



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario
Second Session, 37th Parliament

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 24 October 2001

Mercredi 24 octobre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 24 October 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 24 octobre 2001

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FRANCHISE BUSINESSES

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):

Currently in Ontario, nearly 40,000 franchise owners are vulnerable to the arbitrary termination of their franchise agreements.

Franchise owners are people like my constituent Janice Snyder, an entrepreneur who invested her savings and for the last eight years has successfully operated two franchise stores for Grand and Toy. She also employs 30 people.

I find it unbelievable that today in Ontario a franchisor is under no obligation to provide appropriate notice or compensation when ending an agreement with a franchisee.

This is exactly the situation my constituent and 26 other franchise owners in Ontario find themselves in. It is not news to this government that the majority of problems in franchising occur after signing the contract.

Expert after expert advised that the Arthur Wishart Act should include an alternative dispute resolution mechanism outside the court system. More importantly, they advised that the act include an outline of fair commercial standards when it comes to the performance, transfer, renewal and termination of franchise agreements.

I want to make it clear that this government was aware that franchise agreements are one-sided, lengthy, non-negotiable contracts drafted by the franchisor.

The franchise owners of Ontario deserve better from their government. Ontario entrepreneurs are the engine that moves our economy. They are women and men who are willing to take risks and work hard. All they ask for is a level playing field guided by a principle of fair commercial practices.

CROWN LAND MANAGEMENT

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm pleased to rise in the House today to pay tribute to the citizens of Orono and Clarington for their stewardship of the province's lands in their community.

Last Friday, I attended a ceremony for the signing of a new and creative partnership between the Orono Crown Lands Trust and the Ministry of Natural Resources. This agreement covers the management of over 1,000 acres, located west of Orono along Wilmot Creek. This land includes woodlands, meadows, trails and an outdoor education centre. It is one of our community's natural treasures.

The trust will coordinate the activities of the site, maintenance and management. At this time, I would like to congratulate Mr John Thomson, chair of the Orono Crown Lands Trust, and members John Slater, June Smith, Jim Parker and Paul Jones.

The advisory committee to establish the management plan also includes the outdoor educator, Bonnie Anderson, of the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board; Norm Monaghan, of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters; Tracy Osmond; Mark Peacock, of the Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority; Rayfield Pye, of the Durham Region Field Naturalists; Henry Sissons; Kevin Williams, of the Durham Stewardship Council; Mayor John Mutton, councillors Robinson, Schell and Trim, and Heather Brooks of the municipality of Clarington.

The committee, and indeed the entire community of Orono, deserves to be congratulated.

I would like to commend the Minister of Natural Resources, John Snobelen, and the staff of the Aurora district office for their vision in supporting this partnership. I'd also like to recognize the grade 2 students from Ontario Street Public School in Bowmanville, who helped in the celebration. They presented me with a snake, which made me feel rather uncomfortable, because I've never associated with things like that in my life.

CONSTRUCTION LABOUR MOBILITY

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell):

The former Minister of Labour and today's Minister of Finance, Jim Flaherty, made all sorts of promises to Ontario construction workers during the last election. He spent millions of taxpayers' dollars on billboard, newspaper, radio and TV ads. He also passed Bill 17, the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act.

Ontario construction workers are still on a one-way street. Last week, Black Electric of Ottawa called me to tell me that even though they have a Quebec master electricians' licence and were the lowest bidder by 60%, they lost the job on a federal public works contract in Hull,

Quebec. Was it because they were from Ontario? This contract was awarded to a Quebec contractor, even though the Quebec contractor was 60%, or \$167,000, higher. This is taxpayers' money.

The present Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the present Minister of Labour, without the consent of the city of Ottawa, opened the doors to Quebec master electricians in Ottawa. But it appears the doors to Ontario master electricians to work in Quebec are still closed.

The Ontario-Quebec construction labour mobility agreement is up for renewal in November, and my leader Dalton McGuinty and I urge the Ontario Minister of Labour to stand up for Ontario construction workers when he negotiates this new agreement.

PORK PROCESSING PLANT

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise in the Legislature today to tell my colleagues of a new pork processing plant that is being built in Mitchell, in my riding of Perth-Middlesex.

West Perth Packers is building a state-of-the-art hog processing facility, which is expected to begin operations in June 2002. When the plant is fully operational, it will process 5,000 hogs a week and employ 60 people.

I realize that 60 jobs may not sound like a lot to some of my urban colleagues. But in a town of 3,600, those 60 jobs represent employment for almost 2% of the population.

West Perth Packers will further add to the local economy by contracting with small independent abattoirs to slaughter their hog requirements, thereby supporting local entrepreneurs and allowing them to focus on the value-added part of the business. Although Perth is a leading pork producer, this will be the first dedicated processing plant in the county.

Rural Ontario has always produced great agricultural products, but the recent move has been toward attracting value-added businesses to those communities. This plant is a great example of just that.

I tell you about this today because a groundbreaking ceremony for the West Perth Packers' plant will be held tomorrow. Although I won't be able to be there myself, I want to extend my best wishes and the best wishes of all members of this House to those who have made the \$10-million investment in this facility.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): At 5 o'clock this afternoon, a group of advocates on behalf of children's mental health services will be holding a rally in my home community of Windsor, Ontario. Led by George Johnson and Joanne Johnson, that group is going to address yet again the chronic shortage of children's mental health services in our community.

Neither my colleague from Windsor West nor my colleague from Essex nor I can join with them today because of our obligations in the House, but they know we are in full support. They know we understand that the waiting list is far too long for a whole range of children's services.

They know that the broken promises our finance minister—I should say that our finance minister met with them last year and, guess what, didn't do a thing about it, not a thing. There's still a waiting list of over 750 kids waiting for very basic and elementary mental health services ranging from counselling on through.

Interjection: It's a shame.

Mr Duncan: It is a shame. It's a crying shame, and it's a problem that's prevalent not only in our community but indeed right across the province. Member after member after member on the government side talks about what they've done in health care, knowing that those statistics are nothing but a smokescreen.

One of the most important issues here is the fact that children's mental health ought to be considered part of the health care system, not community and social services. It's a crying shame. Thank goodness for people like George and Joanne Johnson and all the people who will be there this afternoon supporting them.

1340

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): Last week I sent all MPPs a letter advising that this day has been designated Child Care Worker Appreciation Day. I encourage those with appreciation day activities in their ridings to support these events, to thank these workers for their tremendous contribution in caring for our most important resource—our children.

Over 75 Ontario municipalities have issued proclamations recognizing the valuable work being done by well-trained child care workers. They help shape the social, emotional, physical and cognitive development of our youngest citizens. They support Ontario families by providing safe, high-quality child care so that parents can participate in our economy. Child care workers provide an essential public service, and Ontario can't work without them.

If this government truly wanted to show its appreciation, it would pay these workers the pay equity they deserve. But this government has shown disdain for these workers by cancelling proxy pay equity in 1996 and then, when the Divisional Court ruled against the government, by capping proxy pay equity in December 1998. These workers are now back in court, trying to get this government to pay them what they are owed. This capping of pay equity to child care workers makes a mockery of this government's alleged commitment to our kids.

Today, on Child Care Worker Appreciation Day, the Conservatives should prove they really do value the efforts of child care workers and pay them the proxy pay equity they deserve.

KENNEDY ROAD BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Yesterday I had the privilege of attending the annual meeting of the Kennedy Road Business Improvement Association. The purpose of the association is to promote business and economic development along Kennedy Road in my riding of Scarborough Centre. It has over 500 member businesses and is chaired by Blayne Lastman. The association's primary objective is to improve the shopping environment and to represent store owners' concerns and comments to different levels of government and organizations.

The association has been in existence for over 11 years. They have assisted me in many ways by communicating their concerns, which helped me do my job as city councillor, and now as an MPP, to make it a positive environment for business to grow.

Unlike the previous two Liberal and NDP governments, 10 lost years of 69 tax hikes and deficit financing, this government has laid a solid foundation for small business to grow by cutting taxes, balancing budgets, eliminating red tape and removing barriers to business. These measures have made Ontario's economy and small businesses more competitive and better able to weather any economic downturn.

The Kennedy Road Business Improvement Association has proven itself to be an extremely important part of the Scarborough economy. I'm pleased to congratulate them on a successful annual meeting.

HOUSING STOCK

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This coming Monday, October 29, the tenants of Brentwood Towers and on Eglinton East are going to have their housing fate determined by the Ontario Municipal Board because the city of Toronto has lost the power to determine the fate of its rental stock, notwithstanding that vacancy rates are less than 1% in the city, notwithstanding that we have a housing crisis.

We have institutionalized the destruction of low-cost housing, creating incentives for a decrease in affordable housing stock instead of an increase. That's why in September 1999 our housing critic, David Caplan, and I proposed a private bill that the city of Toronto would bring forward and that I would sponsor before the private bills committee. It would give back to the city of Toronto the power to determine the destruction of affordable housing stock and condo conversions.

It has now been two years since city council unanimously passed a resolution supporting this private bill. I anxiously and eagerly await the city producing this bill so that we can get the bill before this House. I say to this House, I'm going to need members' support to fix this housing anomaly. Let's give back to the city of Toronto the power to control its housing stock.

FILIPINO COMMUNITY

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): It gives me great pleasure today to speak about an event that is taking place on Sunday, October 28, in my riding of Thornhill. The Filipino community in Thornhill will be holding a multicultural event highlighting Filipino customs, culture and traditional food. In fact the city of Vaughan has a twin city in the Philippines called Baguio.

Recently, a delegation from the city came and toured our beautiful province of Ontario and stayed with local families in Thornhill. This is an ongoing commitment between the twin cities, as local Thornhill high school students have also visited the city of Baguio.

The event being held on Sunday is aimed at raising money for a new Filipino community centre that will not only act as a general meeting place for Thornhill residents but will further support the cultural exchanges between Thornhill and Baguio delegates. Last year, the Filipino-Canadian Association of Vaughan helped raise more than \$25,000 for the student exchange program. This program allowed 26 Thornhill students of Filipino descent to visit the Philippines and 22 Filipinos to visit Vaughan. I was very excited and proud to recognize them in the House when they came for a tour on May 17 this year.

Congratulations to the Filipino community of Vaughan and best wishes for success at the event on Sunday.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize two members from the riding of Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop's riding, who are here today. Welcome.

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 14th report of the standing committee on government agencies.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on justice and social policy and move its adoption.

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

Bill 14, An Act to encourage awareness of the need for the early detection and treatment of brain tumours /
Projet de loi 14, Loi visant à favoriser la sensibilisation à la nécessité du dépistage et du traitement précoces des tumeurs cérébrales.

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

The bill is therefore ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT
PROGRAM AMENDMENT ACT
(FAIRNESS IN DISABILITY
INCOME SUPPORT PAYMENTS), 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE
PROGRAMME ONTARIEN DE SOUTIEN
AUX PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES
(ÉQUITÉ DANS LES VERSEMENTS
DU SOUTIEN DU REVENU)

Mr Martin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act to amend the Ontario Disability Support Program Act, 1997 to require annual cost-of-living adjustments to income support payments / Projet de loi 118, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur le Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées en vue d'exiger des rajustements annuels relatifs au coût de la vie en ce qui concerne les versements du soutien du revenu.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Quite simply, this bill would tie ODSP benefits to the annual cost-of-living increase and adjust benefits every April 1 to reflect that rise. There has been no increase in support payments to people with disabilities since this government took power. At the same time, rents have soared, medications have been delisted, and people with disabilities are being forced to live in poverty. This bill would go a long way toward improving their lives. They could afford, if you can imagine, food and maybe even the medications they need.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I have not seen it and I don't think the other side has seen it either. I guess the time to stand is now, to ask whether you would deem it to be in order, and if you could just look at it, I'd appreciate it.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I understand you haven't seen it, but it's a timeliness issue.

The Speaker: As you know, I don't get pre-information on all the bills. We review all bills that we know—

DEFERRED VOTES

IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICE
FOR ROAD USERS ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR L'AMÉLIORATION
DES SERVICES À LA CLIENTÈLE
OFFERTS AUX USAGERS DE LA ROUTE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 65, An Act to permit the Minister of Transportation to delegate to persons in the private sector powers and duties and responsibilities to deliver services relating to road user programs / Projet de loi 65, Loi permettant au ministre des Transports de déléguer à des personnes du secteur privé des pouvoirs, des fonctions et des responsabilités pour fournir des services liés aux programmes à l'intention des usagers de la route.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1351 to 1356.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Di Cocco, Caroline	Marchese, Rosario
Bartolucci, Rick	Dombrowsky, Leona	Martel, Shelley
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	Martin, Tony
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	McLeod, Lyn
Brown, Michael A.	Gravelle, Michael	McMeekin, Ted
Bryant, Michael	Hampton, Howard	Peters, Steve
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Phillips, Gerry
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Cleary, John C.	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Crozier, Bruce	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Curling, Alvin	Levac, David	Sorbara, Greg

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 36.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S RESOLUTION

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: My point of order concerns notice of motion 8. As you are aware, the honourable member for Ottawa West-Nepean has presented a resolution requesting you, Mr Speaker, to establish an inquiry in relation to Project Truth.

Mr Speaker, you will know that the honourable member previously raised the matter in the House in the form of a private member's bill. My predecessor, the Honourable Jim Flaherty, previously provided advice to the House regarding this matter, and I am standing now as Attorney General to respond to the current request.

First, I note that the motion is not worded in the customary manner of private members' resolutions. I ask whether the motion is appropriately worded for consideration under standing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry to interrupt. I say to all members, I give some latitude for yelling and heckling during the regular question period, when it is partisan. But you would appreciate on points of order that I'm very strict in making sure all points of order, whether they be from opposition or government—I need to hear them. This is a non-partisan matter where I need to hear specifically what the Attorney General is saying to make a ruling. During question period and other things, if I miss some things, it really doesn't matter all that much, because I'm just the referee, but in a case like this, I do need to hear the points that are being raised. I would appreciate if all members would kindly allow the minister, and anybody else who may be making a point, so I can hear. Sorry.

Hon Mr Young: That's all right. Thank you, Mr Speaker. If I may just go back to my first point, I note that the motion is not worded in the customary manner of private members' resolutions. I ask you, Mr Speaker, whether or not it is appropriately worded for consideration under standing order 96.

My second point to you is a question asking you to consider whether the motion attempts to do something that indeed can only be accomplished by legislation. I refer in particular to the reference to the Speaker's warrants and the power to compel evidence. This power would be given not to a committee of this House but to a commission, and the power would be confirmed by motion, not by statute. I ask whether a motion can be used to bypass the legislative process. I would ask you to consider standing order 79, which involves three readings before a bill becomes law.

I don't make these points in any particular order; I think they are all of significant importance.

Thirdly, I ask you to consider whether the motion is out of order, pursuant to standing order 23, and I would specifically refer you to clause (g). I bring that to your attention given the likely impact that such an inquiry

would have on the criminal proceedings that are before the courts at this time, both trials and appeals.

As a further preliminary matter, and I say this with the greatest respect to you and to your office, there is considerable doubt from a legal standpoint regarding your authority as Speaker to order the requested inquiry. I have conducted a considerable amount of research over the last short while, and I am not aware of your office ever having acceded to a request such as this, one where, in fact, the judiciary is already engaged and which does not directly bear on the responsibilities and duties of the Speaker or the rights and privileges of this honourable House. I know of no precedent in the history of this province—indeed, I know of no precedent in the history of this country—where that has been done.

Mr Speaker, as you are aware, there is a fundamental principle of justice at issue, one which we dearly cherish in our free democracy, and that issue is the independence of the judiciary. The judiciary and the Legislature are cornerstones of democracy. There should be no doubt about that. The integrity of each institution must be carefully respected.

There are other significant values engaged by this resolution, no matter how well-intentioned its author may be. Those other matters include the right of each citizen to be presumed innocent until proven guilty. As Attorney General, I am careful not to say or do anything that would affect or interfere with that right. Indeed, I am careful not to do anything that would leave the appearance or the influence of prejudging any individual. It is essential that individuals are allowed to have a free and fair trial, and we should not be prejudging that trial.

This principle applies equally to representative institutions of our democracy. It applies to courts, to me and how I carry out my job as Attorney General and, I say to you with respect, it applies to this honourable House. We have maintained in Ontario a tradition of not commenting on cases before the courts. However, if this resolution does pass, if it is put in front of this Legislature and it passes, that important value will be compromised. An inquiry like the one being suggested could lead to various unintended and serious results, including the appearance of an unfair trial, disrespect to witnesses and the judiciary and, significantly, the possibility that charges would not be dealt with on their merits, that charges would be dismissed or stayed as an abuse of process at some point.

I would ask you as well, Mr Speaker, to consider the potential impact upon victims if that result occurred. Even the most well-intentioned and carefully crafted terms of reference relating to an inquiry of this sort still pose what I believe to be an unacceptable risk to the fundamental and cherished rights that exist in this country.

The police investigation may well have concluded—it's over—but what the police have laid before the courts is not. The matter in issue must be allowed to proceed to trial without interference from this Legislative Assembly.

As I referenced a moment ago, I am aware that the honourable member who brought forward this resolution

is well-intentioned. However, I want to say that I am just as concerned as the honourable member in ensuring that justice is followed and that the rights of children and of all citizens are protected. The proper course of action is to allow the current process, the court process, the legal process—one that is the envy of the entire world—to proceed.

If such an inquiry as the one requested by the member were called, it would seriously jeopardize the proceedings currently in front of the court and could result in trials being stayed or dismissed, and this would remove the issues from the justice system. I say to you that is not fair to anyone. It's not fair to the victims and it's not fair to the accused. It's not fair to anyone involved in the proceeding. And it's not fair to the province and it's not fair to the country.

As a member of this House and as the Attorney General, I have great confidence in your office, Mr Speaker, but in my respectful opinion as Attorney General, I say to you that you cannot and you should not allow the resolution to proceed.

The Speaker: I thank the Attorney General. The member for Niagara Centre on the same point of order.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Mr Speaker, it's a serious point of order and it's a serious matter. I want to ask the Speaker to understand and share my regret that the point of order is made in the absence of the member for Ottawa West-Nepean, Mr Guzzo, who is the author of the motion. That's number one.

Number two, I want to ask the Speaker to seriously consider the time frame in which this point of order is raised. But a couple of weeks ago, when the Speaker was called upon by way of a point of order to address the orderliness of a private member's resolution, the issue there was the length of preambles or the number of preambles, a lack of conciseness. As I recall the Speaker's ruling at that time, the Speaker clearly declined to rule it out of order because of the time frame in which the point of order was raised. As it was, the point of order was raised on the same day that motion was to be debated. Understand that the Speaker subsequently said, "Yes, those types of motions are out of order," but because of the fact it was raised, in that instance, on the same day, the Speaker said, "No, I am not going to rule it out of order."

The Speaker could have deferred the matter five or 10 minutes and used that time frame to consider the matter and respond to the point of order, but the Speaker clearly said no, that a point of order raised so soon before the matter is to be debated, in and of itself—insofar as I understand the ruling, the only inference to be drawn—ought to be disregarded.

Here we are, admittedly one day before the resolution is to be debated, and the point of order is raised. Put that in the time frame of the fact that this motion has been on the order paper for a considerable amount of time now. It has not only been on the order paper, but has been a matter of some controversy, not around its orderliness but around the matter it addresses. It is not something that

could have been overlooked, I put to you, by inadvertence on the part of the Attorney General or anybody else.

1410

I think we have and we ought to have some serious concerns that it's the Attorney General who rises on this point of order. The Attorney General has a very clear function in addition to his political function as a member of his party and as a member of the caucus he serves.

The Attorney General says he has a profound respect for the presumption of innocence. I share that with him. He's distinct in contrast to one of his predecessors in that regard. But at the same time, I put to you that the Attorney General has judged implicitly on the Speaker's capacity to do or not do something as directed by this House in a way that displaces what would properly be the role of the court—with respect.

