quality public education in Ontario,

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on all members of the Legislature to fight and defeat this attack on the choice parents most want: stability, co-operation and respect in clean, safe public schools."

I attach my signature in support.

DIABETES TREATMENT

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

I'm very pleased to present a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It's signed by over 300 people and it reads as follows:

"We are suggesting that all diabetic supplies as prescribed by an endocrinologist or medical doctor be covered under the Ontario health insurance plan;

"Diabetes costs Canadian taxpayers a bundle. It is the leading cause of hospitalization in Canada. Some people with diabetes simply cannot afford the ongoing expense of managing diabetes. They cut corners to save money. They rip test strips in half, cut down on the number of times they test their blood and even reuse lancets and needles. These budget-saving measures can often have disastrous health care consequences;

"Persons with diabetes need and deserve financial assistance to cope with the escalating cost of managing diabetes. We think it is in all Ontarians' and the government's best interest to support diabetics with the supplies that each individual needs to obtain the best glucose control possible. As you all know, good control reduces or eliminates kidney failure by 50%, blindness by 76%, nerve damage by 60%, cardiac disease by 35% and even amputations. Just think of how many dollars can be saved by the Ministry of Health if diabetics had a chance to gain optimum glucose control."

I sign my signature.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Forty thousand people in the city of Thunder Bay and the Thunder Bay district signed a letter to the Premier, a petition related to the shortage of doctors and specialists in our community. I'd like to read that to the Legislature.

"Dear Premier:

"Our community is facing an immediate, critical situation in accessing physician services and in providing hospital care to the people of northwestern Ontario.

While the recruitment and retention of physicians has been a concern for many years, it is now reaching crisis proportions. Training more physicians in northern Ontario is certainly the best response to this problem in the longer term. We are, however, in urgent need of support for immediate short-term solutions that will allow our community both to retain our current physicians and recruit new family doctors and specialists in seriously understaffed areas.

"Therefore, as residents of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario, we urge you to respond to our community's and our region's critical and immediate needs. For us, this is truly a matter of life and death."

As I said, 40,000 people signed these petitions. I am pleased to add my name and to present them in the Legislature today.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): This is a petition by tenants asking for a province-wide freeze on rents.

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

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

"Whereas one in four tenants pays over 50% of their income on rent, over 100,000 people are on the waiting list for social housing, and homelessness has increased as a result of unaffordable rents;

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

I support this petition with my signature.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): I have a petition which reads as follows:

"Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

"Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

"Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised by the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

"Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

"Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

“Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible.”

NORTHERN HEALTH TRAVEL GRANT

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’m proud to sign this petition on behalf of the hundreds, if not thousands, of constituents who have signed similar petitions.

1530

EDUCATION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): This petition comes mostly from people from Sarnia who are against education funding cuts.

“Whereas Mike Harris and the Ministry of Education, with their new curriculum changes and cuts, have been failing our province’s students;

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

“To cease cutting funds from the education system, and put back what was taken out to pay for textbooks for

all grades, music, arts and physical education programs, and to hire more teachers;

“To immediately begin preparing elementary students for the secondary school curriculum (as the current students were not);

“Prepare for the doubling number of students in 2003 by working with colleges and universities now (space, teachers, admissions, marks etc);

“Abolish recent in-class time hike for teachers, which doesn’t allow proper time to prepare lessons or volunteer their time to extracurricular activities;

“Eliminate the teacher adviser group and the teacher adviser program;

“Simply, to listen to the students of Ontario and to stop ignoring them. After all, they are the ones these changes are affecting.”

I support this petition.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

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

“Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

“Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

“Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

“Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

“Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public system through their tax dollars; and

“Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

“To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible and ensure that the Ontario curriculum is followed religiously.”

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will create two-tier education;

“Whereas the government plans to give parents a \$3,500 enticement to pull their kids out of public schools;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will encourage the growth of a segregated society;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools will steal money from an already cash-starved public system;

“Whereas tax credits for private schools effectively create a voucher system in Ontario;

"Whereas the Harris government has no mandate to introduce such a measure,

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

"We call on the government of Ontario to withdraw its plan for two-tiered education and properly fund public education in Ontario."

PROTECTION OF MINORS

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

NURSES

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

"Whereas the nurses of Ontario are seeking relief from heavy workloads, which have contributed to unsafe conditions for patients and have increased the risk of injury to nurses; and

"Whereas there is a chronic nursing shortage in Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario government has failed to live up to its commitment to provide safe, high quality care for patients;

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

"We demand the Ontario government take positive action to ensure that our communities have enough nursing staff to provide patients with the care they need. The Ontario government must:

"Ensure wages and benefits are competitive and value all nurses for their dedication and commitment; ensure there are full-time and regular part-time jobs available for nurses in hospitals, nursing homes and the community; ensure government revenues fund health care, not tax cuts; ensure front-line nurses play a key role in health reform decisions."

I'm in full agreement and will affix my signature hereto.

EDUCATION TAX CREDIT

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I'm joining the members from Durham, London West, Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Kitchener Centre and so many other ridings in reading a petition as follows:

"Whereas wide parental and student choice are essential to the best possible education for all students; and

"Whereas many people believe that an education with a strong faith component, be it Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Hindu or another religion, is best for their children; and

"Whereas many people believe that special education methodologies such as those practised in the Montessori and Waldorf schools are best for their children; and

"Whereas over 100,000 students are currently enrolled in the independent schools of Ontario; and

"Whereas the parents of these students continue to support the public education system through their tax dollars; and

"Whereas an effective way to enhance the education of those students is to allow an education tax credit for a portion of the tuition fees paid for that education;

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

"To pass the budget bill giving tax credits to parents of children who attend independent schools as soon as possible."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I move that, pursuant to standing order 46 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 25, An Act to amend the Public Service Act and the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, 1993, when Bill 25 is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment, and at such time, the bill shall be ordered referred to the standing committee on general government; and

That no deferral of the second reading vote pursuant to standing order 28(h) shall be permitted; and

That the standing committee on general government shall be authorized to meet for one day of public hearings in Toronto; and

That following one day of public hearings, the standing committee on general government be authorized to meet for one day for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That the committee be authorized to meet beyond its normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration; and

That, at 4:30 on that day, those amendments which have not been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession with one 20-minute waiting period allowed pursuant to standing order 127(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House not later than the first sessional day that reports from committees may be received following the completion of clause-by-clause consideration and not later than June 19, 2001. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on the date provided, the bill shall be deemed to have been passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the standing committee on general government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, when the order for third reading is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill to be divided equally among all recognized parties, and at the end of that time the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

That the vote on third reading may, pursuant to standing order 28(h), be deferred until the next sessional day during the routine proceeding "deferred votes"; and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

Mr Speaker, at this time I'd like to ask for unanimous consent that the member for Kitchener Centre be the leadoff speaker.

1540

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

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): This government has always been and continues to be a prudent manager of the province's resources. This was part of our election promise in 1995 and again in 1999 and is a key element that separates us from the opposition. We are obligated, by the trust given to us by the people of Ontario, to manage the resources of this province in the responsible and effective manner that they deserve and have come to expect.

Part of this promise is to get the most for their money. It involves making wise decisions and taking the tough choices required of real leadership. Ontario offers some of the best services in the world. They are fair, equitable and deliver what the people of this province need. They

help make Ontario the best place to live, work and do business.

But we cannot be content to rest on our laurels. We live in a world that is faster, more dynamic and that demands more flexibility than ever before. My colleague the member for Thornhill illustrated this perfectly when she spoke on second reading. We no longer live in a world where we exclude one gender from senior management positions, families seldom get by on one income, and the entire climate of global business and politics has changed.

The policies and practices of this government must meet these challenges or we will all get left behind. To do this, we must modernize the contextual framework in which we operate. The way we operate must be made the most efficient it can be. We must get more value for our dollar and we can only do this by taking a comprehensive approach to the way we deliver quality services for the tax dollars of the people of Ontario.

The member for Essex said it best during second reading of Bill 25. He said, "There are too many silos today. What you want to do is get co-operation between those ministers and those ministries." That's what we are trying to do. We do need more co-operation, we need more collaboration and we need a more coordinated approach. The member for Elgin-Middlesex-London seemed to agree when he spoke on second reading. He said, "I think taxpayers want value for their money." However, it does seem that they do not fully understand the limitations on the government in gaining this efficiency.

The member for Davenport tells us we do not need this bill to root out inefficiency. With all due respect, the member is wrong. The members for York North, Northumberland and I have all stated quite clearly in debate that as it exists right now, the Public Service Act does not allow the civil service the flexibility to take out the waste that exists in overlap between ministries. My colleague the member for York North may have illustrated it best when she envisioned for us the possibilities of joint ministry programs and offices that are just not possible under the current act. Some of these savings are already being realized, but there is no logical reason at all why we should not continue to pursue further savings.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: The member for Essex has pointed to us and said that just because something hasn't been changed in 120 years, that doesn't mean a reason shouldn't be given for doing it. Well, we agree with that. Governments should always be held to account, and government should be asked to explain why it chooses the path that it does, and we have done so.

Each member who stood on this side of the House explained at least one important aspect about this bill. Most of us explained many more. The bill improves efficiency. It maintains accountability. It brings some democracy to the workplace. These are all important aspects of this bill. They have been debated thoroughly, and our points have been clear.

The current Public Service Act makes it difficult for the public service to attract specialized talent, especially at executive levels and in high-tech areas. These legislative changes will allow us to make more attractive job offers to new workers with the specialized skills we need, particularly in the high-tech areas.

Updates to the act include increasing initial appointments to the unclassified service to a maximum of three years before they need to renew. It adds term-classified employees, a category that adds an element of flexibility and adaptability which is needed in today's business environment, in today's fast-paced work world. It allows the government to take greatest advantage of specialized talent which is needed for special projects but not necessarily on a permanent basis.

We've heard many times across the way that we should be allowing the present civil service or we should be hiring extra public servants to do these jobs. All that will do is permanently increase the size of the public service when all that is needed are temporary people for temporary projects on a specialized basis.

These employees may have an opportunity to renew their contracts after three years, when appropriate. They will be entitled to many benefits currently available only to full-time classified employees. This will make the Ontario public service more attractive to today's highly specialized and mobile workforce, a workforce that is looking for new challenges and stimulating opportunities. Nothing in the bill overrides any existing provisions in any collective agreements, nor does the bill propose to change any of the classified positions in the public service.

