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**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 18 October 2001

Jedi 18 octobre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 18 October 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 18 octobre 2001

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS
PUBLIC BUSINESS

RETAIL SALES TAX
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA TAXE
DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL

Mr Parsons moved second reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): At the time this bill was introduced in May, I think it's fair to say that I shared a weakness that much of Ontario did, which is that we took firefighters for granted. They were there, they did their job, but we didn't pay a great deal of attention to them. I think the horrible, tragic, cowardly act on September 11 made us realize how brave they are and what a vital part of this province they are.

Now, fire protection in Ontario is provided by both full-time firefighters and volunteer firefighters. For much of Ontario, the fire protection is from volunteer firefighters. It's rather unique in that not only do they volunteer their time and commitment, but they are expected—or need to—fundraise much of their own resources for it. There are a considerable number of fire trucks and a considerable number of vans that have been purchased because volunteers in the community came together and bought them. That's rather unique. We don't ask our police forces to purchase their own cars and yet we have an expectation that volunteer firefighters will.

The reality is that whether they're full-time or part-time volunteers, they are of equal importance to us. For rural Ontario, we simply wouldn't have fire protection without that. So I would like to pay tribute to the individuals who have committed their time to doing this,

and indeed to their families. I've had firefighters share with me how many a Christmas or a holiday or a birthday or something special for their families the beeper goes off and they disrupt their own personal lives to go—so not just for firefighters but for the families also. This province is blessed to have the commitment they have.

This bill came forward as a result of an activity in my riding of Prince Edward-Hastings. All the volunteer firefighter organizations, from both the Hastings county side and the Prince Edward county side, went together and purchased what is called a fire safety house. This is a rather unique vehicle, and the outward appearance is that of a trailer, but it is specially produced and equipped to provide fire education. It has facilities to replicate smoke coming into a house. They have the ability to heat the doors so that they can teach individuals, if they're in a room in a building that's on fire, how to sense which is the best exit.

These volunteers raised \$50,000, hard work, going through the community—a special note of appreciation to a number of automobile dealers, though, who put a considerable amount of the funding forward. But by and large, the money came from individuals out on the street. Not only do we expect our volunteer firefighters to attend at fires, attend training on a regular basis and be on standby every minute of every day, we also have the additional expectation that they go out and fundraise to purchase fire education equipment. I applaud \$50,000 out of a relatively small rural community to do that.

They take this fire safety house around to fairs and give people an opportunity to go through it. They take it to each of the schools; children in the schools get an opportunity to have a lesson in how to react in a house on fire.

On a personal note, we had the misfortune at one time to have a fire within our home. Although my wife and I were quite calm and clear-headed about it, our children were more than excited when we woke them at 1 o'clock in the morning and said, "The house is on fire." When we told them that, it was obvious to us that not only were they excited; they recalled the experience they had when volunteer firefighters came to their school to teach them what to do. I should note, these volunteers are on their own time when they go to schools to do the training. So our children were able to respond. I read on a fairly regular basis in the newspaper where it is the children in a family in a house or building that's on fire who provide guidance to help the family get out.

They got this money and used it to purchase the house and take it around. We owe them a deep debt of thanks

but, instead, the thanks they got was a bill for about \$4,000 in sales tax. The province said it would exempt fire purpose vehicles. That's a fairly vague sort of phrase, but it has been interpreted to mean that fire safety vehicles consist of the trucks themselves. This trailer, in my mind, and I believe it will be in the minds of most members in this House, is a fire purpose vehicle. This is to prevent fires. Surely it is better to prevent a fire than to fight a fire.

But instead of saying thank you, they received a bill that required them to go back out and fundraise \$4,000 more. I would suggest to you that when people in the community were donating to the firefighters, they had the expectation that their money was going to be used for fire prevention and firefighting within their community. They did not realize that the current legislation made our volunteer firefighters into tax collectors and that they in fact were collecting the \$4,000 to send off to Toronto.

They made numerous appeals that their fire safety house be classed as a fire purpose vehicle. Indeed, it has the capability, when going to a major fire, to be used as a central command post so that there can be a coordination of the firefighters from the various halls or even from various forces.

This is one instance in one little community where I believe the current legislation provides a great disservice to the people of our community, particularly to the volunteer firefighters. The \$4,000 that they collected in taxes could have been used for fire prevention material to give out to the students and all kinds of other options that would have served to prevent fires.

1010

What a horrible way to thank our firefighters in my community. But then, when the bill was introduced, I realized that all across Ontario we have literally thousands and thousands of firefighters who have been in the same boat. We are relying for police protection on forces that are funded by the province or by the municipality. In much of rural Ontario we rely on bake sales for our fire prevention, bake sales for a service that is equal in importance to police services.