If this resolution were to pass, and I'll speak to other aspects of it being in order in a minute, and the Attorney General, or quite frankly anybody else, felt that it would for whatever reason be improper for the Speaker to proceed with that direction, the course of action, I put to you—and the Attorney General's own logic during at least part of his submissions would seem to endorse or support this—would be for the Attorney General to apply, for instance, for an injunction to enjoin the Speaker from doing that for the reasons argued before that Supreme Court judge or justice, seeking that injunction. There could in fact be a debate around the legality, the legal issues and some of the things that the Attorney General tries to put on the floor today.

(1) I think it is very, very dangerous, with respect, sir, to fetter the subject matter of private member's resolutions, motions or bills. The standing orders do that in terms of the types of bills that can be put forward, and they're pretty clear. It's been a long time since there has been a successful point of order regarding the subject matter of a bill, for instance, because members are pretty conscious of what is the proper content. Of course we know it goes to the matter that private members can't, as I understand it, address matters dealing with revenue raising. That's clear.

(2) The Speaker spoke clearly about resolutions, but not as to their content. He spoke as to their form, and that is a far different thing than what's being addressed here. The Attorney General is not criticizing the form of the resolution, in this most untimely manner, but he's addressing the content.

Look, I understand. It's clear that the Attorney General would rather that this assembly—I'm assuming; this is the inference I draw, the irresistible inference—did not approve this motion. Fine. Let him come here tomorrow and debate the motion. That's his forum in which to persuade any member of this assembly that it would be, for any of the reasons he tried to enumerate today, improper or inappropriate to effect this motion by way of its passing. Let him persuade any member of his caucus by way of personal lobbying, or any other member of this assembly, not to support the resolution. Let him distri-

bute speaking notes. But please, for the Attorney General to usurp what I submit would be the function of a court were this motion to pass, to decide on, as I say, for instance, an application for an injunction, is in itself an abrogation of the very careful role that the Attorney General has to play.

May I speak very briefly to the subject matter of the resolution. Neither you, nor your office, nor this assembly is unfamiliar with the issue. The member, Mr Guzzo, has used—as is his right and, I submit, obligation—his position in this Legislature to the extent that the rules permit it. It's not inappropriate to consider that the rules have become increasingly restrictive about the rights of members. They haven't diminished our responsibilities, but the rules, the standing orders, have become increasingly restrictive. I think that's a given. Everybody acknowledges that. I think in context of that, the most appropriate thing to do—look, the resolution speaks for itself. The assembly is directing the Speaker to do something. It's quite right, this isn't a piece of legislation in terms of law. In other words, were the Speaker to decline to do something as directed, it's not a matter of the Speaker breaking the law. Let's make that very clear. The Speaker shouldn't have concerns. I can understand the Speaker having concerns about a piece of legislation that compelled the Speaker to do something in such a way that the Speaker had no opportunity to exercise what would be an inherent and natural and historical discretion on the part of the Speaker. This resolution doesn't do that, because this resolution isn't a bill, it isn't a statute; it's a resolution. We all know from our own experiences how much impact resolutions can, and sometimes may not, have here in the assembly. But it's a resolution to direct the Speaker to do something.

If the Speaker were to determine that he did not have the capacity to comply with that resolution, then the Speaker has to make a decision if at the end of the day the resolution is passed. I respect the Speaker's right to make a decision. I respect the Speaker's right to respond to this and say, "Assembly, ballot item number 28 directed me to do certain things. I feel compelled to inform this assembly that it is my—" And then members of the assembly can again use whatever extraparliamentary avenues—and I'm speaking of judicial avenues that may or may not be available, but they could investigate that—to compel the Speaker, if they thought the Speaker was in error in determining not to follow a direction.

It is not for a single member, least of all the Attorney General, to short-circuit—I have to draw your attention to that precious little bit of time in this assembly Thursday mornings. Speaker, it's two hours a week, for increasingly fewer weeks a year, that private members have a chance to respond to issues, and I hope the Speaker will defend individual members' rights to act from time to time, and many times very independently of their caucuses, even of their parties, in their utilization of that very scarce right to bring forward a matter for one hour. It amounts to one hour perhaps every two years to bring forward a matter which is of personal significance

to them or to a constituent in their community or to a constituent out there in the broader community.

This is a very precious right—a very precious right—and I suggest that you should be interfered with as rarely as possible, should be interfered with only when on its face, as in the matter of form, it violates the standing orders with respect to motions and resolutions or when on its face it violates the standing orders with respect to a private member compelling the government to increase revenues—two clear-cut issues; two clear-cut examples.

I'm asking the Speaker to tread very carefully, because it's being called upon to trample on that right. It is not for the Speaker to determine—to determine—whether this in and of itself will constitute an interference with independence of the judiciary. I say that as a blanket statement, and please link that with my subsequent statement.

This is not, please, with respect to the Attorney General—if the Speaker will not adopt or accept the argument that it's not for the Speaker to determine that, then let's go to the next stage. This is not an interference with the independence of the judiciary. The Speaker is not being asked to determine culpability, either criminal or otherwise, of any individual during the course of performing what he is called upon to do, should he do it in this resolution. You still go back to the fact that at the end of the day the resolution may pass, but then the Speaker can decline to do it because it's not law; it's but a resolution.

There is nothing in this resolution which tramples on the rights of anybody currently under prosecution, or who may be under prosecution. The issue is very clearly the effectiveness of police investigations. That is so thoroughly removed from the issue of guilt or innocence, from the issue of any type of culpability, criminal or civil or otherwise—it's as removed as anything could be.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Look, Speaker, I regret the time that I've felt compelled to devote, but this is a critical issue for every member of this assembly, both present and in the future. It's something that I feel obliged to address as fully as I can. It's clearly not a matter of interfering in any respect with the independence of the judiciary.

1420

Let me ask you to consider as well, and I think this is not inappropriate, the underlying interests of the Attorney General in raising this point of order. I'm very conscious of the rules, the standing orders, when I speak to this. Please. But let's understand that this government has stood firm in what has been a not-illegitimate request for a public inquiry. What I'm putting to you is that nobody has disputed that the issues raised by Mr Guzzo could legally be the subject matter of a public inquiry. Rather, it is my submission to you that the government has simply refused, has exercised its discretion not to call one. Governments call public inquiries and they don't call public inquiries. It's within the power of the government to do that, and nobody, at the end of the day, can

force the government hand, no matter how legitimate the call is for a public inquiry.

The Speaker knows—both in your current status and through the history of your office—a history of debate and litigation in this assembly going back to the days succeeding 1987 regarding public inquiries, the plethora of case law that has flowed from that, including the now-leading decision in the Westray mine incident. I ask you to refer to that, sir. I know your office will make that litigation available to you. That clearly defines the circumstances in which an inquiry can be conducted, notwithstanding that there is concurrent litigation of either a civil or criminal matter, and doesn't disallow the public inquiry but merely restricts it in its scope.

This Legislature has witnessed more than one public inquiry that has survived the challenge of the government of the day, and as a result of the court direction it has been made clear that the public inquiry can coexist with litigation, the prospect of litigation or the prospect of appeal, never mind an appeal actively underway.

So I submit that if you do not accept the proposition that it's a simple matter of not fettering the right of a member but do feel compelled to delve into the issue of whether or not it's an interference with the independence of the judiciary, and then consider the underlying interests of the government, I put to you that your examination of the case law will determine, in contrast to many of the responses given by an Attorney General about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of a public inquiry, that in fact the position of the Attorney General is as much a political position, and certainly in most cases more so one of a political concern, than an accurate interpretation of the law, because the law makes it quite clear.

So I put to you at the end of the day that even the calling of a public inquiry—but let's understand how careful the author of the resolution was, because the resolution does not call for a public inquiry. It calls for a commission of inquiry. It calls for a report back to you, sir, the Speaker, and it says that any portion of the report can be made confidential. I put to you that the author of this resolution has anticipated any possible arguments, that this resolution has anticipated any possible arguments that might be accepted, even though I put to you they ought not to be accepted, about the concurrence of a public inquiry and litigation for the commission requested.

I'm asking you, please, Speaker, to accept the fact that it's our job to move resolutions and motions as we see fit; and to deny that, to inhibit it, to prohibit it, to restrict it, is in itself—I put this to you: one of the underlying effects of the Attorney General's point of order is to do precisely that: it's to inhibit, restrict, control the types of resolutions we can put forward here, based on political considerations. That, I put to you—without wanting to be at all inflammatory—comes pretty darn close to what we've examined as being contemptuous of this assembly because of the effort on its part, by way of that argument, to muzzle members of the assembly.

Members have to have an unrestricted right to move resolutions. Their validity, their impact, their effectiveness, their scope, their relevance—subject to the very narrow interpretation of the standing orders which we've witnessed in the recent past—is then a subject matter for something to occur after that resolution is passed. It's up to the members of this assembly to be persuaded not to vote for this by the Attorney General, should he wish to do so.

Sir, I submit that it's not for you to tell us that we can't debate it. To grant this point of order is to tell us that we can't debate this very serious motion by a member who has expressed long-standing concern and has been joined by members of this caucus and many others across Ontario out of their concern about the serious legacy of abused children in Cornwall and area for whom—we know this, and there's no debate—no justice has ever been done. This modest effort to seek justice for those abused kids, those assaulted kids, those victims, should have its day in this forum.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I have not had—and I know that the House leader for the third party has not had—the benefit of the extensive research to which the Attorney General referred. So we make these submissions in that light and in this vacuum.

I would echo the comments from Mr Kormos, but add this: we would like you to speak to the issue of notice. We have had no notice of this. We have not been provided the research. We have not been given the opportunity to respond to this appropriately. In that sense, there is a feeling of a procedural ambush. We have had this resolution on the books since June 6, and as a result, we would ask you to speak to that.

I think it also speaks to your finding in this sense: in a word, this motion is premature. To rule on the commission of inquiry on a point of order is something that ought to be done only once it becomes found by the House that we proceed with a commission of inquiry. This point of order is speaking, on the one hand, to the validity of the commission of inquiry, and the arguments are directed to the prejudice to potential or existing defendants. But the problem is that really the point of order is not about the validity of a commission of inquiry. That's not before you right now. Before you right now is the validity of the resolution: should members of this House be able to debate the resolution?

It is often the case that the procedural issues surrounding either a resolution or a private member's bill become the subject matter of debate. How many times have we heard in this House one side or another say, "Well, we're not going to support this bill because it flies in the face of the BNA Act" or "it's unconstitutional"? I've heard that in this House before. That's a procedural argument. It's a legitimate argument, and it's an argument that can be made during private members' hour. Members may choose not to support the resolution because of that fact, but to rule that the resolution is out of order is premature. We should have the opportunity to debate the propriety of this. If, in fact, a commission of inquiry becomes the

subject matter of a resolution, then only at that time, I would submit, ought you to rule on whether or not the commission of inquiry itself is valid.

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All members of this House, obviously, are here to be held to account, one way or another, to our constituencies, and there is a concern here that the government is trying to do indirectly what it does not want to do directly. It does not want to speak to this resolution. It does not want to be seen to be voting down this resolution, but this is the House in which people are to be held to account. This is the House in which we must have free debate, restricted by nothing: absolute liability immunity, subject to—of course, we cannot rise in this House and make reference to young offenders, contrary to the Young Offenders Act. Yes, we cannot do that, or we ought not to do that. But the restrictions are obviously extremely limited, and they cannot include that we are unable to debate this matter at all.

I'd also say that I believe the Attorney General is asking you to rule on the constitutionality of this particular commission of inquiry and resolution. As you know, you are not in a position to rule on the constitutionality of the resolution, as I understand it.

All the arguments of the Attorney General with respect to "innocent until proven guilty" are concerns we all share in this House. But all of these due-process arguments are not going to be jeopardized, all of these concerns about prejudice to the accused are not going to be jeopardized, by debate.

A commission of inquiry: I leave it to you to make that determination. I think you've heard submissions from the third party on that. But we'd like the opportunity to speak to that as well.

With respect to the resolution, the independence of the judiciary is in no way impacted by debate of a resolution—in no way, although I appreciate and echo the comments of the Attorney General with respect to the importance of the independence between the legislative, executive and judicial branches. Innocent until proven guilty: again, no prejudice to any existing or potential defendants in the event that the resolution is debated.

Lastly, I would say that I think it's important in your ruling that we narrow it to the resolution itself and not expand it to unintentionally in the future capture a ruling on the commission of inquiry or on the propriety of speaking to matters on public inquiries or the propriety of speaking to matters on question period itself.

We need to have the opportunity to debate this motion. The government may not want to be seen to defeat this motion, but at the very least, before determining whether or not the commission of inquiry in and of itself is the right thing to do during private members' hour and thereafter, you need to determine whether or not you will have the powers to do so. We need to have the opportunity on Thursday to debate this, for the sake of this chamber and for the sake of the province of Ontario.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): There are two additional points that we'd ask you to take into account.

First of all, you yourself last year and earlier this year defended against the intrusion of an outside body on the affairs of this Legislature. I'm referencing specifically the Lord's Prayer. In effect, when the Attorney General came here—and I listened to his statement very carefully—he was speaking as the Attorney General. He is a member of this assembly, but in effect the Attorney General's ministry is attempting to influence the affairs of this Legislature—something, sir, that you yourself and your good offices defended against. You defended against the Human Rights Commission having the ability to influence the Lord's Prayer; you've defended against the courts having an ability to do that.

It is sacrosanct, sir, that this Legislature can make the determinations as to what will and will not be heard here. The references are numerous, whether you look at Marleau and Montpetit, Beuchesne or any of the references. I would argue, sir, that the government, in addition to asking you to rule this out of order, can by way of motion remove it, defeat it, either procedurally or in the substance of the debate itself, a point that was made by the member for Niagara Centre and my colleague from St Paul's.

Finally, subsequent to the point of order that was raised by the member for Northumberland, a number of resolutions were taken off the order paper. This resolution sat on that order paper when that occurred. It was tabled, as I recall, on June 6 of this year. Presumably, sir, you and the staff of the Clerk's office have reviewed this already and, by not removing it, have found that it's in order. So in effect, you're being asked to rule about a decision you have already in fact made.

To conclude, my colleague from St Paul's has pointed out that substantively this does not interfere with the legal proceedings. Second, from a procedural perspective related to this House and the primacy of this House to set its own affairs, the test, in our view, is the members themselves, not you and your good offices. Subsequent to this resolution being defeated or passed, you will still, as Speaker, have the opportunity to approach the House with respect to whatever limitations you may be confronted with. It's been suggested to me, for instance, that there would be challenges to you in terms of the funding of this inquiry, that that would require Board of Internal Economy approval. There's no power to compel witnesses contained in the resolution itself, though as I understand it, those powers are contained in the Legislative Assembly Act.

So on that basis, number one, we do not believe that this resolution would interfere with the court processes, but more importantly, this House and the members of this House are the only ones—not the Attorney General, not the Attorney General's ministry, not a court, not a commission—the members of this House, by their vote, who can determine what can and cannot be debated on the floor of this House. Finally, if the government takes

the view, if the opposition takes the view, as presented by the Attorney General, then the power rests with us to defeat the resolution if we are so convinced.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): The issue before yourself is, of course, does this resolution so offend the standing orders of the House that it should be removed from the order paper? I submit to you, sir, that it is clear it does not so offend the standing orders. I'd like to set out the reasons for that.

I would like first to refer to the question of timeliness. It has been pointed out that this was placed on the order paper on June 6 of this year and the day before it's to be debated, we have this before yourself. It's quite proper that it should be brought before yourself, but I would submit to you, if there is a matter of discretion in these circumstances, discretion should be exercised in favour of leaving it on the order paper because of the lateness of this objection being raised.

The Attorney General spoke of wording. There's nothing that I'm aware of in the standing orders that says anything about the wording of a resolution. There's nothing in this resolution that offends any of the standing orders. He also speaks about the question of compelling of evidence. The House has the power to issue Speaker's warrants. That's been a privilege and right of this House for hundreds and hundreds of years. There's no intent here to assign that right to anyone else. It's the House that would compel any evidence, if it were required to be compelled. This resolution does not delegate to anyone else that ancient and essential right.

We have received comment from the Attorney General with respect to standing order 23. It says that criminal proceedings are specifically dealt with in the motion. Mr Speaker, the motion is quite clear, and I want to read that part of it: "The commission may not engage in any activity which may jeopardize any ongoing prosecution of a criminal nature." So there can only be the kind of problem that the Attorney General referred to if the commission doesn't follow the resolution of the House. I, for one, have confidence in a commission that you may appoint to follow the resolution of the House. That's their legal responsibility and legal duty, and the concerns raised by the Attorney General are only valid concerns if the resolution is not followed.

1440

I would like to suggest to you that there is no doubt, no doubt whatever, in the 800 years of parliamentary tradition, that this House has the right to direct inquiries. It's an absolutely fundamental right that this House have the right to make inquiries. How else can we do the right thing for the people as a whole if we can't inquire and get information? That right, I believe, is fundamental to the functioning of any democracy. I think it is incumbent upon you, sir, to defend that right in this House.

The Speaker is called "the Speaker" because he speaks for all members; that's where the term originated. I would suggest you have a duty, sir, to speak for all members of this House and let them make a decision which they legitimately can make. Parliamentary tradi-

tion and the parliamentary rules all say that you have the right and duty to do that.

I think we should touch briefly on what this is about. This is about the adequacy of two police investigations. I think determining that is fair to the victims, is fair to the investigators and is fair to the people of Ontario. The resolution is not offensive to the functioning of democracy; it speaks directly to the functioning of democracy. I think being fair is to let the House decide whether or not they think this is the right investigation to undertake.

There is some concern in the minds of some that the House may do the wrong thing. I don't think the House has been irresponsible in the resolutions it has passed, and I think we can be confident the House will do the right thing tomorrow if it has been given the opportunity to do so.

I'd also like to make note of a comment made by one of the previous members. This is not a call for a public inquiry; this is a call for an investigation. Parts of it can be confidential, so if the investigators and if the commission follow the resolution, the concerns of the Attorney General will be totally met. His concerns can only be valid if the commission does not follow the resolution. I think the House can have confidence in you, sir, and the people you may appoint to follow a resolution of the House.

I would like to return, for the last time, to my point. It should be for the House to determine what they investigate. It should not be for the rules to decide what's right and wrong; it should be for the members. I personally have confidence in the House, the Speaker and the representatives of the people. I ask you to find this to be in accordance with the standing orders.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): Mr Speaker, there were several points brought forward that I'd like to address. Firstly, the traditional actions of your office: I believe we have seen events that your office has undertaken recently, such as compensation issues, that have not been traditional actions. So in dealing with traditional and non-traditional actions, I would hope you would take that into consideration.

There was considerable mention by the member from Niagara Centre and the others of the independence of the judiciary. In the resolution itself, it calls for the possibility of reporting back in a maximum of 18 months. Mr Speaker, 18 months is a long time; 18 months is certainly enough time to bring a new Premier into the province of Ontario. It's certainly enough time, in my expectation, to deal with an issue.

Another area that I have concern about is that it is the right of the individuals in here to bring forward issues of concern, and what you're now being asked to determine are the specific issues as they relate to the members here: can they or can they not be brought forward? Are you setting a precedent that will determine that in the future?

Lastly, with this, in the past in regard to the issue, I believe that the public were dependent on due process, and I would think that the member who brought this

forward is looking for a just process, and I'm hoping, Mr Speaker, that you do the right process.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their very thoughtful contributions. I will reserve opinion. Obviously we understand that it needs to be done very quickly in light of the circumstances, but I thank all of the members for their participation and for their very thoughtful comments. I will reserve my judgment and report back to the House as soon as possible.