Members opposite would have you believe this bill is all about privatizing the public service. Nothing in this bill will allow the government to further privatize the public service. There are elements that will allow for more private-public partnerships, but this does not equate to selling public service assets. It allows the public sector to work in co-operation with the private sector to meet goals of public good for all Ontarians while bringing more involvement from the private sector, embracing their expertise, their experience and their efficiency, all of which are needed to get the most bang for the taxpayer's buck.

These arguments are disingenuous. They stem from a key component of the bill that allows deputy ministers the ability to delegate some of their authority to supervisors in other ministries or other organizations. To say this is privatization and degradation of the public service is a great exaggeration. Government members have pointed out very clearly that this will be done on a case-by-case basis and that it can only be done with the authorization of the Civil Service Commission. Moreover, each delegation is subject to the same scrutiny and review that comes with all government decisions. There is nothing in this amendment that would allow a deputy minister to simply sell off whole categories or divisions of people. In a worst-case scenario, a person whose authority is delegated can similarly have that delegation

rescinded. There is accountability in this drive for efficiency, and isn't that what the people of Ontario want? Accountability. The fearmongering by the parties across the way, I have to say, I find irresponsible.

1550

The members opposite have also complained that there was little consultation involved in the development of this bill. Again, this is not true. Management Board Secretariat consulted formally with each bargaining unit over a year ago, and they all had opportunity to offer input to the bill. It has been more than 14 months since we began this process. I thought I was very clear in this. I'm sure I was very clear in this. I find it disheartening and unconscionable that the opposition parties would try to expand the grounds of this bill to incite fear in those listening to the debate. They have suggested that this bill includes personal information, including personal health information, and its distribution to the private sector. That simply is not so.

They have suggested this is widespread degradation of the public service. That's not true. They have suggested that this extends political patronage. I have no idea how they can extend this bill to that conclusion. It's a weird interpretation. It is not true. We have explained all these points in the hours of debate on this bill.

In fairness, some of the debate from the members opposite has been thoughtful and well argued. I respect that there are many members who have debated this bill on its merits and have voiced their objections on a matter of principle. I respect that; however, I find it irresponsible to try to extrapolate from these points issues that are not included in the bill. This only helps to bring confusion to the debate and signals to me that they have run out of legitimate points and are grasping at straws to prolong debate and obfuscate the process.

I am convinced that second reading has, in general, been thoughtful and thorough, and that it is now time to move forward on the bill.

The Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I usually say I am pleased to get up to debate in this House, but continually I have to think that I'm not. Today we're really looking at two things, aren't we? We're looking at a motion that is going to choke off debate on a very important piece of legislation. The government, for whatever reason, has decided there's simply not much use in going on to talk about this, and I think it happens too often in this Legislature.

We have an audience viewing this on TV today, I'm sure, and we have pages who are in the Legislature with us every day. I want them to understand, and I want the folks at home to understand, that when I was sent down here on behalf of my constituents to debate important issues, they expected I would be given every opportunity to do that. There are colleagues of mine who haven't yet had an opportunity to debate this bill. I was fortunate enough to lead off the debate and to bring to the Legislature some history of the public service.

The public service was created about 83 years ago, actually, but before that there was a public service

commissioner. It was created so that it would depoliticize the employment of civil servants. We know—in fact you still hear stories in some provinces—that when governments change, there are significant wholesale job changes. That's why we brought in a civil service. It was to take the politics out of it, to train and employ, for the most part, a professional civil service. What's going to happen with this legislation is that's going to be taken away.

We've heard the government say time after time through part of this debate that this doesn't allow wholesale privatization, but there's no restriction on this. Deputy ministers may delegate their authority to other deputy ministers. For goodness' sake, why would one deputy minister want to delegate authority to another deputy minister? After all, one would assume it's his responsibility and that the responsibility should be kept within his ministry. But it goes further than that. Not only can they delegate their authority to another deputy minister, but they can delegate their authority to "other person or persons," and that's what's scary. My interpretation has been that that's the private sector, and I've heard the government deny that this is an attempt at wholesale privatization, but I haven't yet heard the government prove to us that those other person or persons aren't the private sector. I believe in my heart of hearts that's what it is.

Along with that delegation to the private sector, aside from the fact that it could tear the gut out of the civil service, those other person or persons are going to have to have information about the employees that they have. This, then, is going to lead to—in fact I'll read—"It allows the ministry's ability to collect information and, along with other changes, this information could then be maintained by private companies."

My friend across the way just said a few minutes ago that the government has explained in hours of debate that there's no danger in this. The problem is, I don't trust them. The reason I don't trust them is what we saw in the fiasco of the Province of Ontario Savings Office, the scandal that was created when a private company got information that was collected on individuals and gave it to this private organization and it was used, information that should never have been in the public domain. My view is that the Harris government has a terrible track record on privacy issues, and that's why I'm afraid that if this information collected by ministries on their employees gets out into the private sector we are going to have those problems again.

Where personal information is collected in the integrated human resources program, whatever personal information the government chooses to include in this integrated human resources program, including medical information, could get to the private sector, and that is one of the areas in this piece of legislation that I have a huge problem with.

I want to refer back to something that I brought up in debate when this legislation was first introduced. It was a long-time professional public servant who retired in June

2000, Rita Burak, an outstanding civil servant who was recognized for her service to governments of all stripes. She rose through the ranks of the civil service and ended up being secretary of cabinet. One might consider, or I think most consider, this to be the highest rank of a civil service. Now what's going to happen if we take our civil service and start to denigrate it? Where are those professionals going to come from? Who's going to want to be part of the civil service?

1600

We talk about contracts. We're going to make some of three years instead of one year. I'm not so sure that the one-year contracts have always provided us with the very best of talent and I'm frankly not sure that a three-year contract is going to do this. Oh, sure, it can be extended, but who in today's economy is going to say, "I think I'll go to work for the government for three years. I'm going to take that chance"? I think they're going to start out looking for employment somewhere else, and that's too bad because we want a public service that's going to attract the very best. We know that there's competition out there and that we have to compete with private industry, but we want the civil service, the government, to be in a position where it too can offer the very best employment to its employees. Again, I just don't trust this government on how far they're going to take this farming out of responsibility.

We talk about accountability. The problem is that when you start to water down the responsibility government has and farm it out to the private sector, you lose accountability because it's always easier to blame the other guy. We don't want that in government. If I were on the government side, I would want the accountability and I would want to be able to point to that accountability. I don't want to have to blame someone else for it and say, "That's not my responsibility." An example we hear time after time, even today, is when school boards are faced with very difficult decisions on school closings. The government sits there and says, "We're not closing schools. School boards are," and when it was the hospital closings, "We don't close hospitals. They close hospitals."

All I want to do is make sure this government is accountable, and you can't do that if you keep foisting things off on to other people. When it gets out so that it's foisted on to your friends in the private sector, it gets even worse. So I want us to look very seriously at this legislation, notwithstanding the fact that we're standing here today and are going to cut off democratic debate.

What does the government say? "We'll give one day of public hearings in Toronto." Big deal. Let me tell you, and the government backbenchers know this full well, there are a whole bunch of us who live in small urban and rural Ontario who may be interested in this legislation. You're not going to get, number one, very many people on the docket for one day because that's not a full working day, we all know, in the city of Toronto. Then we're going to have one day of clause-by-clause, and that's a futile process to go through. I'll stand here

today, and many of you know I'm not a gambling person, but there won't be one opposition amendment that will be accepted in that clause-by-clause review of this legislation. Not one. As I stand here today, I'll do something silly for you if one clause, one amendment, gets through.

Then we're going to come back and we're going to have two hours of debate at third reading. That, too, is ludicrous.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): Is that like wearing a bow tie?

Mr Crozier: Careful. The minister is remarking about my bow tie, and I'm liable to untie it and tie it up just to show you how well I can do it. Yesterday, I had my Lester B. Pearson bow tie on.

But back to the debate and the seriousness of it. We're going to end up with two hours of third reading debate. That just doesn't cut it. Often the Premier is criticized for having some sort of disinterest in the Legislature or disdain for the Legislature. I'm inclined to think that's true because what we do in here not only becomes less and less relevant, but it becomes less and less relevant because we just cut it off. The only thing I can say to the backbench members of the government is that when they restrict our right to stand up and speak on behalf of our constituents, whoever decides that debate is going to be limited cuts off your rights as well. You should be complaining that you don't have the opportunity to stand in this place, even when it disagrees with me, and it usually does, and speak on behalf of your constituents. That's a shame.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity today, one of the very few opportunities we get any more around here to speak about anything, on this, yet another time allocation motion. Mr Speaker, you will remember that before Christmas, I did the same job as you in this place and frankly got tired of the ham-handed way this government continued, time and time again, to bring pieces of legislation before this House of great import to all of us because they affect the lives we live, the communities we live in, the way we interact with each other in major and serious ways, and they are simply brought here because, I suppose, they have to at least do that, and then are rammed through in short order, usually on a Wednesday. Interestingly enough, here we are, on another Wednesday. My colleague from Nickel Belt is wont to say on Wednesdays—I remember hearing her when I was in that chair you occupy today—"It's Wednesday, so it must be another allocation motion," or, "Another allocation motion, so it must be Wednesday."

That's the pattern around here now. Every week another piece of legislation that has great import to the people of this province is time-allocated, usually given a minimal opportunity to be heard and seen at the committee level, so that those of us in opposition don't have a real opportunity to debate and discuss it across the table with members of the government and others of the broader community so that we might assess the shortcomings or failings of a particular piece of legislation, understand more clearly how in the end it will impact

those people we serve and speak so sincerely about, and then bring forward amendments.

I agree with the member from Essex when he says that in this instance, as in so many other instances we see—he's taking a calculated risk when he says he'll make a bet that there will be no amendments put or received because he knows the track record here is quite consistent—in fact in most instances, even when amendments are brought forward and offered, they are not received in the spirit they are brought forward in and very seldom see the light of day in the legislation that is ultimately passed, which, as I said, affects all of us in very serious and significant ways.

I want, in the few minutes I have here this afternoon, to speak about the—should I say, dare I say, will I be allowed to say?—hypocrisy that this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): I will ask you to withdraw.

Mr Martin: I will not be allowed to say it. I withdraw the word.