Everyone hopes they won't ever have to call the fire department, but we need to know that the maximum resources possible have gone into it. That means the money raised in the community should be used for fire prevention. I am looking for support this morning to rectify what I believe is a grave injustice. It is a devaluation of the work of our volunteer firefighters when we require them to serve as tax collectors and we don't funnel the money into the particular areas where it's supposed to go.

I would like to pay special thanks to an individual named Bob Pierce. Bob Pierce was a fire chief in Sidney township at one time and I believe in Thurlow township subsequently. Bob has devoted literally hundreds of hours to our community and equal hours to fundraising to continue to fight for fire prevention. Bob, as fire chief, I know saw some horrible cases where there were fatalities. I hesitate to name Bob, because so many others

worked on it, but Bob was the sparkplug who said, "What we need to do is prevent the fires." It was Bob who actively worked to raise this money to make this home to go around to the community.

There are another 2,000 Bob Pierces in Ontario who are devoted to a very special calling. In the last five or six weeks I think all of us have become aware of the risk they take every time they leave. There was a horrible terrorist thing in Washington and New York, but we know that over the years individual firefighters, both full-time and volunteer, have paid the ultimate price to protect us. These are individuals who are prepared to put their lives on the line when they leave their homes or fire stations to come and fight fires. We owe them a better thank you than, "Go back and collect some more money, please."

I urge the members to support a bill that would allow our firefighters to concentrate on what they do best, which is to prevent fires and fight fires. I thank you for this time and I look forward to the debate.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I just want to say that the NDP caucus will be supporting your resolution this morning. We believe it's a good idea. We know that firefighters across the province work extremely hard in our communities, as do other professionals in emergency services, such as the EMH people, police officers and others. We certainly saw that on September 11. The people everybody turned to were the people we recognize as the heroes of what happened on September 11, and were those emergency workers, EMH workers, firemen, police officers, all the people who are engaged in the public service to do that, many of them as volunteers as well.

We think as well, on the whole issue of one fundraising to buy equipment that's going to be utilized for emergency services or such, that it does make sense to exempt that from the PST. It would be a good idea because, again, it's a way the province is able to show that we want to support in a direct way the activities of our firefighters and others who are doing those types of activities. We will support that particular legislation. We think it's the right way to go.

The other thing I want to say, which gives me an opportunity to talk about the PST, is that our caucus and our leader, Howard Hampton, have put forward a proposal in this Legislature, and for the Premier, that a way of stimulating the economy would be to reduce the PST at a particular point before Christmas in order to encourage consumers to go out and spend those hard-earned dollars and get the economy going. We're suggesting by way of example that the government could, if it chose to, do a partial reduction in the PST on all goods between now and Christmas. That would give retailers across the province the opportunity to say, "Come into my store. Come and buy. There's a PST holiday," to promote their goods and their businesses. I'm certain the retail sector would welcome it and probably participate and say, "Hey, we're prepared, as a business, to pay the GST," so there's a complete holiday for people who are trying to buy goods before Christmas.

Because of what's happening with the economy, we're seeing that the hotel and restaurant industry is severely affected by what's happening with people's travel plans because of the scares that are going on throughout North America right now. One of the things we could do in Ontario, because we are a safe jurisdiction for people to come and visit—we're not identified as a target of terrorism and we certainly hope that we will not be, and I consider we're a very safe place to come to—is to encourage people to come by saying, "Hey, listen. We're going to have a temporary freeze on PST altogether for restaurant meals and entertainment here in Ontario. Please come and enjoy this beautiful province that we call home and that we want to share with you." It would certainly do a lot to stimulate people touring and utilizing the facilities of the tourism industry, from restaurants to hotels to whatever. We think that would be an appropriate thing. So I say to Mr Parsons that I hope you will give our proposal some support in being able to stimulate the economy by saying, "Yes, we too," as either an independent member or as a Liberal caucus, "will support Howard Hampton and the NDP when it comes to their fight to convince the government to reduce the PST for a period of time before Christmas in order to help stimulate the economy and get things going."

We argue that the government's approach of saying, "It's only by reducing income tax that we're going to be able to stimulate the economy," is wrong-headed. Their argument has been, and I just want to make this point very quickly, that the economy of Ontario has benefited because of the tax cut—that's what I've heard here for six years—and that only because of the reduction of income tax have we seen the kind of rebound that we've had in the economy since 1993.