VISITOR

Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sure you would like to welcome into the Legislature Mr Darren Praznik, an MLA from the Manitoba Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I wasn't aware he'd be here, but we welcome our honoured guest.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. Now that the Premier doesn't have to worry about public support or worry about his comments meaning something other than what he meant, he can finally speak his mind and tell us where he's really going in the area of two-tier health care. Today's comments by the Premier in a scrum here at Queen's Park indicate the real reason you are still the Minister of Health. It means two-tier health care when the Premier said today that we will rely more on the private sector and on individuals in the area of funding for health care. As Minister of Health, will you clarify today that you will not introduce user fees, that you will not allow a two-tier health care system in Ontario?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I don't think anyone is advocating British-style two-tier health care or American-style health care. I'm not advocating that; the Premier was not advocating that.

The fact of the matter is the Premier was commenting on the situation that arises because we have relied in the past on agreements we thought we had with the federal government. Initially, with the passing of the Canada Health Act, the federal government undertook to finance 50% of all health care spending. The fact of the matter is right now they finance 14% of all health care spending. The Premier's only point is that if they continue to underfund health care, if they continue not to make health care their top public spending priority, then this restricts the poorer provinces, the have-not provinces, in the choices that are made available to them. That is a fact. That is what the Premier is good at: expressing facts.

Mrs Pupatello: Minister, we asked you a very simple question. We asked you to stand up in the House today and say that you oppose user fees in health care. We asked you to say that you will not lobby the federal government to change the Canada Health Act, that you need to be a defender of the Canada Health Act. It's very simple. We are asking you, the minister already dubbed to be "Two-Tier Tony," to stand and defend us, defend what the general public wants, and that is not a two-tier health care system.

It's very simple, Minister. You just need to stand in your place today and say you will not bring in user fees—it's very simple—that you will not advocate to change the Canada Health Act to allow user fees. You will not bring in user fees. We want to hear those words right now, Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: My ears are deceiving me obviously, because it was the Prime Minister of Canada who raised the spectre of user fees after coming back from the kingdom of Sweden. If anybody's talking about user fees, it's the Liberal Senator Michael Kirby. It's the Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chrétien who's talking about user fees.

What Mike Harris was saying was that we have been consistently underfunded by the federal government. At the start of 1994 they funded 18% of health care spending; in 2000 it is 14%—down, down, down. They are not living up to their commitments. They are not meeting the aspirations of the people of Ontario and the people of Canada. Shame on them and shame on you.

1450

Mrs Pupatello: I didn't hear the Minister of Health say no to user fees. We asked you one very simple question, and we asked that of the minister who's been dubbed Two-Tier Tony.

To the Minister of Health who's hiring Stockwell Day's staff, to the minister who in his speech at the Empire Club advanced the notion of improving the involvement of the private sector and where user fees were going to be required: you want to have a system for the rich and another system for the rest of us. You are Two-Tier Tony. You have an opportunity, a chance today to stand up and say no to user fees. Take that chance now, Minister.

Hon Mr Clement: This Liberal Party, they come and they go, and they say one thing one day and they say another thing in this chamber. Here is what Dalton McGuinty said just in March of last year. He said, "We've divorced health-care users from the notion of costs connected to their care. Access to quality health care doesn't mean unlimited access." That's what he said then. Now she's saying different. Well, if the honourable member opposite is concerned about health care in this province, I can tell you that for \$1.1 million of Cipro pills, we could have hired 20 nurses in Ontario. Why don't you tell the federal Minister of Health that?

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Last week I asked you about the Janet Ecker boondoggle contract with Andersen—now that company's called Accenture. I'd like to return to that contract today.

We asked you how you could justify throwing away \$200 million and you couldn't even advance the truth, and that was that you didn't save anywhere near the amount of money you spent on that contract. We asked you what you had to show for all that wasted money and you talked about some fancy computer program, one that we showed in this House isn't even working. That sounded so familiar. It was familiar because the Brian Mulroney government used this same company to create the same kind of program, and it too did not work.

Minister, we know now that the federal government is suing the same company, alleging fraud, negligent misrepresentation and professional negligence. Here is the suit. According to the statement of claim, the federal government says Andersen "actively conspired to conceal information from the crown."

Minister, my question is simple. Why would you sign a contract with this company—

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

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I would be most interested to see if the member opposite would dare make those accusations outside the House. If she's so convinced they represent the truth, let her say them outside, but rather, typical Liberal tactics, smear tactics, they come in this place and use their legislative immunity falsely.

The member opposite wants to defend—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It's too noisy, I'm afraid. Sorry for the interruption. Minister?

Hon Mr Baird: We inherited a welfare system that was out of control. We inherited a welfare mess left by the Liberals and the New Democratic Party. This government took real actions to clean up the old and outdated technology, to clean up the old and outdated processes, where welfare fraud was rampant, where overpayment and administrative problems were rampant.

To date—the member opposite is wrong; she still doesn't have her facts right—we've been able to save more than \$350 million for the taxpayers by restoring some integrity to our welfare system. The member opposite should be on her feet applauding that initiative instead of undertaking these—

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

Mrs Pupatello: I'll go outside if the minister wants. I'll bring a copy of the suit with me, because it's all in here. I'm sure that if the minister were on the job he would have a copy of this suit already. The suit talks

about professional negligence and conspiracy. This is the company you renegotiated with. It gets worse, though. We went through the list of contributors to the PC Party and we found something really interesting. In the first few years of Janet Ecker's boondoggle with Andersen Consulting, there were no contributions to the PC Party by this company, but this government was forced by this House to renegotiate the contract, and all of a sudden the company started making tremendous donations to the PC Party. These individuals, executives of this company, over 99, in the year 2000, when we brought this issue up in this House, made contributions upwards of \$20,000 to the PC Party.

Minister, are you going to wear this boondoggle of your predecessor—

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

Hon Mr Baird: I think the record of my predecessor, Janet Ecker, in running the welfare system speaks for itself: hundreds of thousands of people making that important transition from welfare to work; a new Ontario disability support program; a new Ontario Works Act. She can be very proud, as can all of us on this side of the House, of the reforms that we've undertaken in social assistance.

Every single time we went to the plate to try to change the welfare system—we tried to get tougher on welfare fraud. What did Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party do? They were against it. We wanted to get tough on overpayments and a system out of control. What did Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party do? They didn't support it. We tried to bring in workfare and restore the merit principle and hard work to our welfare system. What did Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party do? They opposed it. They rejected every single welfare reform that this government has undertaken. The people of Ontario have spoken in two successive elections. They strongly support the Harris welfare reforms; they strongly support the Ecker welfare reforms; they strongly support this government's attempt to get—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

Mrs Pupatello: The only thing we see about fraud is in the lawsuit launched by the federal government about the company that you are overpaying in the contracts that you renegotiated. They started making contributions to the PC Party after you started having to renegotiate with them because we went after your predecessor over the Janet Ecker boondoggle on that Andersen contract. That contract was worth \$180 million, you have now paid over \$200 million, and the system doesn't work.

This is the same company that has been chased out of the federal government; this is the same company that is now chased out of New Brunswick and Texas. The federal government is suing them for fraud, negligence and conspiracy to conceal information. We don't have enough money for home care, we don't have enough money for textbooks in our classrooms, we don't have money for the health system the public deserves, but you

have enough money to pay over \$200 million to follow up on the Janet Ecker boondoggle.

Hon Mr Baird: In fact, two years ago the contract was renegotiated, and what did that renegotiation deal with? It dealt with successfully completing the project. It dealt with completing it on time and it dealt with completing the project on budget. We're restoring a welfare system that was out of control.

I understand why they're so sensitive about this issue. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party disagree with work for welfare. They want to return to the money-for-nothing days of the past. They want to return to a system rampant with fraud. They reject every notion that this government and that this party and that this caucus and cabinet have taken to restore some integrity to the welfare system. I understand why they're so disagreeable: because the people of Ontario strongly support our welfare reforms.

PROVINCIAL SALES TAX

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Today you have a fresh opportunity to do something for Ontario's sagging economy, for consumers and for working people across the province. Later this afternoon we will debate the New Democratic call for a three-month provincial sales tax holiday to help people where they need it most at this time, when they go to the cash register to make needed purchases.

The evidence grows daily that the economy is stumbling, that consumer confidence, which accounts for two thirds of economic activity, is declining. Your own parliamentary assistant, Mr O'Toole, has said that he supports our idea of a retail sales tax holiday. We might even find out today where the Liberals stand on this issue. But the real question is, when are you going to show some leadership? When are you going to respond to the decline in consumer confidence which may well result in more layoffs? When will you bring in a sales tax holiday for Ontario?

1500

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I appreciate, once again, that the member opposite has converted to the importance of tax reductions in Ontario. They've been advocated by Mike Harris since at least 1989. It's taken the leader of the third party I guess 12 years to realize the efficacy of tax reductions in Canada.

He's joined by Paul Martin, who said that tax reduction is essential to secure strong and sustained economic growth in this country. So I guess we're ad idem between the New Democratic Party, the government of Ontario—the governing party here—and the federal Liberal Party. It's just the opposition Liberals that still don't get that reducing taxes is important for long-term, sustainable growth in Ontario.

Mr Hampton: No, Minister, you don't get it. What you don't understand is that your latest round of corpor-

ate tax cuts will only benefit the most well-off corporations and the most well-off people in this province and will do nothing for the 11 million consumers.

Let's just look at one corporation: Bell Canada Enterprises, who will get about \$22 million from your latest corporate tax cut; Bell Canada Enterprises, that is busy laying off 150 employees at CTV, and it's speculated will lay off hundreds more at Bell Globemedia; or the president of Bell Canada Enterprises, who pocketed \$6.7 million in salary and bonuses last year. They're going to benefit from your corporate tax cuts, but your corporate tax cuts are not going to do a thing to restore consumer confidence around this province. That's why you've got it wrong.

Unload the corporate tax cuts. Give the consumers of the province a retail tax holiday so they can go out and do the shopping, make the purchases they need and stimulate the economy.

Hon Mr Flaherty: There have been two myths in Ontario that have changed over the past several years. One is about tax reductions and the idea that tax reductions benefit our income, in terms of being the government, and benefit the people of Ontario. Indeed, times have changed. When budget time comes now in Ontario, the media and others, the people of Ontario, want to know where the tax reductions are, when they used to look for where the tax increases are under the Liberals and the NDP. Times have changed in Ontario.

One other thing has changed. I think most of us now recognize—most people in Ontario—that corporate profitability is good for the economy. It creates jobs. It creates investments. We want healthy, viable, successful corporations in Ontario.

I understand—the member opposite smiles; he doesn't understand—that this is where the jobs have been created: in the small and medium-sized businesses of Ontario since 1995. Ontario is open for business. We welcome their business. We want the jobs.

Mr Hampton: I want the people of Ontario to understand what the Minister of Finance said. He said that tax cuts for Bay Street are good, that tax cuts for the millionaires on Bay Street are good. But when it comes to reducing the retail sales tax for the 11 million consumers across the province, that's bad according to the Conservative government.

Minister, pay attention to what's happening elsewhere. The United States has cut their interest rate. The Federal Reserve has cut the interest rate in the United States to its lowest level in over 30 years. The Bank of England has cut their interest rate to its lowest level in over 20 years. The Bank of Canada has cut their interest rate to the lowest level since 1961. Why? Because they understand that consumer confidence in the economy, which accounts for two thirds of economic activity, is declining seriously, and they want to give consumers a reason, an incentive to get back into the economy. When are you going to do your part instead of just giving more money to your corporate friends?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Personal income tax reductions, which we've accelerated in Ontario, give money directly to individuals in the province. I can tell you that auto workers at the GM plants in Oshawa are happy to have tax reductions. They can choose to spend that money as they see fit.

You could reduce the retail sales tax, which is another way of making goods more affordable. But you can do it the other way: you can put money right back into people's pockets directly by saying, "Here's a reduction in your personal income tax. Spend it as you see fit."

That's the policy choice we made, it's the policy choice the Premier made in 1995, and it's been extremely successful in the province. We've had fabulous economic growth in this province with the stimuli created by tax reduction. Indeed, if imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, that policy has been followed across this country in every provincial budget, and in the mini-budget by the government of Canada last October.

LOW-INCOME ONTARIANS

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): To the Minister of Finance again. We can see where this Minister of Finance would lead Ontario: more tax cuts for the well-off, more corporate tax cuts, and who cares about consumers? That's where you would take this province.

I want to ask you about another group of people out there who haven't had a tax cut and haven't had a wage increase now in seven years: the people who work for the minimum wage, the hundreds of thousands of people who work for the minimum wage and who, if they had an increase in the minimum wage, would almost certainly spend all of it in the local economy, would contribute more to the local economy.

We've seen your arguments for rewarding your corporate friends. We see your arguments for giving more tax cuts to the well-off. Why do you continue to freeze the wage for the lowest-paid workers in the province?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The Minister of Labour.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Let's be clear about who has received the benefits of tax cuts. The people earning the least amount of money in this province have received the most generous tax cuts of anyone in the province of Ontario—period. Case closed.

When this government came to office, they reduced taxes, removed taxes and dealt with taxes—oppressive, crushing taxes—on people who earned the least amount of money. Where did those taxes come from? They came from you and you. So when we got elected, we understood that the money was better in their pockets to spend, supporting their families, feeding their families and sending their children to school. We looked after those people who needed help. We will still look after those people who need help. And as I've said before, when we came to office, the beautiful thing is they had one thing that they never had with you: they had a job.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): Minister, what are you going to do for the disabled poor in the province? Ontario citizens with disabilities haven't had an increase in their pensions since you came to power almost seven years ago. Rents have gone up, you've delisted needed medications, and these folks have not had an increase in their income.

Today I introduced a bill that would peg increases to pensions for the disabled to the cost of living. Quick passage of this bill would guarantee increases to these people every April. Will you do that for these vulnerable citizens? Will you support quick passage of that bill?

Hon Mr Stockwell: The Minister of Community and Social Services, I guess.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Through the Ontario disability support program, we provide social assistance rates that are substantially higher than the average of the other nine provinces. That's a commitment we made back in 1995. We've protected those rates. They weren't reduced when expenditure reductions took place in the 1995-96 budget.

The Ontario disability support program is a program of which I think we can all be proud. It provides a whole range of supports. It provides a higher benefit rate. It provides employment supports. We're helping more and more people with disabilities make that important transition from welfare to work. It provides a whole regulatory regime that supports that. Most importantly, it also takes away the "permanently unemployable" title that was absolutely devastating. That's why the program has, since its inception, certainly done a lot to help people with disabilities.

We acknowledge that more work can be done, and that's part of the continuing improvements we make to a whole range of disability supports, whether it's to the developmentally disabled or to special-needs children.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. My colleague asked you yesterday about funding for Visudyne, a treatment that can prevent blindness in people with wet form macular degeneration. You said you were still working on it.

The decision on Visudyne treatment was supposed to have been made in March of last year. Health Canada gave its approval for Visudyne treatment on May 31, 2000, a year and a half ago. Your predecessor informed me last December that the Ontario review would be completed by the end of February of last year, eight months ago.

You should know that in March of last year there were about 1,000 people in Ontario who would have been candidates for Visudyne treatment. In the last eight months, it is likely that for 25% of those people, the

disease has progressed to the point where they can no longer be treated. That means that 250 more people will have permanently lost much, if not all, of their eyesight while you keep saying you're working on it.

Minister, the approval process was on track for last February until you came on the scene. Why are you continuing to deny this treatment to seniors who every day lose more and more of their eyesight as you delay and delay?

1510

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member is confusing two dates: the date of Health Canada's approval versus the date of the drug quality and therapeutics committee approval, which is a different date and a later date than the one the honourable member mentioned in the House.

The honourable member knows very well what the process is. The honourable member has followed the process on many other drugs. We on this side of the House follow the process. There are some Ministers of Health who don't follow processes and try to cut corners, and we all end up paying more and getting less. On our side of the House, we follow the process. This process is now beyond the DQTC. We are taking it under advisement, and I assure this House we will have an answer in the near future.

In the meantime, I would like to say to this House that this government and this ministry have added 1,216 products to the formulary since 1995. That's our commitment to drugs for seniors and for those of limited means, and we are proud of that commitment.

Mrs McLeod: Your predecessor said the ministry was on track for deciding on this by the end of last February. Here's a letter from a woman who wrote in March, expecting that you were going to have a decision. She was part of a medical research project receiving Visudyne treatment. She writes, "The prospect of becoming blind is devastating. I am only 54 years old. Not only will this be a personal hardship, but I take care of my elderly mother. Without my sight, I fear I will not be able to take care of my parents." She adds that on her income, she can't afford to pay for the treatment herself.

Here's another letter from Audrey Webb of Madoc. She's 75 years old, and she's losing her eyesight. She can't afford to pay for Visudyne treatment herself, and she's afraid that she won't be able to care for her 75-year-old spouse if she goes blind. In fact, only 25 of 100 people who could benefit from Visudyne feel they can afford the cost of treatment.

Minister, is that your answer to people who have been waiting for eight months for you to fund this treatment? Are you telling them that if they want to preserve their eyesight, they've got to pay for it out of their own pocket? Is this part of Two-Tier Tony's privatization agenda?

Hon Mr Clement: Of course the answer to that is no. We have added 1,216 products, which is more than happened under previous governments, which have tended to delist medications to pay for their other programs. We

have not done that. We have added 1,216 products. Spending on the Ontario drug benefit plan has increased by 69.8% to a record \$1.8 billion under the Mike Harris government. We are proud of that record.

The honourable member is not capturing the reality of the situation when she says that and imputes the motives of myself and this ministry. From our perspective, we are doing everything as it should be done, according to the book. It started with Health Canada and its recommendations, it then goes to the DQTC and their recommendations, and we are apprised of that. I can assure this House that, just as we have done in many, many other cases with medications, at the earliest available opportunity we'll have an answer.

TAX CUTS

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): My question is for the Minister of Finance. You have said that accelerated tax cuts are going to help stimulate the economy in the province of Ontario and help ensure this province is well prepared to deal with a time of economic uncertainty. Could you please explain why you have chosen accelerated tax cuts versus other methods—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Member, come to order, please. Sorry for the interruption.

Mrs Molinari: Minister, could you explain why you have chosen accelerated tax cuts versus other methods of dealing with this economic uncertainty?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I thank the member from Thornhill for the question. Tax cuts are more important now than ever in a time of economic slowdown, which we are experiencing. It's important that the people of Ontario more quickly have more money in their own pockets, their own hard-earned dollars. The government doesn't have any money that it hasn't taken from people in this province in the first place.

We know that lower personal income taxes are very effective for long-term sustained wealth creation in the province of Ontario and for job creation for individuals. It's for that reason that the personal income tax cuts, as announced by the Premier, were accelerated from January 1, 2002, to October 1, 2001.

In addition, as announced in the budget this year, the surtax on incomes of \$70,000 or less is being removed during the course of this year.

Mrs Molinari: Minister, on October 18 the member for Parkdale-High Park was in my riding of Thornhill. When asked if the Liberals would increase corporate taxes, his answer was, "We are not going to call it that, but we will increase corporate taxes." I think Ontarians know that the Liberals' plan is to increase taxes, no matter what they call it. You are cutting the province's corporate income tax rate to 25% lower than that of our counterparts in the state of New York. Why the perceived rush to cut corporate income tax?

Hon Mr Flaherty: It's certainly been indicated previously by members opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, who said in 1997, "I will not reverse the tax cuts if I become Premier," that you can't afford to do so, that it would send out a negative signal about our economy. That's been the view expressed by the Leader of the Opposition, that he would not change the tax reductions that have been made by Premier Harris's government.

Corporate income taxes are important. It lets corporations spend more money on investment in plant and equipment, in people, in jobs, in growing their businesses. That's been the history of the province in the past six years, a history of investment and job creation, of a strong economy, of a solid, diversified, resilient economy so that now we're in good condition to resist a time of slower economic growth.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): My question is for the Solicitor General. All across this province, the systemic abuse of animals is taking place by people who operate so-called puppy mills and backyard breeding operations. There are over 400 of these abusers operating across our province of Ontario. It's a free-for-all. There are very weak provincial laws and no provincial penalties to shut down these puppy mills. Repeat offenders, like the Miseners north of Toronto, have been operating at will since 1965.