The Acting Speaker: I will ask you to withdraw that, please.

Mr Martin: Inconsistency—is that a word? I withdraw the word "hypocrisy" and I instead put the word "inconsistency" on the record. Is that OK to the Speaker?

It's the inconsistency in the things we hear from this government by way of speeches from the throne and some of the public relations and communications efforts they put out there—the budget speech etc—where they speak about democracy.

We had the Premier this afternoon talking about democracy in this place and giving us that old fist across the chest about how wonderful democracy is and how we're all so committed to it, and how we should be doing things around here that speak of democracy, having hearings and listening to people and including what they say in the deliberations we have, and at the end of the day ultimately bringing forward and approving legislation that has the fingerprints of as many people as possible on that piece of work so that we know that when it's done it will be enhancing or building on or helpful to the common life that we all share in this province.

1610

Here we are today time-allocating a motion that has had as little as eight hours and 15 minutes of debate in this place. When you consider that around here we usually get about two hours in the afternoon, from 4 o'clock to about 6 o'clock, and then about three and three quarter hours in the evening, what this means is that we've had less than two days of discussion about a bill that I'm not going to go into here this afternoon. My colleague from Nickel Belt will in some serious and significant way. I've already spoken on it, actually. The last time in that eight hours and 15 minutes we had I had a few minutes to put some thoughts on the record.

But eight hours and 15 minutes, not even two days of work in this place, dedicated to a piece of legislation that will have major ramifications for a whole lot of people,

particularly civil servants, who are very concerned at this time in their communities about their future, about their jobs, about their ability to continue to give of themselves reflective of the education that they have partaken in, the commitment they've made to bettering themselves, the experience they've had, that they will be able to continue to offer in a way that reflects the seriousness and the value in that; and to be, in turn, valued by way of the pay they get, the recognition they get from their employer; and by so doing, contribute then to their own well-being, the well-being of their families, their children, the well-being of their community, to which they contribute significantly in hours above and beyond their work time to raise the quality of life.

This is a bill that will affect that very seriously, and yet here we are: eight hours and 15 minutes of debate, a promise of a day of hearings, probably here in Toronto, another exercise in—mind you, we're thankful we have a day. Imagine people out there and on this side of the House saying, "Thank you so much for a day of hearings on a piece of legislation that's so important," when in fact a day is really nothing compared to some of the consultation we've had on pieces of legislation similar to this, which has the potential to have such a tremendous impact on the people we represent in this place.

The interesting piece about this eight hours and 15 minutes is that in fact this is more than most pieces of legislation get. The argument that's made by some across the way here this afternoon, that eight hours and 15 minutes is a lot of time, more than we normally get for pieces of legislation around this place, says a whole lot.

Let me just refer to what this government said in its speech from the throne, delivered in this place on April 19, about democracy and about process and about involving members of this House in a meaningful way in the making of laws that affect all of us.

"The 21st century demands that Ontario's democratic processes be modern and responsive.

"The 21st step of the plan is support for parliamentary reform, particularly changes that enhance the role and responsibilities of MPPs."

I wonder what they mean by that.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: The member for St Catharines says, "That's a joke." Well, it is. But it's even worse than a joke; it's sad. It is inconsistent, Mr Speaker, because I can't use that other word, by this government to, on one hand, say that they want to enhance the role and responsibilities of MPPs and yet, on every Wednesday that we come here, bring forward a time allocation that effectively curtails, cuts off, closes down the possibility, the opportunity for MPPs to actually participate in a meaningful way in discussion around this place about legislation that's going to affect the lives of all of those we represent.

Does that not present as inconsistent to members across the way? Does that not present to you folks out there listening to the debate this afternoon as somewhat inconsistent in terms of what the government says and

then ultimately does, time allocation after eight hours and 15 minutes, after less than two days of debate on a piece of legislation that's going to have a major impact and effect on the lives of people across this province?

It goes on to say, "The government will propose that more issues, particularly those requiring in-depth examination and considered recommendations, be referred to legislative committees." This has got to be good news for a whole lot of people out there listening to this. But the question that we need to be asking this government is, how is that going to play out? Who's going to decide, for example, what issues will require in-depth examination and considered recommendations? Who will decide which legislation?

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Do you trust John Baird to?

Mr Martin: He'd be one of the people, and no, I don't, frankly. He'll be one of the people who will decide which pieces of legislation require in-depth examination and considered recommendations. The minister pushing this piece of legislation that's before us today, the Minister of Labour—we know from experience around here how he respects or understands or is willing to listen to the voice of those people the legislation he proposes in this place is going to affect.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: It's OK, yes, if they're big business. I guess that'll be the definition. If big business brings forward a piece of legislation, that will—it should, actually, in fact—require in-depth examination and considered recommendations. But, again, I think it speaks to the very real confusion that exists here and will exist around that whole question of, what is it any more, if not everything that we do here, that requires in-depth examination and considered recommendations?

I would suggest to you that the track record of this place up until 1995 was that any piece of legislation brought forward by government was of a serious nature and required that in-depth discussion and recommendation brought forth by everybody and anybody who had an interest or a view or, particularly, who were going to be affected directly by the legislation that was going to be brought forward.

It goes on to say, "It wants to restore the importance of the process by which MPPs hold the government accountable." I wonder what they mean by that? "It wants to restore the importance of the process by which MPPs hold the government accountable." Now, I'm guessing that they mean they're going to make their own caucus meetings longer and give the members of their caucus, instead of two minutes, maybe three minutes to interject and to speak on particular pieces of legislation that they're considering bringing forward, because I'll tell you, if their track record up to now is consistent, it certainly won't be about members on this side of the House having greater opportunity to participate and partake in the debate that happens in this place, particularly if what we're doing here today is reflective of that very nice statement made in the speech from the throne but

which is playing itself out in such a very real and obvious way here this afternoon.

Imagine, "It wants to restore the importance of the process by which MPPs hold the government accountable," and here we are this afternoon, asking the government to take its time, slow down, be considerate in terms of the opportunity that you provide, not only to members of this House duly elected by constituencies from across this province, but to the general public out there, particularly those who are going to be affected most directly by the legislation that you're passing. I have to say to you, eight hours and 15 minutes doesn't do it and one day of public consultation doesn't do it either. So I don't know what they mean by that.

It also says here, "It will propose that the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly explore other parliamentary reforms that would enhance the role of private members and expand the use of technology." I'm not sure if we can get into the expanded use of technology debate; we probably will at another time. But this business of exploring other parliamentary reforms that would enhance the role of private members—I dare say to the members across the way that changing the rules in the way that you have over the last five to six years has in fact taken us back 10 or 20 years in terms of enhancing the role of private members. In fact, I have to say that any time we change the rules around here—and we've all partaken in that exercise. I remember—I wasn't here then—the Liberals changed the rules, and then we changed the rules when we were in government and now you've changed the rules. You know, a majority government always does that in order to enhance its own ability to push forward more quickly the legislation that they in their wisdom feel is in the best interests of the people of the province.

1620

I suggest to you that a long, long time ago a group of people sat around a table talking about how we might provide for democracy in this jurisdiction, put together a set of rules and regulations, put together a process, put in place a significant number of checks and balances that were about enhancing the role of private members to participate in this place in a meaningful way, to speak on behalf of and reflect the views of their constituents.

Every time you as a government bring in a time allocation motion to this place, every time, after eight hours or seven hours or nine hours of debate, you bring in a piece of legislation that does none other than to limit the amount of debate that's going to happen here in this place, to limit the ability of members to participate, to cut off the possibility of committees going around the province, hearing from people about particular initiatives, you fly in the face of those wonderful things you speak about in some of the documents that you put out and some of the public relations exercises you participate in, none more recently than the speech from the throne, in which you talk about parliamentary reform.

I would suggest to you today that all of you go back and take a look at that, because what we're doing here

today is not consistent with that very real and important and exciting direction that you said you wanted to go in. Thank you very much.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in the debate this afternoon. I'd say that it's important in our society for its institutions to conduct themselves in a manner which is open, fair and democratic. I'm sure the members opposite will agree with me on this basic principle.

We elect our members of Parliament, school board trustees, mayors and town councils. We choose between parties and their respective platforms. In this regard, we choose which person or group will best represent our interests, but it's not all so simple. The majority rules, but with the responsibility to all persons in this society. No government can rule with impunity and cater only to the majority. It must proceed in all cases with the best interests of the greater good and take tough choices which are not just popular but right.

This principle should be extended to other areas of our lives. But imagine if we did not have this option to choose, if we were prevented from selecting from the full range of options. This, in essence, is the situation for the civilian employees of the Ontario Provincial Police. They are currently barred from choosing a representative in a very important aspect of their life that they feel best represents them. This is inherently undemocratic.

Members of the government side have made very clear our position on this issue. It is a matter of fundamental fairness and democracy that employees should have the right to choose which organization best represents them. Let me emphasize the key word in here, which is "choice." These amendments do not dictate that civilians in the OPP shall be represented by another organization. It does not imply that they should be represented by another organization. It only specifies that they should have the right to choose which organization best suits their needs.

Imagine the outrage if members opposite were told they could not elect their public representatives; if they were told they could not elect leaders of unions; if they were told they could not choose between something as minor as where they buy their own groceries. Why are they not upset over who represents them in the workplace?

As it stands, this is highly unfair. No law prevents people from voting for a different representative, no law prevents them from switching grocery stores, yet a law prevents nearly 2,500 people from switching their bargaining unit, an organization which represents their interests regarding wages, work conditions and workplace equity. I wish the members of the opposition could explain the legitimacy behind that.

This is an important part of this bill, yet it is an issue that has been given short shrift, not by members on this side of the House but by members opposite, who have been satisfied to spout rhetoric. They have proposed no meaningful changes nor suggested helpful insight. Instead, it has been rhetoric: "union-busting," "privatiza-

tion” and “degradation” is what we hear. We believe that this debate has been complete but, if it’s not, it is because too many of their members have chosen to ignore the substance of the bill and have tried to extrapolate into areas which this bill does not affect.

My colleagues the members for Kitchener Centre, York North, Thornhill and Northumberland have all done admirable jobs of debating the finer points of this bill. It introduces more efficiency, ensures accountability and brings in more democracy. In fairness, some members have mentioned these issues but have couched them so deeply in rhetoric and fearmongering that it is difficult to tell if they have a problem with the legislation or if they’re just trying to delay passage of a government bill.