Well, first of all, the tax cuts didn't happen until 1996, so it's beyond me how they equate the tax cut to what happened from 1993 to 1996. But the point is this: the economy is falling and you can't have it both ways. You can't say stimulating the economy is only by way of an income tax cut, and then, when the economy is falling, still say that was the reason the economy was climbing, because the economy is going down. So clearly income tax cuts are not the real stimulus that we need in order to be able to get the economy going. A real way to do that would be to do a number of things, one of which we think is on the retail sales tax, because that's the tax people save.

On the income tax side, we know that for the average taxpayer out there the entire accelerated tax cut the government is now proposing amounts to \$16 in one person's pocket. That's not much of a stimulus. Certainly you will stimulate, if you reduce the PST, to a much greater degree.

So I support the member's bill, and I would suggest other members also support the resolution and proposal we have, which says we should reduce the PST over a period of time as a tax holiday before the holidays and at the same time remove the tax from restaurants in order to help the entertainment industry.

With that, I'm sure my good friend Mr Marchese will have something to say.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): It's my pleasure, as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, to respond to Bill 54.

Before I do that, I want to make it very clear that in light of September 11 and in general respect for firefighters, this government and I think all members of this House just two weeks ago rose and spoke very supportively and respectfully to all of those involved in community safety: fire, police, ambulance etc.

That being said, I live in a community where there's a mixture of emergency services, and certainly I would start by saying that a week ago I spoke in the House with respect to the opening of a newly renovated fire station at Scugog in Port Perry. I might add, for the record, that that community does a lot of work for outreach and fire prevention. Fire Prevention Week was the week that I spoke in. That group of 50 volunteers who make up that Scugog fire services is led by Deputy Chief Rob Gonnermann and District Chief Dave Ballingall. They work with the volunteer firefighters.

At that opening, about three different organizations within the community came forward with significant contributions toward defibrillators, again all done by service clubs and volunteers and fundraisers, and I commend them for that action.

1020

In the municipality of Clarington, which is a mixture of full-time and part-time, in the last few years they have also voluntarily raised a considerable amount of money and, I might say, time and talent by the firefighters and the community to build a fire safety house, which is part of their outreach and fire prevention education. That's not something new. It is part of the overall requirement of those services in the community to be engaging the citizens to be supportive.

I want to be on the record as saying that the Ontario retail sales tax already exempts firefighting vehicles purchased for more than \$1,000 for the exclusive use of municipalities, universities, public hospitals, local school boards or volunteer groups.

Most fire departments in Ontario already offer comprehensive fire safety education in their communities, often bringing activities, vehicles and equipment to those events. Firefighters visit schools and talk to children, and they allow community groups such as scouts and guides to visit and tour the stations. So it's not something new.

I would only say that while the immediate impact of this special fire education equipment exemption is estimated to cost less than \$1 million annually, extending the current sales tax exemption to include fire education equipment would have a broader fiscal implication, as many other organizations also use taxable equipment in public awareness and public education, and indeed in public safety.

The positive part of this is to respect the member on the other side for working with his community, and I

commend him for it, while at the same time recognizing that's the first time I've heard the Liberals talk about a tax cut. It's a healthy beginning for them to think that way, but also, don't deprive the volunteers and fundraisers in the community who work tirelessly. This province, I believe, supports them and this legislation is a good first step. I'm waiting to hear what other members say about this legislation. I'll be sharing my time.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm pleased to stand in support of the member for Prince Edward-Hastings with regard to Bill 54, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide an exemption for fire education equipment.

I would suggest to members in the House and to the people of Ontario that September 11 changed the way we think. We all have very personal stories, we all have very sad memories, and there has been a profound effect on the people of Ontario in each of our communities with regard to the disaster of September 11. From a very personal perspective, my wife has a cousin who is a fire captain in the New York fire department. Charlie Vella is his name. Charlie has been a pallbearer 11 times in the last month. He has lost 58 of his very close friends. No one can imagine the impact that would have on an individual unless you have lived the experience. Our thoughts and prayers go out to everyone who has been immediately affected and everyone who has been affected in a broader spectrum.

Getting back to Bill 54, the member for Prince Edward-Hastings outlined a personal situation that it seems could have been addressed in a very simple way if the minister would have just defined the regulation a little differently. It would have expedited the money going back to the community and there would have been no purpose in bringing Bill 54 forward. But I guess that is the essence of this government: they don't always operate in the best interests of individual municipalities, and certainly they don't always operate in an expeditious manner when it comes to dealing with the needs of municipalities.

We have historical evidence in Sudbury with regard to this particular exemption. In Rayside-Balfour, we're in the process now of putting forward a fire education centre. Our community, our municipality, would certainly benefit from the exemption in the provincial retail sales tax. I urge the government to adopt the private member's bill. It is a good bill. It is in the best interests of firefighting services and in the best interests of municipalities, because every municipality in Ontario has a fire education component attached to it.