Our provincial laws need to be updated and more powers must be given to the SPCA to shut down these criminals. Thousands of people across this province are supporting my private member's bill, which if passed would put an end to these puppy mills by setting up a provincial registry of lawful kennels and breeders, fining offenders up to \$50,000 and putting repeat offenders like the Miseners in jail. It would also increase the power of the SPCA to inspect.

I ask you today, will you support my bill to shut down these puppy mills or would you bring forward today a bill to put these criminals in jail?

Hon David Turnbull (Solicitor General): I certainly appreciate the question from my colleague across the floor. Obviously this is something that is of concern to all members irrespective of what political party they belong to.

As I've indicated in this House before, we have under review the whole of the OSPCA act, which has not been substantially changed since 1919. Clearly we are in the process of bringing forward changes to this. This being said, I have indicated to the SPCA that we're supportive of legislation and that we will be coming forward with legislation. In the meantime, I delivered a cheque for \$50,000 to help them with their prosecution of these important cases. This is allowing the Ontario SPCA to form a special operations unit.

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

Mr Colle: The cheques you're delivering are fine; the SPCA needs all the money they can get. But these abused, defenceless animals need more than cheques. What they need is for you to do your job and make it a provincial offence to operate a puppy mill. Find these criminals, jail them and stop pet stores from selling these animals from puppy mills.

There is a lot of room for provincial legislation. The law should have been updated decades ago. You have done nothing to stop these—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I'm confused.

1520

Mr Colle: I know the minister across is laughing about this. People in this province care about these defenceless animals. They want you to do your job. Today I've got a bill that almost everybody in Ontario supports. Will you endorse my bill today?

Hon Mr Turnbull: I've already indicated on many indications that I will be bringing forward a bill, and you are fully aware of that. There are consultations with all of the stakeholders going on, and I would suggest to you that if you were to take the trouble of checking with the Ontario SPCA, you would find that they're very supportive of the measures I've been taking.

This being said, I have spoken to the federal Minister of Justice and encouraged her to move forward with Bill C-15, which in fact puts this into the Criminal Code in the proper context. Your bill, I would suggest, goes beyond the ambit of Ontario legislation. We on this side, being the government, have to make sure that any legislation we bring forward is legal within the framework that we operate in.

INTEGRATED JUSTICE PROJECT

Mr Bob Wood (London West): My question is to the Attorney General. As members of this House know, the integrated justice project has been ongoing for quite a few years. It is generally thought to be a good idea in principle, but a number of people have raised concerns about the length of time being taken to implement it.

Would the minister tell us what parts of the project have been implemented to date which will provide better service for the public?

Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for his question on what is indeed a very important project. The integrated justice project is indeed an innovative procedure. It's breaking new ground. It's actually being watched by members from various parts of this province, from across the country and indeed from around the world.

I'm pleased to say what we have done here and are attempting to improve upon is a working relationship between my ministry, the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Ministry of Correctional Services. Together with private partners, we are making great progress and we have had

some successes to date. But I do want to say, before I list those successes, that there have been many challenges as well, as is often the case when you venture into new ground. I am, though, very proud of the computer-assisted dispatch program that the OPP and various municipal police forces are using. I'm similarly proud of the offender tracking system being used in the corrections ministry.

Mr Wood: I think it's generally agreed there are a lot of potential benefits to this program, but there's a pretty widespread view that there should be more focus on faster and better implementation. Could the minister please outline for us his timetable for further implementation of this project?

Hon Mr Young: Again I thank the member. We're at a stage now where we have a number of projects which we are presenting to members of the bar, members of the judiciary and others who regularly utilize the justice system. In order to make this project work, it's essential that we do so, because these people are important players and we need their input. I should say to you, though, that there's an electronic filing program that should be in place on a test or pilot basis in Hamilton in the very near future.

I'm equally proud of the fact that the crown case management program that has been established should be in place, again in a pilot capacity, in the London area in the not-too-distant future. Based upon the success of those endeavours, we will decide just how fast we can proceed forward with the other projects.

CHILD CARE WORKERS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Some 75 municipalities have declared today Child Care Worker Appreciation Day. They did so because these municipalities recognize the tremendous contribution made by child care workers who support the development of and care for our most important resource: our children. On the other hand, your government continues to show its disdain for these workers, for their value in terms of skills, training and efforts, and you do so because you continue to deny them the proxy pay equity payments that they deserve to truly compensate them for the important work they do.

Minister, instead of trying to waste money in court to fight these workers one more time, why don't you show your appreciation for child care workers today and pay them the pay equity they deserve?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We provide a substantial amount of money toward child care and specifically toward wage subsidies in our regulated, licensed, institution-based child care. I recognize that this government will never be able to spend as much money as the NDP government would like to spend on child care or, for that matter, on anything. We saw what happened

in the NDP years where they spent money on everything. We had an \$11-billion deficit. We had less jobs, less hope, less opportunity. Now it's like a "he said, she said" game. He says cut taxes, she says increase social spending. It's quite the tag team.

Ms Martel: Minister, the question was about child care workers and whether or not your government appreciates the valuable contribution they make to the lives of our most important resource, our children. The fact is that child care workers, who are primarily women, are among the lowest-paid workers in the public sector, despite the tremendous work they do with our children.

Our NDP government recognized that fact. That's why we brought in the proxy pay equity law, to ensure that they were paid the amount of money they were entitled to, to recognize their contribution. Your government, on the other hand, cancelled proxy pay equity and when the Divisional Court ruled against you, you then placed a cap on these payments as of December 1998. It's estimated you now owe these and other workers in the public sector about \$140 million, wages which would finally recognize and compensate them for the valuable work they do.

I ask you again, Minister, when will you stop showing disdain for these child care workers? When will you pay them the proxy pay equity payments they are due?

Hon Mr Baird: This government is committed to pay equity. In fact, we spent \$500 million to put in pay equity. That's more than the government of which she was in the cabinet. In fact, for wage subsidies for child care providers we'll spend over \$116 million.

The sad reality is that what we have to do is pay the interest on the debt that you and your party and your cabinet built up for the five years you were in government. This year, we'll spend more than \$9 billion paying for the debt. We will pay \$9 billion of interest to pay for the legacy of financial and fiscal mismanagement of your government.

Now they're here today saying they want to give a tax cut to someone who wants to buy a Lexus, a tax cut to someone who wants to go to Hawaii. The NDP tax cut regime, the risky tax scheme—they wanted tax cuts. They want tax cuts more than social spending. We can never spend as much as the NDP would like us to spend. We saw the reality of the fiscal mismanagement created by those years of waste and wild spending—

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

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. It's a very simple question. Minister, where is your made-in-Ontario safety net program?

Over the past several months, you've made several grand statements, held talks and consultations on what, in my opinion, is a very laudable goal, but the time has come for you to make a definitive statement as to where this program is. Can you tell us, Minister?

The proposal has been on the desk since the spring. The proposal called for a substantial increase in safety net dollars, yet we hear nothing from you. It's time for you to take that leadership role and tell Ontario farmers exactly what is being done on their behalf. Farmers are scared. Agricorp has already stated that they're going to see the highest crop insurance payouts ever, yet there's been absolutely no word from you on what you intend to do with the market revenue program. Today, we have no market revenue for the crops that are being harvested.

Will you assume that role as a leader of the agricultural community today and announce to the farmers of Ontario exactly what actions you're going to be taking on their behalf?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Certainly, our government is committed to working with our farmers and our stakeholders in the agricultural community to develop a made-in-Ontario solution. After we provided \$90 million when we recognized that farmers needed some assistance this past spring, we asked them to work with us to develop a made-in-Ontario solution. I'm quite proud to say that they have worked with us over the course of the summer.

With respect to the drought we've had this past summer and the programs we have in place, that's what those programs are there for, to meet those conditions that they've suffered this past summer. I can tell you that we're working with the input they've provided to us so that we can come up with a package that will provide some sustainability and some future to agriculture they can depend on.

1530

Mr Peters: Minister, the farmers have worked with you, but the farmers are still waiting. Farmers across this province need to know how much money is going to be made available to them. You, yourself, have raised the expectations of these farmers across the province with this made-in-Ontario program. It's incumbent on you to ensure that the money is there.

We know there are serious problems out there. The quality of the crops in this province is well below average. In many cases, beans are not even worth the cost of sending the equipment out into the fields to harvest them right now. Yields are far worse than anybody ever expected, and we know the insurance payouts are going to be enormous. But you cannot simply hold up an unknown pot of money and say to the different groups in the agriculture sector out there, "Here, go for it." There are serious problems for red meat, grains and oilseeds, edible horticulture and others. All of these have issues that you need to address on their behalf.

Will you assure the growers and the producers that the necessary funds will be appropriated and that you'll take the leadership role that is expected of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and you, the minister?

Hon Mr Coburn: Certainly we worked with the farmers, as I said, this past spring, and we have had tremendous support. The leaders of the commodities that we've been working with have confidence in our

preparing and have worked with us toward a made-in-Ontario safety-net solution. We have not failed farmers in the past and will not fail them in the future. When we come forward with this program, it will be able to provide some certainty to agriculture and agribusiness of a sustainable future for them.

AIMING FOR THE TOP SCHOLARSHIPS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. I recently had the honour to recognize the students in my riding who won Aiming for the Top scholarships this year. These hard-working students have earned high marks in their studies, and they deserve the recognition and support to help them to continue on to post-secondary education. Clearly our government not only believes in higher standards for Ontario students but it also believes in recognizing those students who surpass them. While I'm particularly proud of the students in my riding who have earned this distinction, I wanted to ask you to give this House a province-wide update of the results of this year's Aiming for the Top scholarship awards.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I take pride in our young people in Ontario. This month all of us will have been given some information with regard to who did win the Aiming for the Top scholarships, and we do have an opportunity to get in touch with them and congratulate them. We acknowledge their excellence, we acknowledge their merit and we have great confidence in the future of our province because of them.

There were 6,733 new Aiming for the Top scholarships that were awarded in Ontario secondary schools this September, and I just know that everybody must be very proud—their families, their teachers and certainly all of us, the MPPs in Ontario. Of that number, 1,900 actually earned average marks of 90% or higher, which is really just terrific. Since we announced the program in 1999, we've invested \$25 million. When it comes to maturity in 2003, there will be \$35 million invested in our young people.

Ms Mushinski: Thank you for that update, Minister. I know that our government did promise in the Blueprint to ensure that willing and qualified students in Ontario would be able to attend college or university, and it seems that this is another important step toward fulfilling that promise. But as we speak—and I know the Liberals are not interested in this, but I know that we, as government members, are—another graduating class of high school students and their parents are in the process of making plans for the future. I know there are many students in my riding, as well as across the province, including I'm sure Liberal ridings, who will be interested in being considered for next year's awards. What students are eligible, and how would they apply?

Hon Mrs Cunningham: It takes the students to get my colleagues in this House somewhat relaxed and pleasant with each other, so I congratulate everyone in this regard. It is our students that we do represent.

The applications are open to all students who are Ontario residents, who earn high marks and who will continue full-time studies in Ontario. They can apply for next year's Aiming for the Top scholarships through the standard OSAP forms. Eligibility is determined by merit and the amount of the award is determined by need. If they do well, students can receive up to \$3,500 in support, and if they continue to do well, they can actually maintain these scholarships for up to four years.

I hope this year's students are already thinking about it. They can go to their guidance counsellors, they can go to the financial aid offices at Ontario colleges and universities or they can look at the information through our training, colleges and universities Web site.

CABINET OFFICE FUNDING

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Your response to my question on Monday about the 116% increase in cabinet offices was quite pathetic and, frankly, an insult to the intelligence of the people of this province. I hope you can provide a better response as you vie for support in your leadership campaign.

I've not been able to find any significant change in the work that cabinet offices do to justify your 116% increase. What I have found, though, is that the operating costs for the Office of the Assembly, this Legislature, have decreased by 18%. The anomaly is in the cabinet offices. The question for you is, how has the work of cabinet offices changed to justify the increase of 116% in operational costs?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): The current size of the Ontario public service, as of June 2001, was 61,430 full-time equivalents, also known as FTEs. Since June 1995—and I'm sure the member wants to know this information—there has been an employee reduction of 19,270 FTEs and the additional elimination of 2,610 vacant positions.

I know the member opposite wants to have this information because she is concerned about the costs of operating the Ontario public service. The figures I've provided, the reduction in the number of positions, means that \$600 million per year has been saved for taxpayers since this government came to office in 1995.

Ms Di Cocco: The point is still the same. It's contradictory that you should, in your cabinet offices—if you have a smaller Legislature now and everyone else has been cut down, it would seem reasonable to expect that your cabinet offices' operational costs would decrease, as has every other ministry. This increase doesn't fit with your response that you've made government smaller and leaner. You've got a double standard here, Minister. The operational cost has ballooned by 116%. You're the Minister of Finance; you approved that bud-

get. Did this increase escape your scrutiny, or did someone else approve it?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Six hundred million dollars per year in savings is substantial savings for the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. That's the reality in the Ontario public service.

With respect to Cabinet Office itself, a number of changes have happened: restructuring to support the new cabinet committees structure and the decision-making processes of cabinet, the creation of the Ontario Olympic Sports and Waterfront Development Agency in support of Toronto's 2008 Olympic bid and the important waterfront development work. I'm sure the members opposite want to support the waterfront development work at the city of Toronto, and I encourage them to have their federal counterparts maintain a commitment to that waterfront development work because there are grave concerns in the city of Toronto that you Liberals are going to waltz on your commitment to the people of the city of Toronto for waterfront development.

Six hundred million dollars in savings; this contrasts to an increase in the cost of the Ontario public service of \$1.2 billion under the last—

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

1540

TRANSIT FUNDING

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, earlier this week you met with your counterpart, the federal minister, David Collenette. I'd encourage members to follow up on this by reading a report by Royson James in the Toronto Star, which, by the way, does give a fairly accurate report. According to the report, you met to discuss the promise that the federal government made in their red book and have been making relentlessly during their past federal election, namely, that they would take steps to fund transit in this province. We all know about the Liberal election promises: GST.

Commuters in the GTA and certainly in my riding of Durham and across the province were expecting great things from your meeting; however, I learned from the report that we're all disappointed that the federal government has made no commitment to fund transit. Minister, can you elaborate on this situation for the House today?

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Transportation): I want to thank the member for his question. It's something that's very pressing for the province of Ontario.

As you know, last month the Premier announced a transit plan that would see this government sharing the costs of ongoing funding for transit capital renewal. We committed to providing up to one third of the eligible municipal transit costs in the amount of \$3 billion over 10 years. Municipalities are on our side. They have committed their share also.

The third member of this partnership was supposed to be the federal government, and we had every reason to

believe that they would have been there with us at the table. For example, at the TTC's 80th anniversary celebration on September 6, Minister Collenette said his government is "committed to working with partners across Canada to help improve public transit."

In the *National Post* on January 15 the minister boasted that the federal government has committed itself to becoming involved as a partner in urban areas. What the federal Liberals have failed to understand is that you can't pass yourself off as a supporter of transit without fulfilling—

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

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that rather important response, Minister. I know how hard you and your cabinet colleagues have worked to improve transit service.

You mentioned your partnership and the fact that municipalities and Ontario are onside. I know I've read about Ann Mulvale and others who have supported that.

Why is it that the federal government does not want to be partners in funding transit when all the key stakeholders in Ontario are at the table and willing to participate? Does the federal Liberal government not understand the reality of an effective, balanced, integrated transit system that would be responsive to the everyday needs of everyday people?

Hon Mr Clark: Let's take a moment and put this into perspective. The US federal government is investing more than \$200 billion in transportation, including urban transit. A comparable commitment by the government of Canada would be \$20 billion. We're only asking Ottawa for \$3 billion over 10 years.

The municipalities are with us; the developers are with us; the environmentalists are with us. Everyone in Ontario seems to agree that what we've proposed makes sense. The only one that isn't there is the federal government. Everyone is asking them to come to the table with the money to help us in transit. The only ones who aren't asking them to come to the table are the Liberals on that side of the House. Dalton McGuinty is missing in action. No one over there has asked the federal government to come to the table for transit. Where are the Liberals?

MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): To the minister responsible for multiculturalism: you know full well that Muslims have been and continue to be the targets of hate-motivated backlash to the events of September 11. Of any group, they're the ones most in need of reassurance of their safety and security, yet you excluded them from this ad. You see, leadership and members of the Muslim community have made it clear to me that they're upset about the deliberate omission. They've expressed their concerns to me. I pass them now to you.

My question is simple. Why did you choose to omit the image of identifiable Muslim men and women from this ad? Why didn't you include a Muslim woman wear-

ing a hijab, for example? The image is conspicuously absent. Why?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): First of all, I'd like to suggest to the member opposite that he may have in his own mind a profile for a person who is a Muslim in this country and in this world, but as the minister for this province, I attended the Muslim conference this summer and spoke. I met people from Israel, I met people from South America, I met people from all over the world, and I for one could not stylize the look of a Muslim in this country.

We are fortunate that we live in a province where people can practise their religion, attend their schools and participate fully in the life of our province without specific identifiers. In this instance, Mr Speaker, if the member opposite would like the matter raised, both the Premier and I will be meeting with Muslim leaders later this afternoon, but I for one happen to believe that the member is on a fishing expedition here, and I think it's most inappropriate.

Mr Kormos: You know full well what I'm talking about. It's those Muslim women, for instance, who wear head coverings and who wear the hijab as a part of expression of their faith who are literally afraid to leave their homes, young and old, in this community because they are identifiable as Muslims. You had a chance to include them among the people whom you regard as being Ontario's members in Ontario's communities.

We filed a complaint with Advertising Standards Canada on behalf of that community, on behalf of those persons. You pretend your ad's there to reassure people, but your omission of an identifiable Muslim wearing garb that clearly reveals their faith appears to be a breach of at least three sections: exploiting fears, providing unacceptable depictions and portrayals, and defying the federal gender portrayal guidelines governing diversity and guidelines.

Will you explain why you would not have included a Muslim woman in a hijab as part of Mike Harris's Ontario that deserves reassurance that their safety and security is foremost in the Premier's mind as well?

Hon Mr Jackson: Mr Speaker, I am very concerned about the tone and the nature and the approach the member is taking in the question. Again, I have to say that in the course of the last month I have met on numerous occasions with leaders of the Muslim community in this province, and I must confess that not once was this the nature of the concern they expressed. I for one believe it's not helpful to the process of the inclusion of all people in this province for a member to stand in his place and raise this kind of a question. The Muslim community seeks to be understood and they need to be listened to, and those are the things that we're doing. All members of Ontario's society should engage in this process.

I can share with this House that I for one have concerns that even until recently your own NDP Web site selling memberships was asking for ethnic profiling as a condition of applying. In my view, that is most inappro-

prate, and I am pleased that it was recently removed from your Web site.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S RESOLUTION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: This is tangential to the decision you're going to make within the next while with respect to Mr Guzzo's resolution. I would ask you also to consider, sir, what happens in the event that you rule that resolution out of order. It's an hour of private members' time that would be lost. The members on all sides of the House, I am sure, would want to make sure that should your decision impact to the negative in terms of allowing that resolution some method be allowed to accommodate an hour of debate on another private members' matter.

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

PETITIONS

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

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

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to institute patient-based budgeting for health care services in the 1995 Common Sense Revolution; and

"Whereas community care access centres now face a collective shortfall of \$175 million due to a funding rollback by the provincial government; and

"Whereas due to this funding rollback, community care access centres have cut back on home care services affecting many sick and elderly Ontarians; and

"Whereas these cuts in services are forcing Ontarians into more expensive long-term-care facilities or back into hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately lift the funding freeze for home care services, so as to ensure that community care access centres can provide the services that Ontario's working families need."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

1550

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have a petition to stop the clawback that this government is doing on the national child tax benefit supplement. I've got 460 further names to the 7,000 of the other day from all over Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order. Did you want to read it or did you want to explain it?