Let me review for members of the House what this section of the bill will do.

First, it will allow civilian employees of the OPP to evaluate whether their current bargaining unit properly represents them. These employees perform important roles such as forensic sciences, administration and mechanical work.

Second, the OPPA will have to show the labour relations board that they have adequate support to bring about a vote on whether OPP civilians want to join the OPPA.

Third, if these civilian employees are not happy with their bargaining unit and the OPPA shows the labour relations board that they have sufficient support, they will vote on whether to join the OPPA.

Fourth, each member would be able to vote their conscience in a secret ballot. It would be a fair process that meets the same standards of the Ontario Labour Relations Act and would be overseen by the labour relations board.

Fifth, should these people choose to join the Ontario Provincial Police Association, this would make them consistent with civilian employees of municipal police services who are represented by their local police associations.

Finally, the standards for these members to leave their current bargaining unit and join the Ontario Provincial Police Association will all be consistent with those in the Labour Relations Act.

Another important aspect of this bill is the creation of the term “classified employees.” This amendment would make it easier for the government to attract executive and specialized skills into government for time-limited projects which are by their nature not permanent. Both parties opposite should know this. It was explained in briefing to either their critics or House leaders, had follow-up questions answered by ministry staff, and government members have explained this aspect ad nauseam. It should be perfectly clear. However, many members opposite do not care to understand or they purposely exaggerate the magnitude of these appointments.

These positions require specialized expertise which the civil service neither has nor needs on a permanent basis. Nonetheless, in a dynamic and fast-paced business world, there is the need for people who can effect change

in order to make best use of the scarce resources available. The government has been very clear about this. It would be unfeasible and undesirable for the civil service to replace tens of thousands of classified employees upon whom Ontario depends to develop and implement quality programs and services. We have stated this, but the parties opposite insist upon saying that we are using this to drive out classified staff and busting unions in the process.

All organizations rely on contract workers to some extent. They can provide immediate and flexible expertise which helps the government to deliver on things that the people of Ontario want and need in a more timely manner. There is no logical reason to suggest that extending their maximum term from one to three years will result in greater reliance on these contract workers.

As the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington put it, one would be left with the impression that contract workers equal poor quality. I’m shocked and appalled that she would suggest that these hard-working men and women lack the sense of dedication and commitment to service that their counterparts have who happen to work there on a full-time basis. I challenge her to talk to some of the rank-and-file employees of the public service and estimate which ones are on contract, based on their commitment and quality of work. This is just an example of the wild assumptions that some members of the opposition and of the third party have made. For lack of substantial arguments, they have extrapolated what could be. Their only suggestions have come from what could be. There could be personal health information included in the records if it’s not specifically excluded was one example.

1630

There are many examples of what is not included in this legislation, and it would be a waste of time to enumerate them. To do so could imply that others are not ruled out, and I’m sure that it would not be the members’ opposite intent to limit what could be covered under this legislation for want of what is not specifically excluded. It’s a specious argument.

After three days of debate, covering more than seven hours and 30 speakers, there has been more than adequate time to address the key issues in this bill. The members opposite have addressed some meaningful points, but their wild assumptions and fearmongering only compromise this public discussion and obstruct the business of this House.

So I support this motion, and I encourage the other members to do so also.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I’m happy to speak to this bill. Unfortunately, it is a motion on time allocation, and that causes me great concern, because this government has invoked time allocation far more often than any previous government. Essentially, and I say this to the backbench government members, the more often the government uses this method of operation, the more we in this Parliament suffer, the less time the members of this place—and I remind the government

members that you are members, elected to represent your constituents—have to deal with meaningful and substantive questions. You're not doing that. This has become largely a rubber stamp. This assembly is a rubber stamp. It manufacturers government bills and processes them far more quickly than at any time before. If you think that's good in a democracy, well, I've got to say to you, just look at the record. You've gotten enormous numbers of pieces of legislation incorrect and have had to bring them back to this place. Just look at past history, when this House, with its committees—and I'm going to go into that subject in just a moment—used to sit far more often and had greater debate in the past than we have witnessed in the last five or six years.

This place is being reduced to redundancy, and that is lamentable. All of us have to stand up and say, "Enough is enough." We have to have a say in how these matters are decided. Each piece of legislation that goes before this assembly has to be examined in its fullest detail. That is not happening. Eight hours of debate for this piece of legislation, which is, by the way, a very important piece of legislation and I want to comment on it in just a moment, is simply not enough. It's simply not enough.

If you're going to manufacture widgets, you want to do it faster. If you're going to increase the volume in a manufacturing plant, you want to do it more efficiently and faster and sell that on the marketplace quicker. But you don't want to do that with democracy. Democracy takes time. We've made these speeches before in this House, whether it was the amalgamation of the city of Toronto or a variety of other important matters. This government attempts to ram everything through very quickly without giving members an opportunity to comment.

We used to have select committees sitting on a variety of issues, very important matters. Don't tell me that today, in this day and age, with the complexity of our society and the complexity of the knowledge-based economy that we're having to deal with, there isn't a role that is important and critical for us to play, that this Legislature should not sit more often and look into matters of real importance for this province. My God, there used to be select committees on just about every important subject of the day, and I've been here since 1985. We had numerous select committees sitting to deal with the important issues of the day, whether it was free trade or any number of other issues. But I have yet to see this government—and I stand to be corrected—appoint a select committee to deal with an important matter in this assembly during the time of this government's existence. I say that with all due respect. That has not happened. It just denigrates further the role of the individual member in this place.

If you want to expand the role of the member, then for God's sake, stop invoking these time allocation motions. Give members an opportunity to have a say, a real say, in how legislation comes forward. There is a lot that's being decided here that is critical. When you look at this act which is being time-allocated, which deals with con-

tracting out, the fact of the matter is, the more we contract out, the less of a say citizens have with respect to that privatization that takes place, the further removed it is from the citizens of Ontario.

Privatization of this fashion, in this way, leads to less accountability in the long run. I'll get to why that is in just a moment.

Mr Wettlaufer: Only a Liberal would draw that conclusion.

Mr Cordiano: No, it's very true. When we're talking about critical aspects of our economy and our lives, whether it's the environment, whether it's health care, things that are truly important to our citizens—and I as an Ontarian do not want to see inspection of our water and sewer facilities go to the private sector, because there is a question of confidence there, there is a question of trust.

Over the years, good Tory administrations, Progressive Conservative governments, built an enormous amount of goodwill and trust among the Ontario electorate. That's why they got re-elected for 42 years, time and again. But what they also did—and I think this is a testament to their good government—was build the Ontario civil service to be one of the finest anywhere in the world. They had a stellar status. They were considered to be the finest civil servants certainly anywhere in this country, rivalling those in Ottawa and certainly anywhere around the world. That was responded to positively by the people of this province. Most people had a great deal of confidence in the civil service. When inspections of our water took place and testing needed to be done, people invested their confidence and their faith in what those civil servants were doing. Obviously, that is no longer the case. When you privatized those labs, you no longer had the same degree of confidence, and what resulted in the Walkerton situation is nothing short of a disaster. We'll leave that for the commission to really determine, because I'll be accused of being biased in this place.

Ultimately, when the civil service is decimated, when it is denigrated, when it is emasculated to the point where it has no critical core components, even when you contract out, even at the end of the day when you contract out, what remains in terms of the collective expertise will not be sufficient to determine if the contracting out to the private sector has been conducted properly, if a good choice was made, because you no longer have the expertise in-house to determine that those private contracts are being carried out with the proper expertise in the private sector.

The public servants who remain will not have that critical mass of expertise to be able to make those good decisions that they made in the past. So it's not a solution. It really is a cost-cutting measure. Let's call it what it is. It's not a measure to make things better, more efficient; it's simply a cost-reduction exercise.

1640

By the way, making things more efficient at the expense of quality is not making things better. When

you're contracting out—that's what this bill essentially provides for, a cost-reduction method, and it's not accident. When the government no longer has the resources to pay for the services that are required, they have to find ways to cut. What that means essentially is that quality suffers. There is no longer the standard that there used to be. The standard for the public service was exemplary, whether it was testing water or inspection of processing plants, etc. All these things are called into question now. We have fewer inspectors in all kinds of areas, and I think the government is leaving it to the private sector more and more. Whether it's self-regulatory bodies or inspections that are conducted by outside agencies, it will in the end deliver less quality, less assurance, less confidence in these areas for the public.

I think it is ultimately a real failure on the part of any government to let down citizens when it comes to ensuring public safety. I think the buck stops with this government, any government in this province, when it comes to making certain our public is safe. Inspection of rides at amusement parks, inspection of water, inspection of processing plants, food: all these things are essential to citizens, and we trust the government and the civil service to ensure that those quality standards are met. This bill, as you contract out more and more, provides for a loosening of that and, ultimately, a deterioration of quality and a deterioration in the confidence people have in public institutions.

That is really what this government's agenda is all about, to move more and more to a private sector model, privatizing just about every function. I'm not opposed to privatizing certain things. But when it comes to safety, quality inspections with regard to health care and to education, when it comes to our food and the water we drink, these are essential things that cannot be left in private hands. The government stands out tall, and it must protect the interests of the public. You are abandoning what I think has largely been traditionally and historically the role the Ontario government has played in the past, and that is a real departure from our traditions in this province. I think it's a dangerous path that we're following.

I cannot support this government's direction with respect to the way it deals with legislation in this assembly. We sit less often and, frankly, we're unable to have meaningful debate in this House as often as should be the case. Our committees sit less often. I think the role of the backbencher in this place has been denigrated, and we have ourselves to blame. We have a system where the executive branch and the legislative branch sit side by side in the same assembly. As a result of that, it is even more important and more essential for all of us to take our roles very, very seriously and to demand that we have the proper time allocated for debate in this assembly. It is not sufficient for this government to behave as though the assembly doesn't exist, as though the only important element in this government is the executive in the Premier's office, and by decree they just rubberstamp what goes on in this assembly. You get second and third readings before anybody notices.

By the way, it's not just for the members to have input; it's also for the Ontario public to have input. Why we want legislation to be slowed down in terms of processing is so the public can have a say, and why committees exist is so the public has an opportunity to come before legislators to make their concerns felt—(a) to be informed and (b) to have input. That is no longer happening on a regular basis. As a result, I think citizens are becoming more disillusioned with the process and have become more removed from what we do at Queen's Park. That is lamentable, and I think we need to correct that.