Several years ago, about five years ago, I was fortunate enough to work in conjunction and collaboration with Fern Borque, Marc Leduc and Chris Stokes in the preparation of a fire prevention manual. It was an education manual. We did it together because the municipality didn't have the resources necessary to put something like this together. We were able to combine our skills and opportunities and put forth what the community has now come to believe is a very important document.

I think the responsibility is with the provincial government to maximize the opportunities that are in the best interests of individual municipalities and individual municipal services. This is a perfect example. This is a concrete idea that will benefit every single citizen in Ontario because it will enhance fire education opportunities and programs for individuals and municipalities collectively to make Ontario a better place, a stronger place and a safer place. It's the reason the member for Prince Edward-Hastings brought forth this private member's bill. I urge the members on the government side to adopt his private member's bill and give it very quick passage so everyone can feel safer.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): Welcome, good citizens of Ontario, to the political forum. Do you know how early it is? It's 10:27. It's like singing opera in the morning. It really is hard to get going in this place so early in the morning, don't you find, Speaker? You've got to find the energy deep in to be able to participate in these discussions, but here we are, happy to do so and happy to support the member for Prince Edward-Hastings. His motion is a good one.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): Oh, another taxfighter. I found one.

Mr Marchese: I'm going to distinguish between what we say, member for Mississauga Centre, versus what you say, because there are differences.

First, I say to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings that this bill would exempt from the retail sales tax all fire education equipment over \$1,000 used by municipalities, universities, local services boards and/or volunteer groups. It's a good thing. Why is it a good thing? Because what it does is support people who work for the public good, and that is not only good, it's just. When people who are protecting the public, such as firefighters, go and purchase some item that is used for the purpose of helping and saving lives, we tax that equipment. It almost doesn't make sense. That's why I support the bill before us.

Is it a good measure? Yes. Is it better than an income tax cut? I say yes, it is. Here are the differences I want to wage with you, member for Mississauga Centre.

Hon Mr Sampson: I want to hear how you're not a Liberal today.

Mr Marchese: I'm not a Liberal today because the federal Liberal Party promised to get rid of the GST, said that it would, and didn't when it got into power. It worries me when a government makes such a big promise and reneges and still gets re-elected. Now it is true that when the New Democrats were in power, we promised to make the auto insurance system public, quite true. We failed in that regard. We didn't do it and we got punished. But when the Liberals don't keep their promise around the GST federally, do they get punished?

Hon Mr Sampson: No.

Mr Marchese: No, they don't. They still get re-elected. How does it work? We've got double standards in this country, and it's got to change. But that's another problem and another level of government. We're not

dealing with that today. We're dealing with a measure that I support.

1030

But to distinguish New Democrats from the rest—Liberals and Tories on either side—here's what we say. We argue, as New Democrats, that the income tax system is a fairer system. As a policy tool, a fiscal policy tool, it is a better way to collect money, because, you see, governments need money to help firefighters, to help the police, to help every possible program the government runs to help people. We need governments, and we need money to be able to run this shop.

And so an income tax system is one of the fairest ways to collect money. And why is it fair? It's fair in this way: if you're earning a million bucks, a million and a half, like a lot of bankers do, God bless their little souls, they pocket a whole heap of money. It goes deep into their pockets and, God bless them, they're doing OK. They buy the big homes in Mississauga and in the Bridle Path and God knows where else there are big homes; big, big homes. I'm not just talking about homes, but what is within a home is probably more expensive than what is outside.

So they have the money. And I say the income tax system should get to those deep pockets and bring it back and share it with the public so that we can provide the services that we all need, little guys and the big guys. That is the system that I support, and I support a system that's fair, because there are so many of these big guys with deep pockets, with a whole heap of money, that find the way legally, through the tax system, to squirrel money away all over the place, and they pay no taxes. God bless the system and God bless the moneyed individuals who know how to protect it and hold it back so that governments have no way of getting at it so as to prevent the little guy from sharing in the wealth, from sharing in the fact that you deposit your money into their banks, and they pocket big time. Good times or bad times, they pocket big time.

So the income tax system, young people watching this program today, is a better system. When your dad or mom pays income tax, it means it comes to us, and we use it to give you a health care system, to give you and the senior citizens a break that they desperately need, to give you an educational system that you desperately need that these people are cutting away from. We need the income tax your parents pay.

But what have they done? You folks are young enough and old enough to understand. What did these people do?

The Deputy Speaker: Through the Speaker, please.

Mr Marchese: They said, "The rich people need a tax break. Rich people like the bankers who earn one and a half million bucks get \$120,000 back because, well, they need a break. They need a little more money to invest for themselves to get richer." And the bankers on the other side say that's good, because any money they get back will be reinvested back into their pockets, and that's OK.