Mr Martin: I wanted to do a little bit of both.

The Acting Speaker: No, one or the other, please.

Mr Martin: "Whereas one in five children in Ontario live in poverty; and

"Whereas, as part of the national child tax benefit program, the federal government gives a supplement to low-income families across the country to begin to address child poverty; and

"Whereas that money, up to approximately \$100 per month per child, is meant to give our poorest and most vulnerable children a better chance in life; and

"Whereas in Ontario the Conservative government deducts the child benefit supplement, dollar for dollar, from those living on social assistance; and

"Whereas this is leaving our province's neediest children without extra money they desperately need to have a chance to begin their climb out of poverty; and

"Whereas all children are entitled to a fair chance at life;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the provincial government of Ontario stop the clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement and ensure this federal money reaches all low-income families in Ontario."

I assign my signature to it and give it to Timothy here.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I have a petition here for the Legislative Assembly dealing with a very vital issue.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas post-secondary education is very important in the development of young adults, to the betterment of society and the economic future of our province; and

"Whereas the continuing challenge and cost of education facing families in Ontario in the 21st century is ever increasing; and

"Whereas the cost of post-secondary education in Ontario requires a combination of government and individual financial support; and

"Whereas the tax credit proposed in Bill 4, Saving for our Children's Future, 2001, will effectively and beneficially encourage families to save for their children's education; and

"Whereas the large majority of children and families with a registered education savings plan do not apply for OSAP, thereby freeing millions of dollars for other OSAP students;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Legislature of Ontario to act quickly to pass Bill 4, Saving for our Children's Future, 2001, and thereby extend the opportunity of post-secondary education to thousands of Ontario children for the future."

I proudly affix my signature to this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This petition is signed by over 200 people in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I sign my name to this petition.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I too have a petition I would like to read. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

It's signed by 251 residents, and I too will affix my signature.

HIGHWAY 407

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): Mr Speaker, as you would know, earlier today I posed a question to the

Minister of Transportation, and this petition is addressed to the minister.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the province of Ontario has proposed the extension of Highway 407 into the Durham region and the proposed route, designated as the technically preferred route, will dissect the property of Kedron Dells Golf Course Ltd Oshawa,” which is in my riding of Durham,

“Whereas such routing will destroy completely five holes, and severely impact two additional holes effectively destroying the golf course as a viable and vibrant golf course,

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to change this routing to one of the other identified alternate routes, thus preserving this highly regarded, public facility patronized annually by thousands of”—many thousands of my constituents, residents of Durham region and the GTA.

I am pleased to support—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Thank you. Further petitions?

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): As you know, there is a severe doctor shortage crisis in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario. I have a petition here signed by 40,000 people.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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, we, as residents of Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario, 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.”

I am very pleased to sign my name to this petition.

MUNICIPAL RESTRUCTURING

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

There are 190 signatures here. I sign mine and give it to Cherie to deliver.

EMERY ADULT LEARNING CENTRE

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I have a petition that is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas, due to the Harris government’s continued erosion of funding for education, the Toronto District School Board may be closing the Emery Adult Learning Centre in June of 2002; and

“Whereas many of the students at the Emery Adult Learning Centre are new Canadians who need to further their education if they are to become productive citizens of Ontario, and they do not want their school closed; and

“Whereas Mike Harris is cutting the heart out of the community by closing the Emery adult day school programs, whose students need this type of education to get off welfare, need better job prospects, and need to learn skills necessary to contribute to society;

“Now, therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“We call upon the Minister of Education, who has the primary responsibility for providing quality education for each and every student in Ontario, including adults, to:

“(1) Listen to the views being expressed by the teachers and students of Emery Adult Learning Centre who are concerned on the implications and disruptive effects of the school closure;

“(2) Recognize the fundamental importance of adult education for new Canadians who need help settling in our neighbourhood communities;

“(3) Live up to the government’s commitment to provide adequate funding to meet the education needs of adult students across the province, and not allow the closing of Emery Adult Learning Centre.”

I concur with the petition, and I will affix my signature to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Pursuant to standing order VIII 30(b), I interrupt the proceedings now to call orders of the day.

1600

OPPOSITION DAY

PROVINCIAL SALES TAX

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I move that the Legislative Assembly calls on the provincial government to implement a temporary provincial sales tax holiday to provide immediate stimulus to Ontario’s sagging economy, to enhance consumer confidence and to create a progressive tax cut that would help working families at the cash register when they need it most.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Debate?

Mr Hampton: The evidence grows daily that Ontario’s economy, and indeed Canada’s economy, is declining very quickly. Today the chief of the Bank of Canada admitted in a speech that Canada’s economy will be likely to reach a 1.5% growth rate for the year 2001 overall. In fact, he acknowledges that for the last two quarters of the year, which we’re into right now, essentially the situation may be flat. He even acknowledges there may be less than zero growth, which means a recession.

The chief of the Bank of Canada recognizes as well that what is plummeting, what is declining very rapidly, as he said in his speech, is consumer confidence. What is so important about consumer confidence? It is this: consumer confidence, consumer purchases, account for two thirds of economic activity in this province and in Canada generally. When you factor in all of the types of economic activity, it is in fact the activity of 11-million-plus consumers in this province who have a very great say in determining how much economic activity we have, how much stimulus there is in the economy or, on the other hand, how much people are staying away from the shopping malls, how much people are staying away from chain stores and therefore how many layoffs we have in our society. So the chief of the Bank of Canada admits in his speech today that consumer confidence is declining very rapidly.

This calls on governments to react. The Bank of Canada has reacted by lowering interest rates to the lowest rate in 40 years. We have not seen interest rates this low since 1961. Just yesterday the Bank of Canada aggressively lowered interest rates by three quarters of a per cent. What does this indicate? That the Bank of Canada recognizes very clearly that consumer confidence needs to be stimulated, measures need to be taken to say to consumers across Ontario and across Canada that we recognize that their confidence is declining, we recognize their activity in the economy is declining and that something must be done to address that.

It’s not just in Canada that central banks are recognizing that something must be done. We have seen aggressive interest rate cutting in the United States, we’ve seen

aggressive interest rate cutting by the Bank of England. Again, they all worry about consumer confidence. What does cutting the interest rate do? It says to consumers, "If you are thinking about buying a home, we're going to cut the interest rates so much that we'll make it more financially attractive to you to buy a home, to take on a mortgage. If you're thinking about buying a car, a cut in the interest rate will make it much cheaper to finance a loan to purchase that car." It also potentially makes it cheaper for consumers to take out a variety of personal loans for the purchase of household products, like maybe a fridge or stove.

But the interest rate is only one way of speaking to consumer confidence. Another way to speak to consumer confidence is to say to consumers directly, "If you're going to go out there and you're going to purchase, for example, winter clothing, we're prepared to substantially reduce the sales tax on the purchase of winter clothing." God knows that's something that is a necessity in Ontario already this fall, and will certainly be a necessity as we head into winter. Or we see students returning to school. Eliminating the provincial sales tax on the purchase of school supplies would also be another important message to consumers: "If you're prepared to make these purchases, which we know you need, we're prepared to make it better for you financially," by either eliminating or substantially reducing the sales tax.

Instead of speaking directly to the 11-million-plus consumers in this province, instead of dealing with the issue of consumer confidence, which everyone acknowledges is a problem, what has this government done? Well, what it has done is it has trotted out its familiar rhetoric. Instead of providing some incentive to the more than 11 million consumers out there, it has gone to Bay Street and offered up \$2.5 billion in corporate tax cuts. These corporate tax cuts are not going to get to the consumers of the province. The corporate tax cuts are only going to get to those corporations that in fact are already showing a profit. These corporate tax cuts will not even help companies that are in trouble.

So in the auto parts production industry we have A.G. Simpson with 2,000 jobs at stake. A.G. Simpson will not benefit from these corporate tax cuts. A.G. Simpson isn't showing a profit. They only pay corporate taxes on their profits, so if they're not showing a profit, they will not get any corporate tax break. Let's take Stelco. Stelco announced a substantial loss and Stelco is going to lay off some 435 employees. Stelco will not benefit from these corporate tax cuts. Algoma Steel has announced substantial losses. They will not benefit from these corporate tax cuts, and literally hundreds of jobs could be at stake there. The Hudson's Bay Co and Zellers department store, which are right there on the front line in terms of consumer confidence and the willingness of consumers to go out and make the purchases they need—for example, in this case, winter clothing—have both announced that they're going to lose money. They will not be helped by these corporate tax cuts.

What we've got in answer to the decline in consumer confidence is a government that says, "We're going to give money to our corporate friends—\$2.5 billion." I just want to outline for people across Ontario who is going to get the money from this corporate tax cut. Let's take Bell Canada Enterprises Inc. Bell Canada, BCE Inc, as it's known, had profits in the year 2000 of \$4.861 billion. Bell Canada, based upon the corporate taxes they paid last year, if we assume that 40% of Bell Canada Enterprises's operations were taxable in Ontario, they had \$1.9 billion in Ontario profits and they paid \$260 million in provincial corporate taxes, will get a corporate tax cut of \$22 million this year, and fully phased in they will get a corporate tax cut of \$152 million.

1610

This government's strategy is simply a strategy to benefit those corporations that are already doing very well. What does this do for consumer confidence? I suggest to you, nothing. In fact, what we find when we look at Bell Canada Enterprises Inc is that Bell Canada Enterprises Inc is one of those corporations that is actually going to be laying off people. Bell Canada Enterprises is not going to take these corporate taxes and ensure that their workers are employed and able to contribute to the economy. If you look at one of the Bell Canada Enterprises companies, CTV, they are busy laying off hundreds of workers in Ontario, particularly in northern Ontario. Bell Globemedia, another Bell company, has said that they are looking at laying off hundreds more. How does feeding the hand of this large corporation help consumer confidence? I think people across Ontario, if they reflect on it, will see that putting more profits in the hands of a company that already has, last year, \$4.861 billion in profits does nothing for consumer confidence, does nothing for the 11 million people out there. It simply makes a company that is bulging in profits more profitable still.

The other point the government makes is that accelerated personal income tax cuts will stimulate consumer confidence. That was exactly the same rhetoric that George Bush, the American President, put across this past summer. He said that a personal income tax cut to the tune of several billion dollars in the United States would stimulate consumer confidence. The problem with that argument, and it's a problem that George Bush has and a problem that this government has, is that in troubled economic times, when people are worried about losing their own jobs or they're worried about perhaps being reduced to fewer hours, or when people are just generally worried about the state of the economy, when they receive a personal income tax cut, they don't go out there and spend it in the economy, they don't go out there and contribute to more economic activity. What they tend to do is say, "Oh, I got this little bit of extra money from this personal income tax cut. I'm going to put it away for a rainy day. Because I don't know what's happening in the economy, I'm going to put it away."

If you look at what happened in the United States with the Bush government's very aggressive income tax cut—

it amounted to \$600 per household in a direct cheque this summer. If you look at what those households did, about 150 million of them across the United States, 75% did not go out and spend that personal income tax rebate. They put it in their pockets. In other words, 75% of taxpayers in the United States said, "I vote no on this personal income tax cut. This personal income tax cut you've given me is not providing me with an incentive to go out there and make the purchases I need."

I predict the same thing will happen with this government's personal income tax cut, that it is not going to result in any reinforcement of consumer confidence and it's not going to result in any stimulation of the economy. Because people are worried about the state of the economy, because so many are worried they might lose their job, people will simply put it away for a rainy day, put it away in case they suffer from reduced hours at their workplace or in case they lose their job. There will be minimal, if any, stimulation of consumer confidence and minimal, if any, stimulation of the overall economy.

Why is this question of consumer confidence so crucial right now and why is the government strategy so wrong-headed? It's crucial because if we cannot begin to restore and rebuild consumer confidence, if consumers over the next three months, let us say, take the attitude, "Well, I'm not going to purchase that winter clothing," or "I'm not going to purchase those winter boots," or they say, "Despite the fact that I need a fridge, I need a stove, I'm not going to make those purchases because I'm worried about the economy," if they stay away from the Zellers stores, the Bay stores and the Sears stores, if they stay away from the shopping malls, what then tends to happen is that there is a further decline in the economy, which is what's happening. The Bay and Zellers and Sears are telling us that. So the Bay and Zellers and Sears then lay off and small businesses lay off. That decline in consumer confidence and those layoffs in the retail sector then result in further economic decline.

It's very important to deal with this issue of consumer confidence now. That's why the Bank of Canada is acting. That's why the Federal Reserve bank in the United States is cutting interest rates so aggressively. That's why the Bank of England is cutting interest rates so aggressively. What's the Harris government's answer? The Harris government, the Conservative government, is not going to address the issue of restoring consumer confidence or giving the 11-million-plus consumers in Ontario a reason to go out there and make the purchases they need. The Conservative government is simply going to funnel more money to corporations that are well off and to high-income earners who are well off and ignore the overall plight of 11 million consumers.

There is all kinds of evidence of what happens when you implement a temporary provincial retail sales tax reduction. That evidence comes not only from Canada, but from a number of states in the United States that have in the past implemented sales tax holidays, sales tax reductions, as a way of stimulating consumer confidence.

I want to give you an example. The province of Saskatchewan is reducing its provincial sales tax from 9% to 6% and it's eliminating the sales tax on home heating oil completely, making it tax-free. Why? Because they want to stimulate consumers in that province to go out and make the purchases they need. They want to forestall further layoffs and further economic decline in that province's economy.

I mentioned several US states. New York enacted the first sales tax holiday in 1997. Florida and Texas quickly followed suit. By the year 2000 legislative session, 21 states in the United States were considering the concept. Since the disaster of September 11 in the United States, several more states are looking at a targeted sales tax reduction as a means of getting consumers back into the retail stores, back into the shopping malls, getting them to make the purchases they need, saying to them directly, "If you're prepared to make these purchases—a fridge, a stove, winter clothing, perhaps furniture you need for your home, perhaps a new car—we will substantially reduce the sales tax and save you money as an incentive."

I want to address the cost of this. The government's accelerated corporate tax reduction is going to cost \$2.5 billion on an annual basis, but will do nothing to stimulate consumer confidence, nothing to bring consumers back into the retail stores, the small businesses and the restaurants to make the purchases they want to make and, in many cases, need to make. So there is \$2.5 billion this government's going to give away to the most profitable corporations in this province, with virtually no effect on consumer confidence.

Merely reducing and eliminating the retail sales tax for the next three months would only cost the province, in terms of revenues foregone, \$1.5 billion. Some of that money would be recouped if people respond, and I think they will respond, because the evidence from Saskatchewan and the United States is that overwhelmingly they responded. If people go out and then make those purchases, some of that \$1.5 billion would be recouped.

I think the government's position is indefensible. At a time when consumer confidence is on the decline so severely and is recognized as such by all kinds of economic commentators and by the Bank of Canada, the government's response is to say, "We're not going to do anything in terms of a provincial sales tax reduction. We're not going to reward consumers. We're not going to try to attract consumers into the small businesses, into the chain stores, into the shopping malls. We're simply going to give more money to corporations." I think that is absolutely indefensible, particularly since it's going to cost so much money and is not going to have any effect in restoring consumer confidence.

That's why we have put this motion forward. We believe, and the economic commentators out there believe, that something must be done now, must be done quickly and must be done in a focused way to enhance and restore consumer confidence. We don't see anything from this government. Corporate tax cuts are not going to work. Larger personal income tax cuts aimed at the well-

off are not going to work. They haven't worked in the United States. We call for a three-month retail sales tax holiday in Ontario to save the 11 million consumers in Ontario. Go out, purchase the things you need and you want and help us restore the economy in doing such.

1620

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'm very interested in responding to opposition day number 1, where somebody "calls on the provincial government to implement a temporary provincial sales tax holiday to provide immediate stimulus to Ontario's sagging economy, to enhance consumer confidence and to create a progressive tax cut that would help working families at the cash register when they need it most."

First of all, I'd like to respond to comments made earlier by the leader of the third party in respect to comments I made yesterday on a supply bill. I take it as a compliment because he refers to me as somewhat of a financial expert. That just shows you how much trouble they really are in if I'm considered the financial expert.

It's important to start with recognizing the importance of having a balanced tax strategy. The most important thing recognized here is that this government is known, and is clearly on record, as being against taxes, and has reduced taxes. It's a precarious balance, to find the right balance of revenue and expenditures.

Mr Hampton has put forward a recommendation of three points and I think, without having the actual facts in front of me, that each point in the retail sales tax represents probably about \$1.5 billion in revenue, so you're talking about a considerable amount of revenue reduction. At the same time, he's not talking about expenditure reductions. You can't have one without the other. We're committed to a balanced budget. His government was operating in the order of a \$10-billion to \$12-billion annual deficit. That was about 20% or more of their spending. I can't in all conscience think they've thought it through very well. If he were to converse with his previous Treasurer, Floyd Laughren, he'd find that their economic fundamentals and strategy were absolutely flawed. If you look at Floyd today—he's at the Ontario Energy Board, so clearly he's doing fine—he's a fair-minded person who keeps the environment in focus.

As to what this government has done, I think it's important for the members of the House to refer to Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty's budget that he presented. In this budget, Mr Flaherty's responsible choices indicate very clearly, in this document, that right now we're spending over \$23 billion on health care, that we're actually spending an increased amount, \$8.1 billion, on education, operating grants for school boards, and \$2.8 billion for colleges and universities, and the list goes on.

I recognize that the expenditures in this province, the careful decisions made to support important public spending, haven't been addressed in this opposition day motion, which is clear evidence that even when they were government, they just didn't grasp the concept of the relationship between revenue and expenditures.

In his supplementary remarks, he may find time to address that portion of it. Health care is consuming over 40% of our budget. Education is consuming in the order of a total amount of around \$14 billion. You've got to look at the whole equation and look at the expenditure side as well. Of the total revenue, by the way, I believe that from retail sales taxes it is in the order of about \$14 billion.

Tax cuts have been an integral part of this government's agenda, as I've said, and the economy; and the results are the proof. Numerous studies around the world have confirmed this government's belief that tax rates are one of the most important factors in determining economic growth and productivity.

Mr Speaker, you would know that the most important way of respecting the plan is to imitate the plan. I put to you that other provinces and other jurisdictions, including the federal government, have imitated our plan by reducing personal income tax as being the most effective tool to put the taxpayers' money, the hard-working income tax relief, right back in the taxpayers' pocket, and they decide where to spend it. I'm referring to studies published under the auspices of well-respected international organizations, including the International Monetary Fund, the National Bureau of Economic Research and the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. It is satisfying to see our government's economic plan for this province receive such appropriate recognition.

And yet we need not rely on studies to have our strategies confirmed. We need only look to this great province of ours: three consecutively balanced budgets and \$3 billion paid off the accumulated debt. Because of our commitment to cutting the tax burden, our people and businesses of Ontario have enjoyed a strong economic growth and unprecedented job creation. During the time this government has been in office, the Ontario economy has created 827,100 new jobs. That's 827,100 jobs in the last six years.

I hardly need add that this is a remarkable accomplishment. There's more to be done. We have worked hard to make tough decisions in an effort to make Ontario the best place to live, to work and to raise our families. I am confident that we have succeeded. And we'll continue to work toward that goal.

As a result of our personal income tax cuts, a significant number of low-income earners, some 755,000 to be precise, are no longer required to pay Ontario's personal income tax; 325,000 of these have been removed from the income tax rolls since 1995. It's not only these lower income earners who have benefited from our personal income tax cuts. Cutting personal income taxes means that all people have more money in their pocket to use as they see fit: to spend, to save or to invest.

Cutting personal income taxes raises consumer confidence and stimulates the economy as no other government initiative can directly. This is why, at this point of projected slower economic growth, we will still not abandon our well-defined plan to continue cutting personal income tax rates. In fact, this was just advanced, as you

know; the 20% was advanced. The Premier and cabinet announced that just recently. Such a plan is also being advocated by many other leading Canadian economists. In fact, we have accelerated, as I said, the tax cuts promised in the previous budget to take effect October 1, 2001. We've also accelerated our corporate tax cuts by promising that the cuts due on January 2, 2002, take effect three months earlier, on October 1, 2001, which sends a clear message to investors that Ontario is open for business.