It's incumbent on us in this assembly to demand that legislation be processed in a reasonable amount of time and that the Legislative Assembly sit a reasonable amount of time for that purpose. We don't just come here because we're filling our chairs and trying to put in time. We come here because there are important matters to be debated. That is happening less and less, and that is very lamentable.

I just want to wrap up by saying this bill is not something we support, and the time allocation motion is reprehensible.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): In the few minutes that are available to each caucus—you see, this is a time allocation motion. What it does is kill debate. It cuts debate off. It stifles debate. It says to elected members of this Parliament, "You're not going to be allowed to do what you were elected to do." One would think a time allocation motion would be a relatively novel thing. But they're notable mostly because of the frequency with which they're imposed. As a matter of fact, one is hard-pressed to identify any substantial piece of legislation that's gone through this Legislature in the last five and six years that hasn't had debate on it quashed by virtue of time allocation closure motions.

They used to be a rarity. It was the rare occasion when the government would seek closure, when the government would want to cut off debate. As a matter of fact, let's put this in the context it has to be put in if we're going to understand the significance of the frequency of this government's use of time allocation closure motions. Closure motions were utilized from time to time when there weren't the rigid restrictions on debate that exist now. Closure motions were utilized by governments during a time when a member, for all intents and purposes—well, for every purpose—as long as he or she could stand at their desk and their mike, could speak ad infinitum, could close off the debate at six at night and have the floor again the next time the bill was called and close off debate and have the floor again.

That's what closure motions were for. Closure motions were put to the Speaker, and the Speaker had a discretion to determine whether there had been sufficient, adequate, fair and thorough debate. Speakers did deny closure motions. They did. Speakers more than infrequently said, "No, we're not finished the debate yet. You're not going to have closure." But the government changed the rules. The Mike Harris Tories changed the rules.

And they didn't change the rules to incorporate any standard of fairness. Far from it. They changed the rules to express their disdain for elected members—not just elected opposition members, but their own elected members. I've been here during the course of debates when Conservative backbenchers didn't even stand up to speak. During the rotation—you know, Conservative, Liberal, New Democrat, Conservative, Liberal, New Democrat—it was Liberal, New Democrat, Liberal, New Democrat. Conservative members don't even—and there's a whole lot more of them than there are even Liberals, never mind New Democrats. We're a small caucus. We know that.

1650

For the life of me, I can't imagine why any fair-minded, conscious member of this Legislature would support this time allocation motion. There have only been three afternoons of debate on this issue. The largest number of MPPs, elected members in this Legislature, haven't had a chance yet to express their views—never mind their views, but their constituents' views—on Bill 25. And Bill 25 is not just an innocent little bit of fluff. It's not just a little old housekeeping bill. It's not some benign little thing that should be passed in short order. No, Bill 25 is a substantial attack on the public service. It is a bill which is a critical part of this government's privatization agenda. You know what privatization is, huh? That's when the government wants to—and has been, and is, and will continue to until it's defeated—seize those things, those institutions, those public services that were built over the course of decades and generations by our parents and by our grandparents, with their tax dollars: things like public education, public health care, public waterworks. Remember when public waterworks meant that everybody in Ontario could have access to safe drinking water?

You see, that's what privatization does. Because the government is seizing those things that people in Ontario built, our parents and grandparents, yes, and those before them, seizing those things that those folks built over the course of decades and generations and handing them off, giving them away, to this government's corporate, for-profit, private friends—more often than not, American corporate, for-profit private friends. Privatization is all about taking public tax dollars and converting them into private profits.

Let's understand something very, very clearly. I think I've mentioned this to you once before. I was reading a book by a fellow called George Soros.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: He's not a left-winger; he's a right-winger. He's a capitalist, a very wealthy capitalist, an extremely wealthy capitalist. He spent a lifetime trading currencies. In one of his recent books, even he writes about the crisis of capitalism—George Soros, the capitalist's capitalist, an extremely wealthy man, a market person, a money transactor-trader, a stock trader, a man who's made millions, possibly even billions. He could even be a billionaire. But George Soros made it clear. He

explained what the corporate world is all about. He explained that corporations have one *raison d'être* and one *raison d'être* only: a corporation's sole function is to make profit, and that's neither good nor bad. It's not a value judgment; it's just the reality. We've gone through this little exercise before.

When the shareholders of General Motors are at their annual general meeting, they don't say, "Oh, I have a question," and then ask the CEO, the top honcho of General Motors, "How many jobs did we create last year?" No, shareholders don't ask that. Shareholders of General Motors don't put up their hands and say, "Oh, CEO, how many hospitals and schools did we help build last year?" Shareholders don't ask that. Shareholders don't say, "Oh, CEO, did we make anybody's environment cleaner and safer?" No, shareholders say, "How much profit did we make?" That's the function of a corporation.

Those are the corporations to which this government is handing over not just control but ownership of our public services: our health care system, our schools, yes, our waterworks, our sewer systems, our ambulance services, our firefighting services, our jails—handed over to the corporate, for-profit private, US corporate, for-profit private sector, so that they can make profit, which is their only function. Wackenhut Corrections Corp of America, the Utah-based private American corporate, for-profit jail operator that the Penetanguishene superjail was hand-made for, tailor-designed for, its shareholders don't say, "Did we rehabilitate more prisoners this year than we did last year?" Rich shareholders don't say, "Oh, private, corporate American, for-profit jail operator, did we make communities safer last year?" Its shareholders say, "How much money did we make last year? What was our profit?"

The private sector doesn't give a tinker's damn about safer communities, healthier communities, more prosperous communities. They don't care about better environments, cleaner environments. They don't care about the quality of the public service and the independence of the public service. They care about profit. That's not a value judgment; that's neither good nor bad. That's the nature of the beast. Not only do I believe that, but ultra-right-wing, ultra-conservative capitalists believe that. They know it. That's why George Soros wrote about corporations in his book that I referred to and explained them in that way and explained them for a very clear purpose. He was warning his colleagues—even as a very right-wing, ultra-conservative, very, very wealthy ultra capitalist; he's a capitalist's capitalist—to be careful what you wish for.

Look, I'm not ashamed to say—I'm proud to say and I'll say it anywhere, any time, I'll say it right here now—that I'm on the side of the union. I have no qualms about acknowledging that, as I did today with Marilyn Churley outside this Legislature when Leah Casselman and other OPSEU members were out here with their condemnation of and their protest against Bill 25. I was proud to stand with them, like I told you earlier, shoulder to shoulder,

arm in arm, any time. I will, quite frankly, go one further and say thank God for the trade union movement, because I believe the trade union movement has, continues to and will do more to effect social justice, economic justice, to fight evils like racism and sexism, because they're doing it out there on the ground. As a matter of fact, I'll say this: the trade union movement does more to create social justice and economic justice and fight evils like racism and sexism, does more to achieve those goals than any political party ever could, because they're out there on the ground. They're out there on the shop floor. They're working with each other as sisters and brothers. They're working in solidarity.

I understand that this government has a lot of reasons to not like trade unions. Among other things, it doesn't like working people. It likes poor working people even less.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Come on, guys, this is the government that for six years now hasn't increased the minimum wage in this province by one cent, not a penny. Hey, but catch this one: these are the guys who wanted a 42% increase in their own salaries—not a penny for minimum wage earners, some of the hardest-working people in our province.

Do you understand what minimum wage is? I'm talking about the quantum. I'm talking the \$6.85 an hour. Do you realize there are people working 40-hour weeks in this province, working darn hard to boot, taking home \$225, trying to support not only themselves but, more often than not, some kids or maybe an elderly parent on that money? They're out there, Speaker. I know them. I suspect you know a few too.

You've got Tory MPPs who wanted to increase their salaries by 42%, and they won't give a penny, not a nickel, not a dime, to the lowest-paid workers in this province. Like I told you, they don't like trade unions, they like working people even less, and the poorest workers of all they seem to despise. They hold them in obvious disgust and disdain. I understand. This government's got a lot of reasons to dislike the trade union. One of the reasons it has to dislike the trade union movement is that the trade union movement operates on the concept of collective effort, solidarity. It scares the daylights out of these guys. It scares the daylights out of the Harris Tories, the concept of solidarity. These Tories have spent the last six years in this province trying to create cracks, trying to create schisms, trying to destroy the solidarity of working people. But the union has stood strong.

1700

I'll tell you another reason, among many, why this government doesn't like trade unions. You see, Leah Casselman and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union have been at the forefront from day one, have been at the vanguard of the fight against this government's privatization agenda. They have been there. They have been bloodied on the sidewalks outside of this building by what amounted to nothing more than Harris troops. I was there. I saw the blood. I saw the wounded. OPSEU

workers were bloodied outside this building, the supposed centre of democracy.

What's democratic about this time allocation motion? What's democratic about cutting off debate? What's democratic about telling MPPs that they're not going to be allowed to debate a piece of legislation that's going to pave the way for even more rapid privatization, for this government to pursue its privatization agenda, which amounts to nothing more than theft of public assets from the people of Ontario?

Let's take a look at what the time allocation motion really says.

Interjection: Have you read it?

Mr Kormos: Some doughhead over there asked me if I read it. Of course I have. Don't be stupid. Of course I've read it. That's why I'm debating it.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Mr Crozier makes reference to the doughhead, and those are the guys in government. Those are the guys passing laws. Doesn't make you feel very warm and secure, does it? Scary stuff—man oh man.

This time allocation motion means that the next time this bill is called it will be voted upon. It sends it to committee for one crummy afternoon when it impacts on thousands of workers in this province, when it union bashes and robs over 2,000 public sector workers of their status as members of a bona fide trade union, OPSEU, the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, a trade union that has proven over and over again that it will go to bat for its employees and it will fight for them and it will negotiate contracts for them, that it will fight to retain their right to strike for them. But I understand, because this is a government that doesn't believe workers should have a right to strike. This is a government that doesn't believe that workers are entitled to withdraw their labour.

It wasn't that long ago in North American and indeed world history when there were economies that didn't accept that workers had a right to withdraw their labour, because those were economies, the latifundia economies of the southern United States, where they owned their workers. It's called slavery. That's what it's called. Do you know what? You see this government moving more and more—because we've got another bill before this House, which I suspect is going to be the victim of time allocation as well, which does the very same thing. It does it to ambulance workers, tells them that they don't have the right to withdraw their labour.