So I say to you, young people and good citizens and taxpayers, what New Democrats have proposed by way

of a provincial sales tax freeze for a short while, while we are deep in the recession—and remember, young people, these are the very people who said that the income tax cuts that they were going to give since 1995 would make this economy recession-proof, meaning that bad times will never ever come. They said the income tax cuts will make the bad times go away. That's what these guys said.

Here are the taxfighters, the economists, those who manage the economy, who are so good at managing the economy that if their tax cuts were able to give us good times for five years, they are now causing a recession. You can't have it both ways. You can't say, "The income tax cuts have given us this great economy, but now that the times are bad, it's somebody else's fault." They used to blame the NDP. They can't do that any more, so they've got to find another enemy. I'm not sure who the other enemy is now.

When we New Democrats said, "The reason you're doing well is because the US economy is doing well," they would laugh and say, "Ha ha, that's not true; it's our income tax cuts, because we are so bright and so sharp economically. It's got nothing to do with the US; it's got to do with our fiscal brilliance. Income tax cuts will keep the recession at bay." Do you see how simplistic and foolish and dumb that is, Speaker, that they could even say that publicly for years and that some people would believe it?

The other foolish thing is, a couple of months ago, they announced another tax break worth about \$200 million, all gone because, disproportionately, that money goes to the corporate sector, whose pockets are deep and, disproportionately, that money goes to rich people whose pockets are deep. The little guy gets nothing.

The PST, on the other hand, reducing the sales tax, means that when a poor little guy who makes \$30,000, \$35,000, goes to buy an item anywhere, he gets whacked by 8% of provincial sales tax and 7% Liberal GST. Together, that's 15% every time you purchase anything when you go shopping. When you reduce the PST, every little guy out there who makes \$20,000, \$25,000, \$30,000, \$35,000, saves, under our NDP plan, 3%. So he or she can afford to buy something and saves 3% on any item, big or small. That helps the majority of people, and that's what we need.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to this private member's bill, which is entitled An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide an exemption for fire education equipment. The rationale for this, as I understand it from the letter that's put out by the member, is that although equipment used for firefighting is currently exempt from the 8% provincial sales tax, unfortunately, equipment purchased to be used for public education related to fire safety and prevention does not qualify for the provincial sales tax exemption. So what we're dealing with here is fire education equipment. Let's be clear about that.

I'd like to address this issue from a dollars and cents perspective. I'd like to do so because it's important to have an idea of what exempting fire education equipment will really cost. That's something that's not in this particular bill. It's our responsibility to consider the possible implications of such a move, because when we talk about how much something will cost, what we are really talking about is how much something will cost Ontario taxpayers.

We're being told that the immediate impact of a special fire education equipment exemption for volunteer organizations—and the member very capably sets out that agencies such as universities, municipalities, public hospitals, local service boards and volunteer organizations would be eligible to apply for and receive a PST exemption for each piece of fire education equipment costing in excess of \$1,000 under the provisions of the bill. So there's a monetary limit there in terms of where this exemption would apply.

Now, we're being told that the impact of a special fire education equipment exemption is estimated to cost less than \$1 million. That's only the immediate impact. Extending the current sales tax exemption to include fire education equipment could have broader fiscal implications, as many other organizations also use taxable equipment in public safety education. So looking at the thrust of the member's bill, certainly he's trying to focus on this particular area, but there are other areas that you should look at. So my only question to the member would be, why don't you broaden it out to cover other organizations so that we have the full picture in terms of what type of equipment that deals with public safety education should he feels be exempt?

1040

When we announced this year's budget, it was based on fiscal responsibility, accountability and growth. Our government must be both responsive and responsible. Our government must also be both efficient and effective. In order for us to continue this way, we must act responsibly. That's why we should have the whole picture rather than a piecemeal approach in terms of dealing with fire education equipment. We should look at all the areas of public safety education.

The people of Ontario need us to think ahead and exercise discipline through strong leadership and prudent management of their money. Every day families across Ontario make responsible choices in managing their own budgets. They expect government to do the same thing, and in this instance, that's what we're doing. We don't think that in the long run, this exemption from the retail sales tax is a fiscally responsible thing to do. Taxpayers expect and demand that the government deliver high-quality services at the lowest possible cost. They expect to receive value for their money.

Since being elected, this government has taken many important steps to both improve the services that it delivers to the public directly and report what it is accountable for. The process of improving accountability started in 1995 and continues to this very day. We're not

about to stray from these principles by making a special exemption for fire education equipment. We should be focusing on public safety equipment in its entirety. Some members are mentioning that the September 11 issue brings this to the fore. The September 11 issue is not something that's related to this at all. What we're talking about is public safety education. I'd say to the member, why don't you broaden it? I would put that to the member right now. He's not listening to me, but I would put that to him. If you want to deal with a public safety equipment exemption, put it all out there so everybody knows what we're dealing with.