Accelerating corporate tax cuts and business tax cuts, as I like to call them—what we propose to do—would free about \$115 million in tax cuts this year for business to use for investing and helping to keep workers on the payroll. Cutting taxes now demonstrates our faith in the tremendous growth potential for our province, as well as the entrepreneurial spirit and productivity of Ontario's workers. Cutting taxes also demonstrates our commitment to the successful economic course that we set out in 1995 and 1999 through today. The most significant and comprehensive package of tax reduction incentive was introduced earlier this year by our finance minister, Jim Flaherty, in the 2001 budget. Ontario's Edge involves, among other measures, moves to improve Ontario's tax competitiveness, not just in Canada but throughout the world.

One component is tax cuts for corporations. We are legislating the full schedule of corporate income tax rate cuts each year between now and 2005. By 2005, these tax cuts would give Ontario one of the lowest combined corporate income tax rates in Canada, which will make the province a prime destination in North America to do business; a very important signal, in response to Mr Hampton's earlier remark, that we have to keep the climate ripe for investment, which in fact creates jobs. No Canadian province would have a lower general corporate tax rate.

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Lower corporate taxes will encourage companies already here to invest more in new facilities and will attract other companies that may not yet have operations in Ontario. They also give business certainty. Because of our tax credit protection legislation, businesses know that they will not be hit with tax increases any time in the future.

Also, part of Ontario's Edge is the first step toward eliminating the job-killing capital tax. A tax on capital discourages investment in capital when more capital per worker is what is needed to boost productivity and in fact equates to a higher standard of living. We have announced that we will take the first steps toward eliminating this job-killing tax by removing it on the first \$5 million of taxable capital. This is one of the steps we have accelerated. We propose to make this cut effective October 1, 2001, rather than 2002, as originally planned, as further evidence of stimulus to the investment climate in Ontario. This would eliminate the tax for more than 11,000 existing small and medium-sized Ontario busi-

nesses, as well as benefiting larger firms that still continue to pay this tax.

We know that corporations are unwilling to invest in places where their workers and their families will face exorbitant personal income tax burdens. We know they are also unwilling to invest where their businesses will face a higher corporate tax burden. In other words, it's simply being more competitive.

We are confident that our policies to cut personal and corporate income tax rates have been the main reason that Ontario's economy has performed so remarkably over the past six years.

Even in the face of potential slower economic growth as a result of the incidents of September 11, our policies will prevail. The track record of this government—prudence, caution and an ability to make tough decisions—has contributed to the strength and reliability of our Ontario economy. As our finance minister, Jim Flaherty, has indicated, we are in better shape than ever to weather a period of economic uncertainty.

With the 2001 fall economic outlook, the minister will demonstrate to all Ontarians that the foundations for renewed, healthy, long-term economic growth are intact. The records of the Liberals and the NDP clearly demonstrate their failure in putting the citizens of Ontario and the economy of Ontario on a solid footing. Evidence of Liberal and NDP fiscal mismanagement is found in the history books.

Tax cuts will continue to help the people of Ontario. They will continue to help the businesses of Ontario. Virtually all forecasters cite tax cuts as a key reason that Ontario will continue to have a higher GDP in 2001 than most other jurisdictions. Economic indicators suggest that the forecasters are right. Over the first eight months of 2001, Ontario's retail sales tax rose by 3.5% from the same period in 2000.

Consumer confidence was also demonstrated by the pace of activity in Ontario's housing market. Over the first nine months of 2001, Toronto home resales are 13% ahead of the same period last year. Housing starts are 4.7% ahead of the same period last year.

Because we were proactive and did not shrink from making tough decisions, Ontario is better poised to withstand economic challenges. The tax-and-spend approach of the Liberals and the NDP is a proven failure. The evidence in the history books is clear, make no mistake about that.

The Ontario economy is strong, diverse and resilient due to the prudent fiscal management and decision-making of the Progressive Conservative government under the leadership of Mike Harris and Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty. I'm confident that the government, by remaining committed to a proven plan, will continue to foster a strong and diverse resilient economy.

I have two or three more points. I just wanted to refer to today's Toronto Star, which speaks to "Sharp Rate Cut Surprises Analysts." That's the 0.75 points in the rate cut to a 31-year low. This means that money for consumers and their credit will be cheaper. It is a direct stimulus. As

David Dodge, the Bank of Canada governor, has said, it's the most direct stimulus to the economy.

I would also like to point out from the same paper that it says that our federal finance minister, Mr Martin, says, "The federal government is not planning to remove the GST from new vehicle sales—despite growing support for the idea in some quarters.

"In a letter to auto dealers released yesterday, Martin said the Liberal government is focused on cutting"—listen to this—"personal income taxes by \$100 billion over five years to stimulate the economy, not on selective GST"—or other—"cuts."

Mr Speaker, I put to you that every point in the GDP will cost this government some \$500 million in lost revenue. As we see the GDP slipping from the 5% range down to what is reported now in the 1% to 2% range, we see there is a revenue challenge. This government is the right government to make the right decisions to look after the people of this province, as we've done. The track record speaks for itself.

I think Mr Hampton has to speak to the issue of expenditures and how they intend to address the loss of revenue and the demand on expenditures.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on the motion and follow up on the comments of the member for Durham.

We do have a significant problem in Ontario. In the last four months—and this was before the September 11 tragedy—Ontario had lost 26,000 jobs. The rest of Canada, by the way, in the same period of time had been gaining jobs. The Toronto Dominion Bank has come out with its economic forecast showing that Ontario is going to have the worst performance of any province in the country in both this year and next year.

The member from Durham quite rightly pointed out to us—and he would know because he's the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance—that the government is now running into a revenue problem, as he acknowledged with the significant drop in the gross domestic product. He pointed out that for every 1% drop of the gross domestic product, there's at least \$500 million of forgone revenue.

So we have a significant revenue problem in the province of Ontario, according to the parliamentary assistant, and I agree with that. We have a significant problem in Ontario's economy. I think every economist that you talk to would say—and I don't think you can find an economist who would not agree with this statement—the single biggest reason for Ontario's economic growth in the past five years has been exports to the United States, no question about it. We've said often that exports have gone from roughly the equivalent of 29% of our gross domestic product 10 years ago; it's now 55%. Nobody in the world relies on exports like Ontario does.

So we had a significant problem in the province of Ontario before September 11, made, all of us would acknowledge, far, far worse as a result of September 11. So what do we do? That's the challenge for us.

I would argue that this lack of confidence is quite a different sense of lack of confidence than we've seen before in economic slowdowns. I believe people are fundamentally worried about the future now. Certainly in the US they have some significant worries about health, because of anthrax and other things and terrorists. That's spilling over into Canada.

So the solutions of the past, in our opinion, aren't going to be the solutions of the future. The NDP have chosen to adopt essentially the Harris solution, that the solution to every problem is that we're going to cut taxes. That's what Mike Harris has been saying for years, and now the NDP have said, "Yeah, we embrace that. We believe the solution now is simply to cut taxes."

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Trinity-Spadina, come to order.

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Mr Phillips: I would argue that they are prepared, as Mr Hampton said, to forgo \$1.5 billion of revenue to have a cut, not to eliminate the provincial sales tax, but to cut it from 8% to 3% for three months.

I would argue that those simplistic solutions that have been offered by Harris and now embraced by Mr Hampton are not going to be the solutions that will see Ontario out of this economic slowdown and this sense of lack of confidence. I think it's far more fundamental than that.

Frankly, I would urge the NDP to look at the proposals my leader, Dalton McGuinty, has laid out over the last few days. What he said is the start of a solution, a sense-of-security plan. The first thing he said was there is roughly \$1.2 billion of SuperBuild plans that have yet to be announced. My leader has said it is time to move on those. This does not represent extra spending by the taxpayers; it is ensuring that they move forward. A key part of that is \$100 million for an essential security plan.

Today, as you know, we see a new structure at the back door, a significant expense that we are incurring to ensure that security here in this Legislature is maintained. Municipalities across this province are going to face that. My leader outlined a \$100-million plan to help municipalities deal with that. I would argue that that expenditure will do more to help consumer confidence than \$1.5 billion, the Hampton approach.

My leader yesterday urged the government to proceed with something we've been urging for some time. We have a significant challenge in our hospitals with overcrowding. We proposed many months ago that the government proceed to open 1,600 hospital beds. Our hospitals are extremely crowded now and will be in the future, as we have an aging population. Furthermore, for a sense of confidence in people that we can deal with a potential emergency, that would help significantly.

We have the busiest international crossing—certainly in North America, maybe in the world—at Windsor. Yet, as my leader pointed out, there are 14 traffic lights between Montreal and Florida on the throughways that carry most of our commerce; they're all in Windsor. Why is that? Because when you arrive on the 401 in Windsor,

you suddenly get to a local road that takes the traffic to the bridge. Dalton McGuinty urged the need to fix that throughway.

I would argue that the solution we have before us today in terms of restoring confidence does not get at the root concern of people. People are worried about their security. They're worried about ensuring that their provincial government, their municipal governments and their federal government have taken the steps necessary to ensure that we've done whatever we can to make sure our communities are safe and secure. I would argue that part of that is ensuring that the finances are available to sustain our health care system, our education system and our community services.

Again, the proposals that we've put forward are not incremental spending; they are rearranging priorities. But rather than forgo at least \$1.5 billion in I think desperately needed money, we're going to see in the next—we will have an economic statement on November 6, now less than two weeks away. It will be interesting. I think the Minister of Finance has a challenging job. Do you spell out the problems, just as the leadership race gets underway, or do you announce a few of the problems on November 6 and hope you can hide the rest until after the leadership race is over and the budget is presented in April?

In any event, I accept the professional advice of the economists who tell us Ontario has a significant problem, and a bigger problem than the rest of the provinces. So we must be wrestling with solutions. The NDP has chosen to adopt the Harris solution: a tax cut will fix everything. I think this problem is going to be more fundamental than that.

I would comment on the member for Durham's comments as well. The government has announced in its budget that we are going to have corporate taxes in the province of Ontario 25% lower than the US. If you look, Mr Speaker, as I know you have, at the documents the government produces—this is the government document "Here's Where You Should Be Doing Business." It is the document used to sell businesses on why they should locate in Ontario. As you read this, it points out that Ontario already has competitive taxes. My leader has spoken often: we are totally supportive of ensuring that Ontario has a competitive tax environment. But why would we want to compete on the basis of taxes 25% lower than the US?

I might add, when you look at this document, it points out that because of the way we fund health care in the province of Ontario—it says, "US manufacturers pay on average more than \$3,100 per employee for the kind of health care coverage provided by Canada's publicly supported system. In Ontario the cost is \$540"—there is, in other words, a \$2,600-per-employee cost advantage on health care alone. It points out in another part here that Canada has a 7.8% business cost advantage over the United States across eight industrial sectors. The point of raising that is that already, because of the way we fund our health care system—and it's funded because we

collectively have decided that through our taxes we are going to heavily insure ourselves—there's a huge advantage to companies operating in Canada and Ontario. But we've decided that we can also have taxes 25% lower than the US. I don't think that's sustainable. If you look at the reasons why people should come and invest in Ontario, it is the quality of our education system, a higher percentage of young people who have taken post-secondary education than any jurisdiction in North America; it is because of the quality of our publicly funded health care system, with a \$2,600-per-employee cost advantage. It talks about the quality of our water. It is all about those things that we've chosen to make sure that we invest in in the province of Ontario.

So I say to us, as we debate this resolution at a time when people are, like I've never seen before, apprehensive about the future, it is a solution locked in the past. You can save 3% on your sales tax for three months at Christmas and that's going to solve the problems of our economy. I think you're going to find Christmas sales starting probably in November, because we are going to have a challenging time at Christmas. But it's far more related, in my opinion, to the fundamental concerns. What I believe governments could best do for the people of this province is to provide the kind of reassurance that, first, we can sustain our health care and our education and our community services. That's why we've argued all along that committing ourselves in legislation to corporate taxes 25% below the US—where do we find the money to at the same time have corporate taxes 25% lower than the US but also say to every company in the province of Ontario, "Your health costs are going to be \$2,600 per employee less than the US"? There's no magic to this stuff. It is all about finding the resources.

I go back to the plans that my leader has announced over the past few days to try and provide a sense of security to Ontario. I would argue that those sorts of plans that he's announced—and more will come—will do more toward ensuring that our infrastructure investments in fact do take place.

1650

I would add that it was a year and a half ago the government first announced the SuperBuild millennium partnership fund, \$1 billion. Guess what? So far they've spent \$4 million of that. My leader has pointed out that we should be moving forward with those, taking \$100 million of that in the Ontario security fund, money that's already budgeted, and ensuring that our municipal partners and the province are investing properly in security, the hospital bed program and helping to ensure that our exports can be expedited to the US. Through this period of time, we must make sure that all the possible barriers are eliminated for our export industry.

I think we face serious revenue problems, confirmed today. I was glad to hear Mr O'Toole, the member for Durham, acknowledge, because he would know better than most of us, that we are starting to see a significant revenue problem. What will undermine consumer confi-

dence more than anything is that we don't invest properly in the necessary security measures; that we find over the next few months we have to cut our health care and our community services and our education significantly. That will do more than anything else to undermine consumer confidence.

As we look at a 3% cut in provincial sales tax for three months, at least a \$1.5-billion cost in forgone revenue, and balance that versus other things that could be done to build a sense of security and confidence, my leader has spelled out what I think we should be doing to build that sense of confidence.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very important resolution, particularly at this point in our history as we face a recession coming at us that we've known about for quite some time, exacerbated, of course, by the events of September 11.

I want to say first of all how disappointed I am that the Liberals aren't supporting this resolution and the way that it was painted by the previous speaker as somehow not fitting within a larger plan that will get this province out of a very difficult jam, created primarily by the initiatives and programs of this government, but in keeping with an agenda that we've on many, many occasions over the last five or six years in this place challenged and suggested needed some fundamental and radical change.

The Liberals speak of the need to get this government to move on spending the money that has been put into the SuperBuild fund. That's not new. We've been saying that here for about three or four weeks now, since we came back from the summer. That's all part of a larger package that we've rolled out that would stimulate the economy of this province and give people some hope, encourage them to continue to spend and to keep the economy going as we work our way through these very difficult times.

The sales tax proposal that's on the table here this afternoon is by no means the be-all and the end-all. It's a short-term, one-time initiative that we feel would give the consumers of this province some relief. As our leader said earlier this afternoon, a huge percentage of the economic activity of this province is in the area of consumer spending, and we need to focus on that. As a matter of fact, it shouldn't come as a big surprise to a whole lot of people across this province that we would be proposing a sales tax cut, because we've been on the record for quite a number of years now as supporting the reduction of sales tax and the reduction of the GST in this province to help ordinary men and women out there who need some relief in terms of being able to buy the kinds of things they need for their day-to-day lives. We feel that to put that together with the very difficult challenge that we face today, give those folks the relief that they need to get them through this difficult time and, in turn, assist small business to keep them afloat when they need it most makes a whole lot of sense.

To put that together with a program of change in government, where government actually begins to take its job seriously and sees its role clearly where the

economy is concerned, challenge the government to spend the kind of money that we know it has socked away to roll out before the next provincial election right now under the aegis of the SuperBuild fund, so that communities across this province can be stimulated and given hope and encouraged in the way that kind of activity and spending always does, would be a very helpful thing to be doing. I challenge the Liberals to take another look at this and support us and move with us in this way to stimulate the economy and consumer spending.

I want to talk, for the few minutes I have here this afternoon, ever so briefly about the claim this government made when it came to power, that if it cut taxes and got government out of the way, the economy would get better and we would recession-proof the province, that we would never, ever see a recession in Ontario again. Well, all the indicators that we look at now, all the economists out there, the banking professionals, are saying that just hasn't happened. In fact, this government has put this province in a precariously sensitive and difficult position, and it didn't need to happen.

They said there was no choice, that there was no alternative, that they went out to the people, they consulted and they looked around the world for other things that people were doing, and that this was the best there was; that as a matter of fact, with this approach to the economy—to give ever more increasing income tax cuts to the rich, give corporate tax cuts to big corporations—they in turn would do the right thing always, invest that money in local economies, in small businesses so that the province would never again have to deal with a recession. I don't think there's anybody out there except a few loud people across the way who suggest that we're not—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Throw him out.

The Acting Speaker: I don't need any advice, but I have about four on the list if you're interested. I will not have this yelling back and forth. The speaker deserves your attention, and I'm here to ensure that he gets it.

Mr Martin: If you want to look and are serious at looking at an alternative to what this government is doing, you don't have to look very far. You look at the clock, and our time is running out. You look at the record of our government when we were in power to know that when government takes leadership, when government invests in infrastructure, when government puts in place vehicles that communities can use to restructure companies in trouble and communities in trouble, you can make a difference. You look, for example, at countries in Europe, like Ireland, where government takes leadership, where government invests in infrastructure. Where government brings people together and gives the industry out there the support they need, you can have a good economy that is sustainable and has in it that which will take it into the future. You add that to some immediate and needed stimulus to an economy such as we're sug-

gesting here today, and I think you have a recipe for success.

I would ask the Liberals to reconsider their position and this government—because it lacks any other initiative, it seems, at this point in time—to support this as well.

1700

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the third party's motion today. I found it very interesting that my respected colleague the member from my original hometown, Sault Ste Marie, made his original comments. As always, I respect his comments. However, we do disagree. We've said that publicly and we've said it privately, but nevertheless I know that Tony does a lot of hard work for the constituents of Sault Ste Marie.

With respect to the member from Sault Ste Marie, I want to remind him that he said that as that government went into doing what it was doing, this was the best there was. The interesting thing is that in the 1995 election, as we were going into that campaign in the last days of the Bob Rae government, I remind the member that there were five provincial governments in Canada, of all three political stripes, that had already balanced their budgets. It wasn't just Ralph Klein of Alberta; it was also Roy Romanow of Saskatchewan, and it was also Manitoba and New Brunswick. These leaders chose to take good management control of their province. They controlled the spending. They were able to assist in tax revenues for their province and to balance their budgets. They went through the same recession Ontario did, but they were able to achieve it.

I also want to indicate to the member that we are very pleased your party and your leader have become born-again. After 1995 we were seen to be the only government and party that endorsed, promised and delivered on tax cuts. Many, and almost all, other governments began to follow that lead of tax cuts. But it wasn't just the retail sales tax that some jurisdictions promoted and that this party is promoting in today's motion; in fact, they were personal reductions.

I found it amazing that across this country, and federally and in other, US jurisdictions—and now, believe it or not, in the last three years, of all places to endorse cuts in taxes, I think of Italy, the country of my heritage, which went through 45 years of coalition governments. Tax cuts were tantamount to insurrection. You know what? They have in fact endorsed tax cuts. I would say that virtually every party, regardless of the stripe—I know that my honourable colleagues with the same heritage I have know and understand that most parties in the Italian government were essentially centrist at the best of times, but leftist almost all the time. They had to govern by coalition. The reality was that here they were embracing tax cuts as a matter of policy, as an incentive to stimulate the economy in that country.

Other European jurisdictions in the common market have endorsed tax cuts. It's wonderful to see that finally the honourable Minister of Finance in the federal govern-

ment has bought into this philosophy. I'm pleased that we now have a born-again NDP, with its leader, that says, "Tax cuts." However, we feel we have a comprehensive, more effective, more impactful economic plan. It isn't just the elimination of red tape and deficit reduction and greater efficiency in government. Clearly all of these elements have helped our plan work in Ontario. But it is the tax cuts that put the money into the people's pockets.

People put it in their pocket, and they spend it as they see fit. They can choose to invest it for future gains. People say, "That's not spending it," but you know what? It really is, because it puts money in the investment market. When you buy an RRSP or when you buy an education plan for your children's university, that's putting money into a different kind of product market.