How can any of these members suggest that we live in anything akin to a so-called free and democratic society when it denies working people the right to freely collectively bargain and the right, in the event that they can't obtain a contract that's fair, to say, "Fine. No contract, no work"? In those places where there is a right to strike left, this government legislates them back to work.

So this government, the Harris Tories, doesn't like trade unions, doesn't like working people and despises poor working people—oh, and the employed. I'm sorry. The style and attitude of this government toward those

among us who don't have jobs—and they're increasing. We'd better take a close look. I don't know how you read the signs out there, but—what was it?—Nortel, 15,000 jobs? Fifteen thousand good-paying jobs gone. A whole bunch of sister- and brother-related industries, again thousands of jobs gone.

Mike Harris's prosperity means the tourist season is starting down in Niagara Falls, if you need a job as a chamber person or as a parking lot attendant for the summer for minimum wage, or for less than minimum wage if you're working in a—I'm going to be corrected, I'm sure, you see, because we pay sub-minimum wage to certain workers: hotel/restaurant workers, waiters, waitresses, bartender types. That's Mike Harris's prosperity down there in Niagara Falls as the tourist season commences. Yes, you can get a seasonal, you can get a part-time, you can get a temporary job for minimum wage. Sorry, friends, Kormos says sarcastically to the Tory caucus, your minimum wage, part-time, temporary jobs aren't job creation in a context where thousands of good-paying, value-added production jobs are being destroyed on a daily, on a weekly, on a monthly basis.

Right where I come from, during the course of Mr Harris's helmsmanship, Union Carbide—gone; Gallaher Paper of Thorold—gone. These are historic companies; these are companies that had been there 60, 70, 80, 90, 100 years. They employed hundreds of working people. Hundreds of families depended upon them. Communities depended upon them.

When the Premier was asked to assist Gallaher Paper, assist those workers, assist those families, assist that community to keep that mill operating, producing paper like it has for 100 years, Mr Harris's attitude was, "Too bad, so sad. Ain't my problem. Besides, I'm ready for the next green."

When Mr Harris was asked to assist when Union Carbide shut down in Welland, destroying hundreds of jobs that had been there for 100 years, undermining hundreds of households, hundreds of families and, yes, a significant part of that small community, his attitude was, "Too bad, so sad. I'm ready for the next green. I'm on the 11th hole. I'm preoccupied. I don't know whether to use my putter or my whatever." It's true.

When we see thousands of jobs being lost in the high-tech sector here in Ontario during the course of the, what, last three months—three months alone, Speaker?—understand that when those jobs are gone, people are unemployed. That means families don't have incomes. That means people are driven into poverty. That means mortgages get foreclosed on. That means people don't pay taxes.

Yet this government is more than prepared to help finance its rich friends and their youngsters to the Ridley Colleges of Ontario and the Havergals and—please help me. What are some of the rest of those high-brow, elite private schools with tuitions of up to 17 grand a year, somebody told me—seventeen thousand bucks a year to send your kid to a private school. These people need help? Give me a break. What? They need some detailing work done on their Mercedes-Benz or on their

Lamborghini or Ferrari or maybe their Rolls-Royce Silver Shadow or the Bentley. People who can afford to send their kids to elite private schools for 17 grand a year—trust me—don't need any help. They're doing fine.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: I'm going to tell you, friends, Kormos said sarcastically to the Tory backbench, because they're not. Let's have no illusions. They're not my friends. The Tory backbenchers aren't workers' friends. They certainly aren't friends of trade unionists or the trade union movement. They're not poor people's friends, they're not women's friends, they're not senior citizens' friends and they're not sick people's friends. But oh, if you're Frank Stronach and you knocked off a gross salary of some \$45 million last year, "Buddy, pal." If you're John Roth from Nortel and you knocked off another X number of millions last year, "Compadre, buddy, let's go golfing. I like you. We're friends." But if you're a trade unionist, you ain't no friend of this government. If you're a worker, this government's no friend to you. If you're a public sector worker, this government is an outright enemy, because it declared war in 1996.

1710

I tell you, the New Democrats were proud to stand with OPSEU and its members and its leadership, Leah Casselman, earlier today outside this Legislature. New Democrats have no qualms about being on the side of the unions, none whatsoever. I have no qualms about taking guidance from Leah Casselman, because she's out there on the shop floor, in the workplace. She's out there fighting to preserve public sector jobs, fighting to preserve a public service.

You guys don't get it. You guys don't understand. It's either that benign level of ignorance, which is so peaceful, so restful, that penultimate level of stupidity that's just so comfortable—it's blissful, that blissful stupidity. You guys don't understand that a professional, quality, independent public service is critical to a democratic society. It's the hallmark of a democratic society. You show me a corrupted, privatized, so-called government support system, and I'll show you a government that isn't democratic. Go one, one, two, two: they work together.

You guys have taken another chunk out of democracy again today with another time allocation motion. The member for Sault Ste Marie got to speak to this time allocation motion. The member for Nickel Belt, Ms Martel, is going to be angry with me again for not saving her any time.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): But I'm here tonight.

Mr Kormos: But she's going to be here tonight at 6:45. Folks from Nickel Belt and across the province should be tuning in to their legislative channel, if they get it, to listen to Shelley Martel, MPP for Nickel Belt, debating what, Ms Martel?

Ms Martel: The budget bill.

Mr Kormos: Debating the budget bill.

Look, I'm telling you this: here's a Web site, friends, here's a Web site. If you want to find out the scoop, go to www.opseu.org. Try that Web site out, friends.

We're going to be voting against time allocation motions. We always have.

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

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's certainly a pleasure to rise on this time allocation motion, government motion number 17, as it relates to Bill 25, amending the Public Service Act.

If I were to sum up this particular bill, it's about accountability, and accountability is indeed a hallmark of our government. The Public Service Act is some 122 years old, with literally no changes in the last 40 years.

I was entertained while I listened to the member for Sault Ste Marie and the member for Niagara Centre talking about this time allocation motion and all the things we're doing as a government. I reflect back on their social contract; I believe it was in 1993. Here was a bill that came through with literally no consultation, forced through the Legislature.

I think it's interesting to look back at some of the quotes that were available and came out at the time. One: "We believe your government's policies are incompatible with sound economic and social planning." That came from the OPSEU president, Bob Taylor, and it was in the Toronto Star of March 20, 1993. Not to bore you, but I have just a couple others that I'm sure the member for Niagara Centre would really enjoy hearing and remembering, recalling some of these quotes. "I don't give it much chance at all.... Why didn't they come to us about a social contract months ago?" That came from a very close friend of the New Democratic Party, CUPE president Sid Ryan—the Toronto Star, April 7, 1993.

"They (union representatives) are going to be wondering whether we are taking decisions before they have a chance to come to the table, and to give input ... I want to assure then that 'No, we're not.'" That came from a star in the NDP caucus, still here, who at the time was trade minister, Frances Lankin. It was in the Toronto Star, April 17, 1993.

"If the NDP is truly sincere about the broader goals of the social contract, and not just a straight deficit-cutting exercise, it will take the time to do it right." That came from Gil Hardy, a columnist in the Thomson News Service in the Sault Star. I'm sure the member from Sault Ste Marie would be particularly interested in that one.

I was listening very carefully to some of the comments coming from the opposition ranks, and the member from York South-Weston was claiming that he's been a member here since 1985, but maybe he should practise a little on his memory because he spoke out saying that our government has not appointed a select committee on any particular important issue. I don't know if he can't recall or doesn't want to recall, but in the fall of 1997, I believe September would be quite accurate, we appointed the Hydro select committee. I was privileged to serve on that committee. It did a tremendous amount of work with the concerns of nuclear energy at that time. We reported I believe in about February 1998, if I remember correctly.

Then of course in the throne speech back in early May, or maybe late April—yes, it was back in April—we announced a new select committee for alternative fuel sources. That will be a very valuable select committee to look at alternative fuel sources, particularly in the energy crunch that we're facing in this country with escalating fuel costs. I'd remind the member from York South-Weston that things like that indeed are being done.

Then I was listening to the member for Essex talking about concerns with consultations in small-town Ontario and rural Ontario, and I share his concerns. Just to show him that small-town Ontario, rural Ontario, has not been overlooked by our government with consultations, I would like to point out to him some of the times that we've spent on consultation with the various bills.

In the 36th Parliament, the PC government spent 798 hours and 14 minutes out on hearings. The NDP spent 645 hours; not a bad record. Then of course we have the Liberal government that spent less than 350 hours. That's less than half of what the PC government spent; they spent 349 hours and 45 minutes. That's the Liberal government that here today has been complaining about the hours being spent. I can go through the list: west, Niagara, central, east and north. I could do that for the benefit of the member for Essex. Certainly a tremendous amount of time was spent out on the road in the west, 245 hours; in the east, 165 hours; in the north, 253 hours—the PC government. For example, in the north, while we spent 253 hours, what did the Liberal government of their day, the 34th government, spend? They spent a mere 147 hours. If you look in the west, while we spent 245 hours, they spent 89 hours, with the NDP sort of coming in between.

I also heard the member for St Catharines when the motion was being read shouting out "Disgrace" that we would be bringing forth another time allocation motion, that we're cutting off debate. It's interesting to look at the number of sessional days. I've also heard that member express concern over the fact we didn't come back quite soon enough. Well, if you look at the 36th Parliament, the one that we were in government—431 days; the Liberal government—the 34th—297 days. That would be 134 days less.

1720

In all fairness, they went to the electorate rather early. It was under three years. To this day I really don't know why Mr Peterson would think it was a good idea, but lo and behold, they did. So let's draw a comparison on the three years. In three years, we had 361 days in this Legislature, while the Liberal government in their three-year term had 297 days. It's very obvious that what they're talking about, not being here the number of days or not spending the number of hours in debate, is a bit of a smokescreen they're throwing up in front of us at this point in time.

I'd like to also draw some comparisons with the number of hours, because that's a concern the members from Essex and St Catharines and Niagara Centre were all expressing. Let's have a look at first sessions in each

government. First session, second reading: we spent an average of four hours and 50 minutes; the NDP spent one hour and 28 minutes; while the Liberals spent a whole hour and eight minutes. Listening to them complain and then seeing these factual figures really brings out the truth in the debate here.