We have to be responsive to the needs of the people of Ontario. All I'm saying is the member's intentions are honourable. The member is trying to accomplish something in the fire safety area. I'm saying, why don't you broaden it so we have a look at what we can try to accomplish for the entire area? Because that's the intent of this, to deal with public safety education equipment, not to approach this area piecemeal.

The point has to be made that the equipment used for firefighting is already exempt. It's already exempt, so that's not an issue. Let's not confuse things. What we're talking about here is public safety education equipment. I say to the member, broaden it out; let's have the whole picture in terms of what we're trying to deal with here. Let's not deal with a piecemeal approach to an issue.

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): I'm going to make a recommendation. The last exchange between the NDP and the Conservatives was a little bit of a disadvantage for us backbenchers here. Maybe I'm suggesting that we should put a mirror up there at the top so we get to see the gallery directly behind us, because I wanted to talk to the kids, too. Nonetheless, I think that's a logical thing we should look into later down the road.

What we're talking about is exactly what the member is intending to do. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings has offered this Legislature an exceptionally bright idea. Why? Simply because it levels the playing field. We are already exempting the PST, the provincial sales tax, for municipalities that have professional firefighters and full-time firefighter services. They are getting that already for prevention and suppression. Suppression is the firefighting equipment that's necessary to put the fires out and be proactive. Prevention, which has been the bent of this government's initiation through the fire marshal, is to improve circumstances so we don't need suppression as much. Quite frankly, the statistics are showing that because of preventive measures and education, that's diminishing, that's coming down.

So the reality of the day is that the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford is blowing smoke. He's trying to say we don't want to spend \$1 million. That's what he's saying: we don't want to spend \$1 million. Why? Because it's going to cost us a little bit of money for those tax cuts. We can't spend it, he says.

Why shouldn't you spend the money? We're talking about education to prevent the use of the suppression. We're being proactive. They're disadvantaged in the

small communities across Ontario. Why? Because of the volunteerism that's required to raise the money to buy the fire truck in the first place. We've got examples across the province where 100% of the money to purchase a fire truck has come through boot drives. You know those boot drives that were created through—whoops, wait a minute. The squeegee bill, the Safe Streets Act passed by this government, did something to small towns in the province that they were warned it would do. They were provided with an opportunity to get out of the problem, and here's what happened: the Safe Streets Act prevented the firefighters across Ontario from doing those boot tolls that all of you are familiar with—except maybe in larger metropolitan areas—where the fire department would go out in their truck, park their truck at the side of the street, put up the cones and act in a very safe way. The OPP would co-operate, the municipal forces would co-operate and they would allow the trucks to set up; the firefighters would stand and put the boots out and the drivers would drive by, open their wallets and put some money in. Guess what? That stopped as a result of the bill passed by this government. It stopped.

By the way, we now have the figures. Hundreds of thousands of dollars have not been collected in the province of Ontario for charity because of that bill. That bill has stopped charity from getting the hundreds of thousands of dollars it normally collects. So what happened? The member from Essex, my own colleague Bruce Crozier offered an amendment to the act that exempted those boot tolls from not taking place. What did the government do? Thumbs down. Why? Because they would have had to admit they made a mistake. If they had admitted they made a mistake, hundreds of thousands of dollars today would have been collected for the Multiple Sclerosis Society and many other charities across this province in small-town Ontario.

They don't want to admit they made a mistake, and that's exactly what the member opposite has been saying: \$1 million is too expensive for education. Because that's exactly what we're trying to do: prevent volunteers in small towns in Ontario from paying extra money that could go to education, because it takes too much effort and work to raise that money on a volunteer basis.

I say shame on the government for standing up and pretending that they're protecting the taxpayers of Ontario. They're not protecting the citizens of Ontario, because education is the great leveller here. The fact is that the small town in Ontario with volunteer firefighters is just as important and just as valuable as any other community in Ontario.

We've got an opportunity here to right a wrong, and the wrong is very simple. You're applying a tax that you've exempted everybody else from to a small town that has to raise funds to even buy a fire truck. So I say shame on the government for not stepping up to the plate and not standing up and saying, "You've got a great idea. We're going to make sure it happens."

The member from Durham, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, stands up and what's his first

comment? "It's going to cost us \$1 million. We can't do it." What does the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford stand up and say? "We can't do it. It's going to cost too much money." At what cost do you say to the people of Ontario that we're not going to educate them and provide that opportunity?