They can spend it on the appliances, they can spend it on new cars, or on a night out with family and friends in a restaurant. Or they may choose to save it for a new home, maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but maybe this coming spring. I remember during the 1995 campaign and the 1999 campaign, but in particular in the 1995 campaign, when I talked to a man in a townhouse complex, and it wasn't an expensive, rich condominium type of place. I was explaining about our tax cut proposal plan and I said, "If you earn \$35,000 a year and you can take \$1,000 or \$1,200 home, you could go and buy a washer and a dryer. You could put a down payment on a car. You could buy various things." He looked at me and said, in his denim jeans, and the power saw on the sawhorse, in front of his house, "Hell, man, that's beer money." I said, "God bless you, my friend. You make the choice as to how you want to spend it. If it's beer money, good for you. If it's going to be a washer and a dryer, good for you." The clear impact is that the money goes into the pocket of the consuming public and we don't direct where the savings should be.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): I requested the opportunity to speak to this resolution and I'm certainly pleased to join the debate. I want to say at the outset that I don't support the resolution and I want to take a few minutes to explain why.

In many ways this debate provides an opportunity to rethink and restate some core beliefs, even some fundamental principles, about government. I believe in government. Although I believe we should only have the government that we need, I believe we must insist on all the government we require. Those kids needing special education assistance and the seniors who come into my office all the time with special needs have taught me that.

To me, government is about two things: how our values, those things we hold to be self-evident, end up getting reflected in public policy; and how we make decisions about the distribution of goods, services and opportunities in Ontario. I've thought for a long time that to whatever extent tax cuts make sense, those tax cuts ought to be targeted and there ought to be a trigger mechanism. I think that holds for both spending and the tax

side. I believe in prosperity. In fact, as one of the people in my riding said recently, no one would have remembered the good Samaritan if he hadn't had money. But what good are wealth and prosperity if they don't assist us in spotting and assisting the vulnerable, in guaranteeing that Ontario is once again a place to stand and a place to grow for everyone? Make no mistake, government is about choices and options, what we choose to embrace. I believe that if you want to have a voice at the table, you need to have something to say.

We've seen in recent years the use of different approaches. We've seen government, for some of the right reasons, naively try to spend themselves out of a recession. In so doing, they placed our economy at risk. To the relief of many, the voters of Ontario cast their judgment on that approach. We've also seen a government that foolishly borrowed—yes, borrowed—money to finance massive tax cuts and, in so doing, allowed the provincial debt to skyrocket and core services to be put at risk. Different approaches, one very foolish and one extremely short-sighted: corporate giveaways versus self-serving political panhandling.

Let me be clear: I believe in government and I believe that government needs to be interventionist. But the kind of intervention we take is important. That intervention must be cogent, comprehensive, integrated and strategic. It should be consistent with a stated goal, and the way of achieving it must make sense. Frankly, I'm having a lot of difficulty understanding my NDP friends. Before we even get to the strategy, I'm having difficulty with the goal, this 3% cut in the provincial sales tax to engender consumer confidence and spending? My gosh. I'm going to save 3% on a new pair of shoes while Margaret still needs home care and Emily and Carleigh still need their special-education assistance.

1710

What's the goal? I didn't hear them say anything about small business. Is the goal to stimulate spending? Is the goal to drive down provincial revenue and, in so doing, further restrict this province's ability to respond to pressing needs?

I think we need to use good times and the wealth that's generated in good times to help us with the burden of the present or future difficult times. Let's take a snapshot of where we're at. Today many are telling us our economy is slowing; it may even be in difficulty. Some sectors are having more problems than others. We know that working families have some anxiety about their jobs. We know our economy is decidedly export-dependent, as my colleague indicated a few moments ago. We know that education and health care are in chaos; vulnerable kids and seniors not getting the help they require.

This isn't rocket science; it's about revenues, expenditures and the balance between the two. If the cost of providing needed services escalates and our capacity to respond to hurting people is restricted, people suffer. There are too many Ontarians already suffering.

I want to describe in the moment or so I have left what a comprehensive, cogent, responsible and integrated economic strategy might look like, building on the remarks of my colleague from Scarborough-Agincourt. It would involve a shared sense of purpose, finding new money through transfer payments, not walking away from the table with the federal government around things like home care and health care. It would involve perhaps an increase in the Ontario disability allowance program, rescinding the \$2.2 billion in corporate tax cuts, in order to find the money for the educational assistance we need and the environmental vigilance we should be using. It would be shoring up supports for our export-dependent economy, assisting municipalities with funding emergency measures and, yes, accelerating capital expenditures that are planned—and perhaps, if we have some space left over, some sectoral sales-tax-targeted relief, and also our infrastructure and water projects.

We would offer those up on this side of the House as that responsible, integrated, comprehensive program that we believe the people of Ontario would have us embrace.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased to participate in this debate, and of course I support the resolution.

Let me begin by looking at the current economic situation in the province. Here we go: May to August, 17,000 jobs lost; September, another 9,000 jobs lost. Canadian auto production down 15% in the first three quarters of this year. The restaurant sector has already said publicly this is the worst year for them in the last decade; they can expect staff, cooks, soon to be laid off.

RBC Financial Group, in its autumn 2001 economic and financial market outlook, said the following: "Given a relatively heavy reliance on the US consumer in Ontario and Quebec, the near term will be tough for those two provinces."

TD Economics, October 12, 2000, Report on Canadian Government Finances, said, "The Ontario economy, which sends about 95% of its exports to the US, is being hard hit this year by the US economic downturn."

The HRDC report for August had 9.5% unemployment in Sudbury, the highest in two years.

We've got a crisis on our hands, and we've got this finance minister, "Jim Nero," fiddling while Ontario burns. And the Liberals are going to join him, because anything they've said here this afternoon shows they have no plan for anything.

The government response to this situation is to trot out, one more time, its corporate tax cut; in fact, they're going to accelerate the corporate tax cut. We're going to give \$2.5 billion to the corporate sector and none of that will do a single thing to stimulate consumer confidence, not one thing. In fact, we're going to give a gift of corporate tax cuts to the same companies that are now busy laying off workers. This government is going to reward Ontario companies with a big tax cut.

My leader mentioned the case today of BCE, which is going to get about \$22 million back from the tax cut, and it just laid off 150 people, most of them in northern

Ontario, at CTV. Isn't that nice: layoffs, and people will give you a big corporate tax break.

The parliamentary assistant said he was worried about where the New Democrats were going to get the \$1.5 billion to support our initiative. I'm worried about the \$2.5 billion that he's giving away, that his government is giving away, that won't do a single thing to stimulate consumer confidence and is rewarding the very employers who are now laying off people. In fact, the corporate tax cut was such a good idea, Nortel announced the day after the government made its announcement that it's going to lay off another 20,000 people. That's how wonderful the tax cut is in terms of responding.

The Liberals came here today and have nothing to say. They're talking today about how concerned they are about having money to do something about health care and education. This is the same group, I remind you, who said in 1999, when Dalton McGuinty was asked by the media if he would reverse the income tax scheme and recoup \$1.5 billion, "No, of course we're not going to reverse the income tax scheme; it's money that's already gone out the door," even though most of it went to the wealthiest people in Ontario.

I say shame on you guys. Where have you been? You are the same guys who want to keep the income tax scheme that gives about 34% of all those proceeds back to the richest 10% in the province. Where is that money going to come from when we need it?

Our plan is this: our plan is to cut the PST on all goods and services by 3% for three months and to completely exempt restaurant meals, winter clothing and school supplies. That would get people into the restaurants, into the tourism sector, into the shopping malls in the retail sector. What we know now is that people aren't spending money. They're so terrified about what's going to happen, they're saving their money. We've got consumer confidence going down the toilet, and neither the Liberals nor the Tories have a plan to address that. Our proposal would get people back in and save those jobs. I firmly believe that we would recoup a lot of that money because of increased sales in those sectors.

Let me just say in closing that I know there are lots of people who are interested in this proposal because they know neither the Liberals nor the Tories have proposed a single thing to deal with their sagging consumer confidence and the job loss, now at 26,000 in the month of September. Anyone who is interested in our proposal, I encourage you to call the following number: 416-325-8300. Get our petitions that say, "I agree with the sales tax vacation that you have proposed. Eliminate the 8% provincial sales tax on winter clothes and school supplies for three months. Reduce the PST to 5% on all other goods for the next three months." This is a proposal that will work in Ontario now.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I'm just so enthused with this last speaker, from Nickel Belt. Hallelujah, it's just so great. Mike Harris came out with the idea, the first taxfighter, really, in the world. He sold it not only to Ontario, he sold it to other provinces, he sold

it to other states and he sold it to other countries. Over and above that, he sold it to the New Democratic Party, in particular to the member from Nickel Belt. Hallelujah, I think it's just so great that she is convinced and sold on it. I think back to 1991, 1992, 1993. She talks about a crisis today. We were in a crisis from 1990 to 1995 that she was helping to create by increasing taxes. Where was she at that time? Where were the rest of her colleagues, the Floyd Laughrens of the world and her fearless leader? I also wonder—the member from Scarborough-Agincourt was talking about a sense of security. The only sense of security there has been in Canada has come from Mike Harris in the last month or so. That's where the sense of security has come from as we've watched the cut to CSIS and to the armed forces. It's just so wonderful to have another taxfighter in the New Democratic Party here in Ontario.

Let's talk for a few minutes about some of the times when they weren't taxfighters. We'll go back to the Peterson era, 1988. You might call that the occupation of this province. They came in and raised the PST from 7% to 8%, and then in Brockville, back in that campaign in August of 1990, Peterson tried to cut it by 1% to save his bacon in that election campaign but it didn't work. Then of course we had the Rae government—we might call that the aberration—and this was a new assault on the hard-working taxpayers in Ontario. That's when we saw the spiral of tax revenues going down. It dropped by billions and billions of dollars because of their increases.

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We could first start talking about some of the gems, like the employer health tax, which cost some \$2 billion to the hard-working employers in this country, reducing jobs; the motor fuel taxes that were increased by both governments in 1988, 1989 and 1991; the commercial concentration tax that cost some \$115 million. How about the retail sales tax that was introduced on insurance premiums? Then they wanted to expand more and more retail sales taxes into other areas and they finally did succeed by including them on newspaper advertising inserts, concrete, asphalt mix and on sand and soil, and don't forget they even put it on gravel. That was the kind of greediness that was present in the NDP at that time.

Then, in 1993, they brought in the corporate minimum tax, costing some \$100 million a year, a penalty for doing business in Ontario. That's why businesses were heading south to greener pastures on the other side of the 49th parallel. Of course, it didn't get in, but they had a plan to raise the WCB premium by some 30%. No wonder that from 1990 to 1995, we had one of the poorest-performing economies in North America, and probably the world.

While they were planning more tax increases, Mr Harris was looking at the Common Sense Revolution. He dared to suggest you could balance a budget and pay down the debt. He dared to say they could create an economic climate that would create more jobs. He dared to say they could reduce the tax burden on businesses and private citizens, that cutting taxes would actually stimulate government revenue. That was the kind of plan that

was being put into place, a kind of plan that really worked.

We saw a promise in the CSR of some 725,000 new jobs, when in fact right now we're at 827,100 new jobs. In fact, Mike Harris, Premier of the province, kept his promise of a revolution in politics. Our party has been known as a party that does what it says it's going to do. It has been respected internationally, which I mentioned just a few minutes ago. The member from Brampton Centre referred to the budget in 2001 saving some 75,000 off the income tax rolls in Ontario. In total, we have 735,000 people in Ontario not paying provincial income tax who have to pay the federal income tax. That's how inconsiderate the federal Liberals are to the poor, low-income earners in Ontario and, as a matter of fact, right across Canada.

In the budget this year we committed to a further 20% cut in income tax that was in the latest platform we had in 1999. These are just some of the things that are working. As a matter of fact, Mike Harris was indeed right: when you cut taxes, it makes businesses more competitive, it means you create more jobs, it means that people have more money, it means that they spend more on taxable items and it also means that there are more people working and more people paying taxes. That's where the revenue comes from, some \$15 billion in stimulated increased revenue.

Where is it being spent? It's being spent on health. It's not coming from the federal government. They dropped from 18% down to 14% on a national average. That's pretty unfair. They don't believe in the Canada Health Act. We've increased spending on infrastructure and education. We've increased the natural areas protection program. We've increased spending for vulnerable citizens in our province. We've increased spending to prevent violence in Ontario. We're increasing spending for the children's aid societies by some \$8 million. We've invested some \$15 million to look at and help prevent youth prostitution.

Fighting taxes is just great, and it's great to hear that coming from Mr Hampton, leader of the third party. Hallelujah, they're now seeing the light. Clearly, our government has been a taxfighting government, and for that we've created jobs, we've reduced the burden on families and businesses, we've balanced our budget, we have begun the process of paying down the debt and we've invested in the core services the people of Ontario care about the most.

It's just so wonderful to hear the NDP coming through. If we could just have the Liberals in Ottawa and the Liberals on the other side of the House see the light and get on the same bandwagon, it would be marvellous. At least we have the NDP seeing the light. All I can say is hallelujah, we look forward to working with them and looking at more realistic tax cuts in the future.

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): One of the sad things about this debate today and about what has happened with this initiative the NDP has put forward is that, if anything, I think this initiative has probably

caused a lot of hurt in the retail sector, because what this resolution today has done is given a false sense of hope out there that something like this is going to happen. We know, though, that this is not a responsible initiative that is being put forward.

We had an opportunity recently to meet with representatives from the automotive sector and one of the questions that was asked was, would a retail sales tax cut stimulate the purchasing of automobiles in this province? The answer was no. Even if you cut the retail sales tax on automobiles, the savings do not go into the purchaser's pocket. The true winners are the auto dealers. It's not going to do anything to stimulate the economy.

What I would like to see, as an example, is this government showing some leadership. We had the Minister of Agriculture talking about a made-in-Ontario safety net package. Let's see this government put its money where its mouth is and start supporting Ontario industries. I would dare to guess—I would hope I could be proved wrong—and I would hope that the Premier and every member of this cabinet on the other side is driving a made-in-Ontario car. I would certainly hope that.

I would hope that government entities like Hydro One, when they go out and purchase the new trucks they require for their services, are purchasing Ontario-made trucks, that they're supporting Sterling Trucks in St Thomas and Sterling Trucks in Chatham-Kent, because if we're not supporting what's built in our own backyard, we've got a really serious problem. We need to ensure that we are investing in and supporting the Ontario economy.

I think there is an onus that needs to be placed on the back of the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. We need to refocus and do everything we can not only to try and attract new business and industry into this province, but to do everything we can to help preserve jobs in this province. In a recent instance with Sterling Trucks, I commend the minister who took an active interest in that. We need to do everything we can to ensure that we keep these jobs here in Ontario, and that in turn is going to help stimulate the economy.

We also need to see the SuperBuild and OSTAR funding grants opened up. We know there are municipalities all across this province that have made applications to SuperBuild, either the millennium and culture grants or the OSTAR programs, and they're waiting and waiting. If you want to look for a way to help stimulate the economy and the local economies, start opening up these grant processes you've been holding back on for some reason. It's a terribly irresponsible thing for this government to do, to not start investing in the communities in this province. Why don't you do it?

Another area where I think we need to make some recognition is this whole corporate tax cut of \$2.2 billion being taken out of the economy. This is going to have a drastic effect. We're seeing this huge ripple effect, these changes. Let's take, for example, the tax cuts that industries in this province are seeing. I've got one example in my own riding right now, where an industry has seen a

\$1-million decrease in its property taxes. But it's a big pie, and if you make one piece of the pie a little smaller for somebody, you've got to add it someplace else.

Do you know where they've added it? Instead of the corporations paying the tax, there's a shift. We have seen an unprecedented shift of anywhere from 20% to 50% in the price of agricultural land. What that in turn does is that as you see the price of agricultural land rise and you use the multiplier effect municipalities use to calculate property taxes, it adds an increased burden on the rural communities in this province. What does that further do? It takes money out of the economy, because those farmers do not have the dollars to spend to purchase new equipment, to purchase new vehicles. So a shift in this government's attitude, shifting the burden from industry to everybody else, has a detrimental effect on the economy. That's a very serious problem that has happened.

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We've seen the plight of the agricultural community in this province. We've seen unprecedented weather situations and unprecedented subsidies being offered by the United States and the European Union. Our farmers are hurting in this province. I asked the Minister of Agriculture today, "When are the farmers of this province going to hear anything?" We didn't get an answer from the Minister of Agriculture. There are farmers who don't know how they're going to pay some of their bills. What we need is the Minister of Agriculture to show leadership, to stimulate and get these safety net programs going and in place so that they start to put dollars into the pockets of the farmers of this province. Those farmers are in turn going to put those dollars back into the local economy. I truly wish the government would look at some of the initiatives we have put forward. These are initiatives in speeding up the SuperBuild and the OSTAR grants, and increasing the security at our nuclear plants and our water plants. These are things that are going to help to stimulate the economy.

This initiative we've seen put forward today is short-sighted. It isn't going to have a great impact on stimulating the economy. There are other initiatives this government should have been looking at and could have been looking at, but they haven't because they've got this tunnel-vision attitude that they don't get rid of. The only people they want to help in this province are their big corporate friends and their big corporate donors. Those are dollars that are being taken out of the economy, dollars that would have been going to the workers in this province, dollars that would have been reinvested in the economy of this province. But they want to cut for their corporate friends.

We see other mismanagement of dollars in this province. I commend my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton for pointing out the mismanagement of the cabinet of this government, who have seen their salaries increase by 118%. Those are dollars that would have been better reinvested in the economy.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): It's my pleasure to participate in this debate, of course. You

remember that Mike Harris on April 20 of the year 2000 said, "Let me say this: as long as the voters of Ontario don't make the same mistake they made in 1985 and 1990, there will not be a recession in this province." That was Mike Harris saying that. Imagine a man who was so smug and confident about his own ability and his premiership that he could say there will not be a recession in this province as long as he's in power. We have a recession, and it's deep, and a whole lot of people in Ontario are going to be hurt.

This government is bereft of any new ideas. All they have been talking about for six years has been, "Income tax cuts will stay the way of recession. A recession will not happen in this province." It's been happening while they have been giving billions and billions of dollars of your money, taxpayers, for corporate tax cuts and individual tax cuts that have gone to the very wealthy. These guys are very generous. The people who receive their generosity give a whole lot back. When they have the \$600 or \$700 fundraisers—like the Liberals who have equivalent fundraising events where you've got to pay 500, 600 or 700 bucks—they are mutually helping each other. The government gives your money away and the rich give it back so they can have rich election campaigns with your taxpayer money.

They are bereft of any new ideas. I say to you, taxpayers, that the status quo is not on any more. That little old pony is tired of driving this economy on these tax cuts as the saving of our Ontario economy. It isn't saving anybody any more; it's bringing our economy down.

What are the Liberals saying? The Liberals are saying, "What we need is not a PST cut; what we need is a SuperBuild fund,"—the one that is recommended by this government—"but speed it up." What the Liberals don't remember is that New Democrats spent more on capital and expenditures of the infrastructure kind, double what this government is putting in the SuperBuild. We were spending double the amount. It's not a new idea you Liberals are bringing forward. Good God, we were doing it when we were in government and spending more on capital projects, because we know that when the infrastructure is in place people are working and society benefits in the short and in the long run.

These are the Liberals who rail against income tax cuts in the same way we say it goes to their corporate friends, including the fact that it goes to their Liberal corporate friends. These are the ones who railed against them, still rail against them, but in the last election, what did the Liberals say? "We will not reverse, we will not roll back any income tax cuts." So where is all this money going? It's going to stay in place, and there will not be any money for all these programs that they want and that we want, because there is nowhere to get it except, "We want to speed up the SuperBuild fund." That's the brightest idea these Liberals have come up with. That's all they've got. They are so devoid of any ideas that they cannot be an alternative in this province. And this government is riding that little pony, that tired little pony, the income tax cuts. It's a failed policy idea.