We could go on to third reading: in our government, 36th Parliament, we spent two hours and ten minutes. That doesn't sound like an awful lot, but when you start looking at the NDP in the 35th Parliament, it's down to 48 minutes on average for each third reading, and the Liberals, 34th government, coming in at—listen to this—seven minutes was the average they spent on third readings. So I think it's a little unfortunate and a little unfair that they'd be rising in the House today, carrying on with their criticism about a time allocation motion, one that we should get on with, when the record really says everything.

In the last few minutes I have, I want to talk a little bit about the accountability of our government, which definitely relates to Bill 25 and also relates to this time allocation motion. I mentioned that consultation is a hallmark of our government, and as well accountability is a hallmark of our government. Take, for example, education, where we've brought in student testing, teacher testing and a new curriculum. So often when I'm speaking with teachers, they compliment us, particularly on the new curriculum and the standardized report card that has been brought in by our government.

There are things like health care, with a hospital report card, with a triage service that's provided in the emergency ward. We've also held the federal government's feet to the fire in trying to get them to come up to a reasonable level of transfer payments. If they'd only come up to the level of the Mulroney government—that really upsets Liberals when we point out that they're so far below the per cent of that government.

When I think of accountability, I think of the bill that was recently brought in, the Executive Council Amendment Act. It is a bill about accountability and attendance. When the vote was taken, lo and behold—it was brought in by a Liberal member—30% of that party was not here, on an accountability bill. It's really very unfortunate that they don't stand up for what they're saying. Certainly our government is one that has developed a reputation of doing what we said we were going to do.

In summary, so that I can leave 10 minutes for the member from the riding of Peterborough, I'd like to group the amendments. What we're looking at is greater flexibility for improved administration efficiency; the opportunity for more workplace democracy, particularly the OPP civilian employees; clarifying political activity rights and restrictions of staff; the clarification of the government's intent regarding the collection, use and disclosure of information as it relates to the delivery of human resource services.

All in all, I very comfortably support this bill and I very comfortably support this time allocation motion. I look forward to a speedy passage.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I regret that we are dealing once again with yet another time allocation motion, which is a motion that chokes off debate in the Legislative Assembly. It is my observation after a number of years, and I think talking to people who have observed this Parliament for a number of years, that it has been diminished so remarkably by this government that it has become almost irrelevant. That is most unfortunate, not simply for those of us who sit in the opposition or for the combatants who are of a partisan nature in this House, but for the democratic institution that indeed it has been in the past.

It was once a significant institution, in my view. I remember, as a person before I was elected, coming and sitting in the public galleries. Those were the days where you didn't have somebody blocking you at the door and making you get passes and so on. You simply had to sit in the public gallery and watch the debates that took place. And we did sit in those days; the House did sit both in the daytime and sometimes in the evening, particularly on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

If you listened to the debate in those days—I'll say, admittedly, that there are always those who view the past as perhaps being better than the present, but I had a number of students who have gone through the Hansards and read some of the speeches and noted that indeed they were very good speeches in the House in those days. They were more lengthy than they are now, in many cases, so that ideas were able to be elaborated upon. There was a greater detailed analysis of legislation that took place, not only in the House in committee of the whole, because often we went to committee of the whole to deal with clause-by-clause, but also in committees of the Legislature.

I think it was more ecumenical than it is today. Today the strongest person is the party whip. The party whip simply tells the members of the committee what shall happen, and it happens. That's unfortunate, because on all sides I think members have something to contribute: the opposition to concede when the government has made moves that are acceptable and good, and the government members to find problems that might exist in government legislation. But that is virtually gone. It is virtually dictated now by the Premier's office. The speeches we hear in the House tend to be speeches which seem to originate from the government caucus service bureau, and I understand the need for some research for speeches, but they are virtually meaningless, because they can't influence the government or the procedures that take place. That's most unfortunate.

The member for—it used to be Carleton.

Hon Mr Sterling: Lanark-Carleton.

Mr Bradley: Lanark-Carleton now. I can remember some of the speeches, as he may remember, in days gone by that were really remarkable speeches from colleagues he had in government and we had in opposition who could actually deliver a good speech in the House. There were some free exchanges that took place. I lament the fact that I can't hear him for a lengthy period of time in

this House, because he has something to say. He's got some perspective. I don't agree with him on many occasions, but he's got some perspective and some knowledge and some background which I think are useful to share with members of the House.

But the Harris administration, in my view, if I could make one criticism of it as a legislator—and we're going to disagree on legislation from time to time—has in fact so diminished the Legislative Assembly that it's become, as my colleague from York South-Weston said, a virtual rubber stamp of the Premier's office. That's very unfortunate, because not all of the wisdom in this world resides in the Office of the Premier.

Members of this assembly go back to their ridings. We talk to different people who have some good ideas. Sometimes they criticize us, sometimes they agree with us and sometimes they offer some good suggestions. I don't see those reflected in legislation or in changes and alterations to legislation that is put forward. Again, that's lamentable, because that's what the democratic process should in fact be about.

So I say even to those who are listening at home who are Conservative supporters, as I have when I've spoken from time to time to various organizations where I've known good, strong Conservative supporters in the organization, that they are the losers when we see this diminishing of our democratic process. It's not only the changes to the procedural rules of this assembly which have had a major impact in diminishing this House and diminishing those institutions, but it's also other changes, and I'll get to those in a moment.

1730

I look at you in the Speaker's chair, Mr Speaker. You are a partisan when you are sitting in your own chair in the House. That's as it should be, because you represent a government on that occasion, and you represent a constituency. When you sit in this chair, you are impartial. I appreciate the fact that you and others who sit in this chair are impartial in that regard. You try to make decisions—often with the assistance of the table, because that's what we do when we sit in those chairs—that are fair-minded, that are reasonable decisions, that accommodate the wishes of all members of the House and not simply the government.

In the rule changes, what happened was they took away your power in some of those instances. Now the minister simply says, "Debate shall take this long on my legislation because I'm going to invoke time allocation." I liked it better when the Speaker could sit in that chair, listen to debate and get a feel for the debate and the flow of the debate and sometimes make a decision the opposition wouldn't like by saying, "There's been enough, and I think we should have the question called," and you accepted that. We could get a feeling that there was something impartial and that it wasn't simply a minister of the government ramming something through, that it was an impartial person in the chair, making a judgment based on fairness for all members of the House.

You don't have that power any more. You have very few powers in your office as Speaker, and I think that's

unfortunate, because we elect Speakers and we look to Speakers with respect in this House, today as never before. To take that power away from you in the chair and vest it in the hands of the government and in the hands of a minister I think is wrong. Again, the role of all of us is diminished when that happens in this assembly.

I also find it lamentable that this House doesn't sit more often. The public thinks this House is sitting when they see the federal House. This year the federal House came back into session in January 2001. The provincial House did not come back until April 19. I suspect most people in this province didn't know that. Some may not even care that was the case.

I understand that there are other roles and responsibilities we have back in our constituencies. I know that. But I was recalling with some observers of the assembly just last night that when the House wasn't in session there was a lot of meaningful committee work that took place. There were some good select committees. The member for Northumberland mentioned there was a select committee, and my friend from York South-Weston said he would stand to be corrected if there were or were not, but I guess what he looked at was a period of time where you took a select committee that had some specific expertise, members who cared about a specific issue. You had them sit down, and I'll tell you, a lot of them buried the partisan hatchets when they got into those committees because they wanted to solve problems.

I had a chance to sit about 1979 or 1980 on the select committee on Hydro affairs. We were dealing with the problems with the boilers at the Pickering nuclear generating station. A lot of good recommendations came out of that. Some information came out before it that never would have come out. A lot of good recommendations came out of that particular committee initiative. There were others: a select committee on education and a select committee on Confederation. Again, the advantage was that the person was actually interested, not simply assigned by the whip, as we all get assigned from time to time. They were people who chose that particular committee as a matter of interest.

The recommendations often found themselves in legislation or government policy. I remember that when I was Minister of the Environment, a committee of the Legislature—it was a minority Parliament at the time—came up with some good recommendations in regard to the acid rain program we were trying to develop. I encouraged members of that committee not to do what the government wanted or what somebody on the government side wanted done. I wanted to see what ideas they could come up with to strengthen the legislation to make it more comprehensive. What came out of that committee were some good recommendations.

You just don't see that now. You walk into a committee and the government members are told what to do by the whip and the opposition members react accordingly. You find there's much more flexibility in the opposition, because in government the whip has much more power than in opposition. I can recall some of your

predecessors on that side of the House who I thought made some excellent contributions to committees because they tried to free themselves of the whip's suggestions and pressure.

There was some good stuff that came out of committees. You just don't see that now. I think those who are no longer in the House, but were in years gone by, look at that and lament that. Members formerly of the government side—I think of a guy like Bruce McCaffrey, who was a pretty independent-minded person on that side. He wouldn't get up and give a government speech, I'll tell you. He'd get up and say what he actually thought, and the opposition people were prepared to concede more to the government because they felt there was more of a free flow of ideas back and forth and they didn't feel that as soon as they said something complimentary the next member would get up and read what they had said in the House out of context.

That happens on both sides of the House, may I say; I understand that. I know that people will phone into a talk show and say, "Why don't you people in opposition ever say anything good about the government?" I tell them, "Because I'll have it read back to me in the Legislature, and besides, that's why you have government members, to say what the government is doing well." I expect that, but I also expect more than that from the members.

I like to see the Premier in the House to be able to ask questions to him. On December 20 of the year 2000, the Premier was present in the House to direct questions to. The next opportunity we had was May 1 of 2001. I think any fair-minded member of this House—and I don't expect government members to get up and condemn the Premier for that—would say, "That's not acceptable for a Premier not to be available in the House to ask questions from December 20 to May 1."

Mr Wettlaufer: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the member from St Catharines is treading on some very unparliamentary ground, talking about the absence of another member. The members of this House have been warned time and again by the Speaker. I would ask you to draw your attention to that, please.

The Acting Speaker: That is a point of order and I'm listening very carefully to the member for St Catharines. I'll chastise him if I think that he has crossed that line.

Mr Bradley: I respect the rules of the House in this regard, which is why I tried to frame what I was saying in such a way that we could recognize that it's about availability to ask questions. I would never draw attention to the fact that someone was in or out of the House on that occasion.