Interjection: They spend it all for newspaper ads.

Mr Levac: So we're going to spend millions of dollars on newspaper ads saying how great you are.

Stand up; be counted. I challenge you on a private member's bill. Use your hearts and your brains together and say that we're not going to allow this little loophole not to be filled. The member on this side from Prince Edward-Hastings has found a problem that he wants to correct for the small towns in Ontario. I think it's laudable. It's the right thing to do. What I say to you today is, I'm going to challenge the government to stand up and say it's worth \$1 million to protect the people of Ontario.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise this morning. I welcome the young people who are in the audience seeing the debate this morning. I want to commend the member for the Retail Sales Tax Amendment Act, Bill 54.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: I guess we've got the chirping going on again this morning. They just keep chirping away over there.

It's interesting. A couple of things I want to talk about are some comments that were made earlier, first of all, on the fire safety houses. They're great projects made by a number of communities across our province.

1050

I have two organizations with fire departments in my riding that have very successful fire safety houses. They mainly go to the malls and schools etc, and they are good. They do a good job. One particular fire safety house even has a re-enactment sort of thing of a tornado in it.

The other comment I would like to make is that many fire departments are still holding fundraising events across the province. I've had numerous ones throughout my riding, and there's been absolutely no problem. Some of them are holding them on municipal streets, some of them are holding them in parking lots and service stations, and they're raising lots of money. I don't know where you're getting that we've shut off all the funding in the province. I think that's a mistake in saying that.

I really appreciate the comments made by the new tax-cutter over here, the member from Trinity-Spadina. It was interesting to note that he talked a little bit about Jean Chrétien and the GST and the big promises. Remember Jean Chrétien was going to be the tax-cutter and get rid of the GST? "Well, you know, we made a mistake. We did need that money to balance the federal deficit."

What else did they do at that time? They cut money from health care. Remember that? Six billion dollars. Today in the province of Ontario, where the citizens of

Ontario pay \$2 in income tax to the federal government for every dollar they pay to the provincial government, they are still \$66 million behind what they were in 1994-95. We're paying \$5.8 billion more, and you know it. You keep putting up with and listening to Allan Rock, that so-called Minister of Health. It makes me sick to think that man is actually the Minister of Health of this country.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): That's unparliamentary.

Mr Dunlop: It is not unparliamentary. It's a fact of life. He's paying—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. This is not a duet or a chorus. One member has the floor. He will speak. One at a time. The member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: That's after he destroyed the so-called gun legislation. A fact of life. I think it's \$600 million or \$700 million a year now. There was a complete mess on that. He's done the same with health care, and he blames the provinces around this country.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: You just don't want to hear it, and none of you fight for it. That's the other thing: you won't fight for health care.

Mr Smitherman: What do you do?

Mr Dunlop: We spent \$5.8 billion more. That's what we've done here.

Besides that, what we're talking about today is this particular Bill 54. Although I think in principle it's not a bad idea, it's very limited. It should be far broader as far as its intent, because there are many organizations that provide educational assistance to organizations throughout our province and throughout our country. That would be maybe more of an intent. But at this time you have to remember that these two parties over here voted against 166 tax cuts, which put \$1,800 a year back in the pockets of a family earning \$60,000. You know what? That gives them money to contribute to things across the country: buying cars, buying houses, buying clothing for their children. I don't see anything wrong with that.

But now we've got these little nickel and dime types of bills which deal specifically with something. You're in favour of that, but you're absolutely opposed to tax cuts. I cannot understand why.

Now, we've got these guys coming around a little bit. They're thinking a little more along the lines of provincial taxes. At this time I would compliment some of them. But you people voted against every tax cut and now you've become the tax-cutters on this particular Bill 54.

Mr Speaker, it's been a pleasure to say a few words to you this morning, and I compliment everyone else for speaking.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): It's nice to have the opportunity to speak to the bill. I'm glad that my colleague Mr Parsons has brought it forward. He obviously identifies a major concern, and that is education

surrounding fire prevention and the way to deal with fires.

His own personal experience was rather revealing, the fact that his children had also learned something about how to deal with a fire at school. Even though it is a panic situation when it does happen, that was very helpful.

The designated ways of helping municipalities or individual organizations that he has listed in his legislation are extremely helpful. We usually develop a consensus on that in the House.

The government has chosen to give a \$2.2-billion cut in taxes—a gift, I would call it—to the corporations of this province. We know that those corporations contribute substantial amounts of money to the Progressive Conservative Party. There are those who would call that—of course, I wouldn't be one of those who would necessarily make this accusation—payback for the legislation. When they give \$2.2 billion in corporate tax cuts to those corporations, we see that they seem to fill the halls. I know in St Catharines when the Premier comes for the Premier's dinner, it's full of the corporate elite of the Niagara Peninsula saying, "Thank you for giving us a tax cut." Well, here is a tax measure which I think is beneficial.