PST cuts mean that people will be able to spend and save money. It will boost the economy by getting people to spend at a time when we want people to spend, and the income tax cut doesn't do that. It doesn't encourage people to spend. If people of Ontario agree with us, call us and let us know that you agree with us: 416-325-8310. Send these postcards in. Let the Liberals know what you think. Send them a message, but particularly send the government a message.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): What an eloquent speech by the member for Trinity-Spadina. I thought I would never hear one NDPer talk about the need to cut taxes to create jobs, but to think we have a whole pack of nine of them trying to cut taxes to create jobs. This is much like the post-war consensus we had with respect to social policy. It's the consensus of the new millennium. All of us now support tax cuts. We're just debating which tax cuts are best. I didn't expect my New Democrat socialist friends to do this.

In Nepean-Carleton, we strongly support tax cuts. The experience there is that tax cuts do create jobs. I support cutting the sales tax. I think it would be a great idea. But I think the better way to do it would be to cut capital taxes, to cut income taxes and to be able to cut corporate taxes, because tax cuts create jobs.

I listened very closely to my friend the member for Nickel Belt. In her argument, she said they could even recoup money with a tax cut. I never thought I'd hear a New Democrat like the member for Nickel Belt talk about supply-side economics. She actually is preaching the benefits. She's the Arthur Laffer of the NDP caucus. We were just tremendously pleased to see her endorsing tax cuts.

The tax cuts that this government has pursued have centred upon income tax. I know my friends opposite say that our tax cuts don't help low-income people, but let me address that directly.

Mr Marchese: Change the pony; get a horse.

Hon Mr Baird: The member for Trinity-Spadina should listen; he'll learn something.

The personal income tax cuts announced in our 2001 budget will remove an additional 75,000 people from the income tax rolls. To put this into perspective, this will increase to 395,000 the number of people who have been removed from the income tax rolls. Many of these people pay federal income tax but pay no provincial income tax, because Jean Chrétien and his federal cabinet colleagues like to whack people who don't pay provincial income tax. People in our government obviously have more compassion, if we use the opposition members' measure. It's important to point out, though, that with the income tax cuts, hundreds of thousands of people who paid income tax under the NDP and the Liberal governments have been taken right off the tax rolls, which I think is good news.

My NDP colleagues have been talking about sales tax cuts. Their finance critic, the member for Hamilton West,

was wondering if we would raise the deduction for meals in restaurants from \$4 to \$6. See, I'm listening.

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Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My restaurants like it.

Hon Mr Baird: The member for Broadview-Greenwood said that her restaurants like it. I looked into this. If we raised it from \$4 to \$6, that would be a 16-cent tax cut—16 cents. The people of Ontario are going to just run into a restaurant to get their 16-cent tax cut. That's not even a quarter. They complained that a further tax cut would only mean \$16 to a taxpayer. Their tax cut idea for restaurants would only save 16 cents. Maybe the people are different in Toronto than they are in Nepean or Stittsville or Osgoode or Manotick, but I don't think people are going to run into restaurants if they can save 16 cents. I just don't believe it.

Let me put in perspective this risky tax scheme that Howard Hampton and the NDP are putting forward. How much revenue do we get per month if we're to go from 8% to 5%? That would be costing us about \$448 million. What would this save? When the member for Trinity-Spadina goes to Morton's for dinner, he'd save \$6. Under the Hampton tax cut plan, if someone in Ontario wanted to buy a Mercedes SUV M320, how much would they save? They would save \$1,650. Buy a Mercedes, get a big NDP tax cut. That's what the NDP are now preaching.

But I'm going to continue. My colleague the member for Erie-Lincoln is always talking about tourism. Maybe this could generate tourism savings too. What would the savings be on a weekend for two at the Deerhurst Resort with two nights' accommodation and food? It would be \$20. Let's just say Howard Hampton brought the entire NDP caucus with him. They'd save \$180, which is quite remarkable.

I think the NDP's conversion to tax cuts and economic growth obviously comes from their experience in government. This is a conversion on the road to Damascus. It's step 1 in their 12-step plan. What did they do when they were in government from 1990 to 1995? What was their strategy when they inherited the Liberal recession? Their strategy was to raise taxes, their strategy was to increase regulation and their strategy most definitely was to increase debt. We saw the debt go from \$3 billion to \$11 billion under the NDP government.

On Child Care Worker Appreciation Day, how do the NDP want to celebrate Child Care Worker Appreciation Day? Do they have a resolution to debate on child care? Do they have a resolution to debate on the Early Years and on the National Children's Agenda? No. All the NDP is interested in is tax cuts. It's the U-turn of the NDP.

They are even having a positive effect on our friends in the trade union movement. I saw a news release from Canada NewsWire: "Canadian Auto Workers president urges Martin to suspend GST on new car sales." Even the union bosses now are supporting tax cuts, which is remarkable.

Interjection: He's a Liberal. Buzz is a Liberal.

Hon Mr Baird: Buzz is a Liberal, I'm told. I know he doesn't support Howard Hampton. If this tax cut campaign could actually bring Howard Hampton and Buzz Hargrove back together, maybe that's the start of something new for the trade union movement and for New Democrats across Ontario.

I'm going to vote against this resolution because I support the income tax, capital tax and corporate tax cuts that have been so instrumental in re-establishing hope, growth and opportunity in Ontario, and they are the best way to help ensure that we have the most bright and optimistic future to help those who are in search of work get the job and help those who have a job increase their take-home pay. But I welcome the New Democrats to the tax-cutting team. We all agree with the same thing; we just differ in how we do it.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): Frankly, I'm very disappointed in the New Democratic Party, because this is a party that has a grand tradition of helping the underprivileged and the poor, and for this government to have an ally like the NDP now—you've bought into the tax-cutting mantra of this government. Frankly, I'm disappointed. You've had other ideas in the past that have worked, but it's a great disappointment to those of us who have seen the NDP over the years fight for the underprivileged and the poor. To buy into the mantra of tax cutting precisely at the wrong time—the timing couldn't be worse. This is a time when government needs to lead. To reinvigorate the economy, government must lead and show that it has confidence in the future. The way it can do that is by investing right now, in this business cycle, in health care, in education and, yes, in infrastructure spending. That has the greatest, most positive stimulative effect on the economy, bar none. Tax cuts come second. This is a time when, in the business cycle, government expenditures would help to kick-start the economy more than any other stimulus we could come up with.

The business cycle, particularly this business cycle that ran from the early 1990s until it ran its course at the end of the decade, was started, was precipitated by investment in capital equipment by the business sector. The business sector started this boom we've seen grace us for the last decade or so. That capital investment started south of the border, which then fuelled our export-driven economy.

Consumers have been holding the economy up for the past number of years. It's been a consumer-led economy. The government has, as a result of that, benefited in terms of surpluses. Now the consumer is withdrawing a little bit as a result of job losses and as a result of the fears that have been occurring since September 11. This is not the same kind of situation we've faced in the past. The right prescription right now is for the government to invest, to lead in terms of the economy. It's a time to invest in those areas we most critically need right now.

It's a big disappointment to me that this New Democratic Party just doesn't get it. If Bob Rae were here, I have to say he would be shocked that they would be

buying into this tax-cut mantra of this government. Furthermore, if you're going to cut taxes, you do it at a time when governments are running a surplus. I'll bet anything that the government is seeing a spiralling downward of revenues at this particular time. So we should be concerned that the government does not have sufficient revenues to fund an additional tax cut.

Now get this: this government proposes to cut corporate taxes, \$2.5 billion worth, and on top of that the NDP wants them to fund another \$1.5 billion in additional tax cuts. How irresponsible can you get at this time? This is precisely the wrong time to be cutting taxes in the economic cycle. It is a time for government to invest in essential services.

That's why we believe it would be appropriate for the government to bring forward the infrastructure projects it has on the books, an additional \$1.2 billion in the Super-Build fund that hasn't been spent. They are not spending that. We should be investing. Dalton McGuinty suggested we should be investing an additional \$100 million in enhancing security. This is appropriate spending. In addition to that, we should be spending additional dollars, \$175 million that was proposed by Dalton McGuinty, for additional emergency health services.

We cannot meet a health care crisis in this city of Toronto. We are operating at somewhere near 93% capacity with respect to our emergency care facilities. God forbid that an emergency should befall us. We will not have any capacity in those emergency rooms.

It is entirely irresponsible for us to forgo any revenue at this present time. What we should be doing is investing in those critical areas I've talked about: education, health care, and additional infrastructure spending. This is a time for government to lead, not to stand aside, not to take a back seat. It's a time for leadership. It's a time for this government to show that it has what it takes during a crisis to take us out of this recession. Of course they're not going to do that because they're proposing a \$2.5-billion corporate tax cut, which is incredibly irresponsible. On top of that, for the NDP to claim we can forgo another \$1.5 billion worth of revenue is also irresponsible at this time.

I say to the government members and I say to the NDP, this is precisely the wrong thing to do at this time in the business cycle. Government must lead. We must be showing confidence in the future for our public. The best way to do that is to show that we have the capability to invest in the future by investing in health care, by investing in education, by investing in further infrastructure projects. That would be the responsible thing for government to do right now and that would be the responsible thing for all parties in this House to support rather than additional tax cuts, which I hardly believe are the right thing.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr Hampton has moved opposition day motion number 1, that the Legislative Assembly calls on the provincial government to implement a temporary provincial sales tax holiday to provide immediate stimulus to Ontario's sagging

economy, to enhance consumer confidence and to create a progressive tax cut that would help working families at the cash register when they need it most.

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

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1751 to 1801.

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

Ayes

Churley, Marilyn	Marchese, Rosario	Martin, Tony
Hampton, Howard	Martel, Shelley	Prue, Michael
Kormos, Peter		

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Galt, Doug	O'Toole, John
Baird, John R.	Gill, Raminder	Peters, Steve
Barrett, Toby	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Beaubien, Marcel	Guzzo, Garry J.	Pupatello, Sandra
Bountrogianni, Marie	Hardeman, Ernie	Ramsay, David
Caplan, David	Harris, Michael D.	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Hastings, John	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Hudak, Tim	Sergio, Mario
Coburn, Brian	Johns, Helen	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Johnson, Bert	Snobelen, John
Cordiano, Joseph	Kells, Morley	Spina, Joseph
Crozier, Bruce	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Stewart, R. Gary
Curling, Alvin	Levac, David	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Di Cocco, Caroline	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted	Turnbull, David
Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Dunlop, Garfield	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Ecker, Janet	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Brenda	Murdoch, Bill	Wood, Bob
Flaherty, Jim	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 7; the nays are 66.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

PRIVATE MEMBER'S RESOLUTION

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I've had an opportunity to consider the point of order raised in the submissions respecting private member's motion number 8 standing in the name of Mr Guzzo. I take seriously the very good point made by the House leader of the official opposition and will rule now in order to facilitate tomorrow's business of the House.

I'm sure it will come as no surprise to the House that this motion has caused me some concern since it first appeared on the Orders and Notices paper. While my attention was drawn to the motion in the first place because the Speaker figures significantly in it, there are a

number of other reasons for my reservations as to its orderliness.

Let me be clear at this point: the Speaker makes a decision on these matters based on procedural considerations. There are ample precedents here and elsewhere referring to the inability and indeed the undesirability of a Speaker ruling on legal or constitutional issues. What is before the House today is, as the member for St Paul's has said, the orderliness of the motion itself, and not the legality.

I also want to address the point raised by the House leader of the official opposition with respect to the fact that the motion remains on the Orders and Notices paper when others were recently removed. Members should be aware that the private members' notices of motion recently stricken from the Orders and Notices paper were stricken in response to a ruling specific to preambles and recitals. It was in that context only that the motions were reviewed. As I have said, this motion even at the time caused me some concern, but in the absence of a point of order being raised, I was inclined to do as the member for London West suggested I should do, which was to exercise discretion in favour of leaving it on until the motion was moved. However, a point of order having now been raised, I'm required to render an explicit decision, which necessitates closer scrutiny of the motion.

I want to start by saying a few words about the nature of private members' motions. As members well know, private members' motions are typically framed so that if and when they carry, they constitute expressions of the opinion of the House; in other words, they are said to be non-binding. This same principle has been applied on several occasions during the time allocated to consideration of private members' public business when the Speaker has declined requests for unanimous consent to give third reading to a bill or to alter some later proceeding of the House. When members are meeting for the purpose of considering private members' business, they cannot bind the House to a final decision on a matter. Were it to be otherwise, a government could easily take advantage of its majority and a time-limited private members' debate to pass motions which could, for example, amend the standing orders. This is clearly not the intended purpose of private members' public business.

There are certain restrictions on the form of private members' motions. It is true, as the member for St Paul's asserts, that the restrictions are limited and should be carefully applied, but I believe that this motion crosses that restricted line. Let me be clear: the restrictions I speak of refer to form, not content. The motion standing in the name of Mr Guzzo, should it carry, would bind the Speaker to a certain course of action. I would find the motion less objectionable if it were worded in such a way as to be merely an expression of opinion and not an order of the House.

This leads me to my second concern, which focuses on the terms of the motion itself, and specifically the direc-

tion it gives to the Speaker. The Speaker's role and responsibility can be divided into three categories. First, the Speaker presides over this House and decides on procedural matters; second, the Speaker is responsible for the administration of the Office of the Assembly; and third, the Speaker has an official role as a representative of the Legislative Assembly. The motion in question seeks to have the Speaker do that which is outside the traditions and boundaries which constitute the role and responsibility of the office. It is a motion that attempts to direct the Speaker to do that which is beyond the scope of his authority, and for that reason it is a motion that could not be perfected.

The member for Niagara Centre suggested that somehow the Speaker has a lesser obligation to comply with the terms of a motion than he would a statute. I beg to differ. As Speaker, I am honour-bound to respond to the directives given to me by this House. The standing orders are determined by motion of this House, they are not created by legislation, but a Speaker has no authority, nor has he the right, to ignore them.

Finally, I have reservations about the part of the motion that deals with the funding for this inquiry. Members will know that standing order 56 prohibits private members from moving any motion, the passage of which would have the effect of causing a direct expenditure from the consolidated revenue fund. It is my opinion that the motion in question contravenes standing order 56.

The numerous concerns that I have outlined are enough, collectively, for me to determine without hesitation that this motion is out of order, and I am directing that it be stricken from the Orders and Notices paper. That said, I do note that the member for Ottawa West-Nepean has a bill on this same subject standing in his name on the Orders and Notices paper, and since the notice provisions have been met, he may, if he so wishes, move second reading of that bill during the time allocated for consideration of his ballot item tomorrow morning.

I want to thank all of the members for their participation and their guidance on the point of order.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I just wish to make one point abundantly clear: I wish I had been here this afternoon when this matter was debated. I apologize for that. But I want you to understand that I had absolutely no notice that my government was going to take this action, none whatsoever. If I had, I certainly would have been here. I thank you for your ruling.

1810

The Speaker: I thank the member. As you know, it is in the course of action that we try to—by all means too, if members have to leave, the vote is over. You can leave if you do have something else.

We do try to do it when the member is here. Unfortunately, with the timelines and with your not being here, we had to proceed without you. I usually don't like to do that, and in this instance unfortunately the circumstances were such that we had to.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The appearance would be that Mr Guzzo was bushwhacked. I would respectfully ask that the Speaker establish either some guidelines or some direction.

I understand how issues arise at the moment, where points of order are very relevant at the moment. On a matter like this, where clearly the government and the Ministry of the Attorney General had prepared the point of order and presented it on a matter that was before the House for a considerable period of time, I think it would be appropriate for the Speaker to provide advisory guidelines at least that those sorts of points of order shouldn't be designed to bushwhack an individual member, as the Attorney General and the government bushwhacked Mr Guzzo today, or quite frankly any other member.

I would be pleased to comply with some sort of advisory guideline, recognizing of course the need, as is more often the case, to rise on points of order because things are happening right then and there. But I think we have a scenario here that was proceeded with in a way far from appropriate by the government, and I ask that the Speaker make some suggestions or provide some advisory guidelines in that regard.

The Speaker: That's a good suggestion. I thank the member for that point of order.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to express to the member for Ottawa West-Nepean that the official opposition was not informed of this until moments before the Attorney General got up on his point of order. It makes it very difficult for us to respond to you in the sense of—

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Do you keep us advised of your points of order?

Mr Duncan: But the decision is not taken two hours later, with all due respect to the Minister of Labour. Your own member, one of your colleagues, has chastised your government for jamming this down our throats. I expressed this point of view to the government House leader. She in turn expressed a concern about the nature of the process. But, Mr Speaker, it is decidedly unfair to the member for Ottawa West-Nepean and decidedly unfair to the opposition, and frankly a number of members of the government side, that there was no notice.

We have on many occasions agreed to waive notice provisions to allow things to happen, and at the very least a member should be afforded the courtesy to be here to respond. The opposition, sir, if we are to provide input into this, ought to have the ability to respond to you in a timely fashion. I don't believe that there was urgency here, save and except that it was left to the last minute, and one could easily conjecture that that was done deliberately.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): With all due respect to the honourable members, I appreciate that they feel they didn't get notice, but let me be very clear here: this is an issue that has provoked great discussion among your caucuses,

among our caucus, and there has been a great deal of deliberation given to this particular resolution. Many members share the goal and the concern of the honourable member who brought it forward of making sure that children are protected. There has been a great deal of discussion about this. At the end of that discussion, the Attorney General is charged with certain responsibilities. It was his view that he advised the government of that view, as is his job. The Attorney General wanted to put this forward because in his view, as the Attorney General here, this was important to put forward.

The reason for the urgency, Mr Speaker, was that if we did not provide this House, this Speaker, with some time to deliberate, knowing that this thing was going to be there tomorrow morning—we did a courtesy by putting this forward as soon as the Attorney General felt, in his professional judgment, that he had to provide this advice. So as soon as this decision was made, I called the honourable member's office at about 25 after 1. I know the Attorney General called the honourable member's office. I came immediately here into the House to try to speak to the other two House leaders. We gave as much notice as we could.

I appreciate the concerns that are coming from the honourable member, but when the Attorney General advises the government of something, when the Attorney General feels in his responsibility that he must put something before the House, I think it behooves all of us here to pay attention to that. That indeed is what has happened, and the Speaker has ruled on the submissions. I would with great respect suggest that we have moved appropriately on this. We have endeavoured to keep everyone in the loop on this particular issue.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, I really do appreciate the latitude you're offering the members in order to raise their points of order. I understand the difficulty you had in making the decision you've made.

I would say that if the House leader for the NDP has offered up some opportunity to create some protocol, I

think was his term, or some methodology in order to deal with points of order, I as a single member of this House am not opposed to anything along those lines. If we're talking about fair notice, fair provisions for standing up on points of order, standing up on points of privilege, that in fact there would be some notice provision given to all members in this House before that action is taken, I don't think you'd find many people on this side of the House opposed to that. In fact, I think the opposition may be opposed to it more than the government, because they do stand on points of order and points of privilege far more often than the government. But the action put forward by the government House leader and endorsed by the House leader for the opposition, I for one would say, sounds like a glorious idea. When we're going to allow provisions built into the standing orders that would force members on points of order and points of privilege to give fair notice to the other side, I'm in favour.

The Speaker: The final word to the member for London West.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I'd like the Speaker, if he is prepared to do so, to consider this: the member for Ottawa West-Nepean is put in a position where he has nothing tomorrow other than the option of his bill. That flows from the fact that this point of order was raised the day before the matter is to be considered. I'd invite you to take a look and see what discretion you have to give him a slot perhaps sometime in November, where he could then determine what he wanted to put into that slot. At the moment you've offered him, I think properly so, one option. I think fairness tells us he should be offered something more than that. I don't know whether you have the discretion to do that, but I'd invite you to consider that and report to the House.

The Speaker: I thank all members for their constructive suggestions. It now being after 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1817.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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