What happens with the strategy of this government is simple. Don't bring the House back into session, bring it back in for the last two months and then jam everything through in the last two months. The problem is, legislation doesn't receive proper consideration. If it takes a longer period of time and the government wins the day, I accept that. I may not like it, but I accept that. But the process is extremely important, and that's where I see the process breaking down.

I see it as well in the changes to the Election Act. The government changed the Election Act for election campaigns to favour a governing party—or a party that has lots of money, one of the two—by shortening the campaign considerably so that those who rely on, shall we say, the door-to-door aspect of campaigning instead of the expensive media-type campaigns would not have an advantage. I think that was not a good move forward. I'm not saying the campaign had to be 60 days as federally it used to be years ago, because communications have changed and transportation has changed.

I noted as well now that the government has allowed larger contributions to political parties and candidates and larger expenditures and exempted some very important aspects of the campaign from any limit at all. We need only look south of the border to see the corrosive effect of private money coming into a campaign. That goes for all political parties. We all raise funds; we all expend funds. I just think it's a bad idea to continue to raise that limit because it makes money a more important component in the campaign.

I think government advertising has gone to an awful length right now. I was watching a program on CBC Sunday night; I think it's called Undercurrents. They interviewed—I thought it was a good idea they had in Britain—a person who reviews all government advertising to determine whether it's partisan or not. They gave examples of the federal government in Canada and the Ontario government in Canada, and on both occasions the person who would arbitrate said that neither one of those would fit the rules. I think there should be a person of that nature so that a Liberal government, an NDP government or a Conservative government cannot be involved in that kind of advertising.

There are some things that are reasonable for governments to provide information on. There are people who go out of this country and don't get private health care insurance. I don't know whether they don't know or not, but that's a reason for a government to let people know you need that when you go out of the country. But some of this blatantly partisan advertising we see, what we've now counted up to \$235 million, is simply unacceptable in a democratic system. It gives too much advantage to a government and it's not a wise expenditure of taxpayers' dollars.

I know you can come back and say, "Well, somebody else said this," and so on. I think we have to get that behind us and start finding rules that will work. Mr Beaubien nodded. I'm not being unkind; I think he recognizes those rules are needed no matter who is in power. So I lament this particular motion. I'll be voting against this motion this afternoon.

1740

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I'm very disillusioned the member for St Catharines is not going to vote for this bill, because it's a good bill. I can't believe that he would not do it.

I also listened very closely to what he was saying. I always get a bit of a kick out of people who have been

around for a long time. "We always did things better back in the old days." I suggest to the member for St Catharines, maybe it's not too bad to look back, but for goodness' sake, let's not go back. It appears that that's what happens.

It's interesting to say, "We debated things for a longer period of time," but you can debate and debate and debate, and never do anything. The difference with this government is that we are a proactive government that puts legislation through, good legislation that is moving this province forward. I can back that up with examples like 825,000 net new jobs. We'll soon hit the 600,000 mark off welfare. I would suggest to you that the type of legislation that we are putting through is legislation that is moving this province forward and making sure that Ontarians, the working families of Ontario, have the jobs and the necessary support services they require.

I am pleased to make a couple of comments about Bill 25 and this time allocation motion. It was interesting when I heard my colleague from Simcoe North make a comment that we had debated this about eight and a half hours and we've had 30 speakers. I would highly suggest to you that if you read through Hansard tomorrow on what's been said about this bill, I would wager it is somewhat repetitious, to say the least. I think we've thrashed it out fairly well.

The bottom line of this bill is that the OPS wants to join the OPPA. I don't know how deep that is for the opposition, but to me it's a fairly simple and good piece of legislation. We've got 2,500 people in this province who are prevented from their democratic right to choose the bargaining unit they feel best represents their interests.

I've heard this afternoon—and again, I was listening very closely—the members of the opposition using the word "democracy." You know, it's like using words like "accountability," "efficiency," "effectiveness." You can use all the words you want to, but I would highly suggest that you realize what those words mean. If you are going to use them, I would suggest that you practise. I believe when the civilian employees of the Ontario Provincial Police who perform their duties such as administration, forensic sciences and other important roles of police business are barred and don't have that democratic right of joining the Ontario Provincial Police Association, something is wrong.

I spoke on this bill a week ago and I made the comment that I had been privileged to attend a couple of retirements for OPP officers over the last month or so. I had the opportunity then to talk to some of the civilian employees who want to join the OPPA and yet are being banned from doing it, being prevented from having their democratic right to choose.

It's a good example of what's happening in the budget bill, where we're now giving tax credits to those who wish to attend independent schools. Certainly the rhetoric from across the way trying to suggest that it is a voucher system that we are funding, I have difficulty accepting some of those comments from honourable people because those comments and facts are not correct.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Gary, would you like to take a moment on Highway 7?

Mr Stewart: Yes, I would like to take a moment on Highway 7, absolutely. That's great. I'm glad you brought it up.

We announced back on January 2 that there were going to be some upgrades to Highway 7. We had support from the minister of the day and the Premier. I had a very open and frank discussion yesterday with the new Minister of Transportation. They realize the priority, the safety factors, and how for some 40 years under previous governments nobody ever got around to trying to even suggest that it be upgraded, to even suggest that it be reviewed, to even take any type of design or whatever. Our government has done that and that highway will be upgraded. I can't be much clearer than that.

I would publicly like to say a very sincere thank you to the minister, who was very open-minded and who I know has the priority of safety for our people in the eastern part of my riding.

I happened to listen to the third party, and I was around in municipal politics during the social contract. They can stand up and say they don't get enough time to debate, they don't get enough time for input, and yet they absolutely had no debate whatsoever on the social contract. I can't understand how people can get up and say something like that when they know full well they did a great deal worse. If I look at what was happening here, there were some quotes regarding it: "We believe our government's policies are incompatible with sound economic and social planning." Do you know who said that? OPSEU President Bob Taylor, Toronto Sun, March 20, 1993.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Which government? Who was the government then?

Mr Stewart: The government of the day was the NDP under Bob Rae.

Interjections: No.

Mr Stewart: Yes, it was.

Mr O'Toole: Weren't they a labour government?

Mr Stewart: That's the labour government; you're right.

Here's another one. It's kind of another interesting one: "I didn't give it much chance at all. Why didn't they come to us about a social contract months ago?" Do you know who said that? CUPE President Sid Ryan, Toronto Star, April 7. Yet honourable people can stand up in this House and criticize. Somebody told me a long time ago, "If you're going to call the kettle black, make sure yours is very, very shiny."

Interjection.

Mr Stewart: That's right. I really have difficulty with that.

Anyway, this has been interesting. I don't really call this a debate. It's just trying to stand up and say we'd like to move this province forward. A good example of it is Smart Growth. We'd like to move this province forward. We'd like to do things now that will make this province better for our children of the future.

The Acting Speaker: I wanted to draw to the attention of the members that the former Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Lorne Henderson, is in the east gallery and we welcome him.

Mr Baird has moved government notice of motion 17. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please rise and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Runciman, Robert W.
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	Sampson, Rob
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Snobelen, John
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	Spina, Joseph
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Sterling, Norman W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Stewart, R. Gary
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Stockwell, Chris
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Tasca, Joseph N.
Cunningham, Dianne	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tilson, David
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim
Galt, Doug	Murdoch, Bill	Witmer, Elizabeth

Gilchrist, Steve	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John	Young, David

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Lankin, Frances
Bisson, Gilles	Crozier, Bruce	Marchese, Rosario
Bountrogianni, Marie	Curling, Alvin	Martel, Shelley
Boyer, Claudette	Dombrowsky, Leona	McLeod, Lyn
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Peters, Steve
Brown, Michael A.	Gerretsen, John	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Conway, Sean G.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

It being well after 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 pm.

The House adjourned at 1804.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

CONTENTS

Wednesday 30 May 2001

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Ontario College of Art and Design	
Mr Kwinter	973
Volunteers	
Mr Johnson	973
Speeding offences	
Mr Crozier	973
Investment fraud	
Mr Hastings	974
Education funding	
Mr Smitherman	974
Privatization of public services	
Mr Kormos	974
Canadian amputee hockey team	
Mrs Molinari	974
Father Charles Armstrong	
Mr Duncan	975
Events in riding of Niagara Falls	
Mr Galt	975

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

Standing committee on government agencies	
The Speaker	979
Report deemed adopted	979

ORAL QUESTIONS

Education funding	
Mr McGuinty	979, 980
Mr Flaherty	980
Mr Hampton	981, 982
Mr Harris	981, 982
Cancer treatment	
Mrs McLeod	982
Mr Clement	982
Automotive industry	
Mr Martiniuk	983
Mr Runciman	983

Autopsies

Mr Bartolucci	984
Mr Turnbull	984

Investigation into child abuse

Mr Guzzo	984
Mr Young	985

Community care access centres

Ms Lankin	985
Mr Clement	985, 988
Mr Gerretsen	987

Occupational health and safety

Mr Lalonde	986
Mr Stockwell	986
Mr Agostino	986

Access to professions and trades

Ms Mushinski	987
Mrs Cunningham	987

PETITIONS

Municipal restructuring

Mr Cleary	988
-----------------	-----

Education tax credit

Mr Marchese	988
Mr Beaubien	989
Mr Wood	990
Mrs Dombrowsky	990
Mr Barrett	991

Diabetes treatment

Mr Tascona	989
------------------	-----

Doctor shortage

Mr Gravelle	989
-------------------	-----

Affordable housing

Mr Marchese	989
-------------------	-----

Northern health travel grant

Mr Brown	990
----------------	-----

Education

Mr Marchese	990
-------------------	-----

Protection of minors

Ms Mushinski	991
--------------------	-----

Nurses

Mr Peters	991
-----------------	-----

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

Time allocation, government notice of motion number 17, Mrs Ecker	
Mr Baird	991
Mr Wettlaufer	992
Mr Crozier	993
Mr Martin	995
Mr Tascona	997
Mr Cordiano	998
Mr Kormos	1000
Mr Galt	1004
Mr Bradley	1005
Mr Stewart	1007
Agreed to	1009

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Mr Caplan	975
Mr Smitherman	979
Mr Gerretsen	979
The Speaker	979
Mr Jackson	979

Omnibus legislation

Mr Kormos	975
Mrs Ecker	978
Mr Duncan	979
The Speaker	979