The member for Scarborough Southwest, on the government side, before he was in the cabinet, advanced the case in a private member's hour for a specific tax exemption. I thought it was designated, I thought it was specific, I thought it was helpful in achieving a specific goal. I supported it on that day, just as I would this measure, which I think can be of immense benefit.

I want to thank Mr Parsons for bringing it forward. That's the purpose of the private member's hour. He also mentioned, as have my other colleagues, Mr Levac and Mr Bartolucci, that there should be in the province a recognition of the significant role that firefighters play. Probably the incident which focused the greatest attention on the role that firefighters play in our society was the unfortunate and horrific circumstances of New York City and Washington on September 11 of this year, the day of infamy, as it is often called.

We see that our firefighters put their lives on the line on a daily basis. When they go to the fire station or when they're called to the fire station, they're going out into circumstances that are often unknown and unexpected. Their families do not really know if they are going to return home. Chances are they are, and for that we're very thankful. Firefighters in this province and across the world play a very substantial and significant role—in firefighting, yes; in rescue, most certainly. They are the people who often have to go to an accident to extract people from vehicles. They see some horrific sights on a daily basis.

We need to help educate everyone in fire safety and fire education. The specific provisions of this bill from Mr Parsons will allow that to happen, and I commend it for support to all members of this assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Parsons: I would first of all like to thank the members for Timmins-James Bay, Durham, Sudbury, Trinity-Spadina, Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, Brant, Simcoe North and St Catharines for their comments. Many of them were quite fascinating.

I was interested in hearing that this government's priorities are fiscal responsibility, accountability and growth. Public safety and security sure went off the radar screen pretty fast after what we heard two weeks ago. The people of Ontario aren't looking for the cheapest police services, emergency services, fire services; they're looking for safety and security.

This is a matter of priorities. I know it costs \$1 million. It's strange that today \$1 million is a lot of money. Last week, when the Premier ran ads in every newspaper, \$1 million wasn't a lot of money—\$6 million for education ads; \$107 million in the first four years for ads. It's a matter of priorities.

Firefighters lead dangerous lives. When they leave their homes, they put themselves at risk. Surely a priority should be that they don't have to respond to a beeper. Surely it should be that we prevent fires with equal concern as we suppress fires.

We know that the only payback for the \$1 million in ads last week was some publicity for the governing party, but we also know that fire education saves lives. That's been shown over and over. The \$1-million investment is guaranteed to save lives. There are no ifs, buts or maybes about it. This government has to take the priority of safety for our individual citizens, for our children. I am astounded that we put a price tag on someone's life in this province.

The minister could have changed this by regulation. I challenge him, when this bill becomes law, to make it retroactive and return the money to the firefighters in my riding and every other riding. The volunteer firefighters are there when we need them. We need to be there when they need us.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item number 25, which is second reading of Bill 54. I will place the questions regarding this ballot item at 12 o'clock noon.

1100

SOCIAL AUDIT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government must conduct an immediate review of the health and well-being of any Ontarian, or their family, suspended from welfare benefits, and launch a broader social audit to assess the impact of the government's unprecedented welfare reforms.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Gravelle has moved private member's notice of motion number 16. The member for Thunder Bay-Superior North has 10 minutes.

Mr Gravelle: In launching this debate on my resolution to have the government conduct a comprehensive

audit of its social welfare reforms, I want to take a moment to reflect on what may well be the single greatest tragedy of these reforms, the death of Kimberly Rogers. On September 24, the chief coroner of Ontario announced that he will be holding an inquest into the death of Ms Rogers, who died on August 9 while under house arrest for a welfare fraud conviction. While all the details surrounding Ms Rogers's death will not be known until the coroner's inquest is complete, the government and the public do know some extraordinarily troubling details that speak to the heart of an important part of my resolution.

We do know that Ms Rogers's crime was to draw welfare while she was also receiving Ontario student loans. We also know that the government's crown prosecutors successfully sought a penalty of a six-month house arrest and repayment of all the money. The government knew that Ms Rogers would have no means of income for at least three months of that six-month house arrest period, and we also know that since then, the welfare ban is now considered a lifetime welfare ban by this government.

The government did know that Ms Rogers was five months pregnant at the time of her sentencing. The government also knew that Ms Rogers suffered from prolonged medical conditions, including depression, and that her punishment would also cut off her ability to obtain needed prescription drugs.

The circumstances that the government's policies put Ms Rogers in should be a shock to all members of this House. Ms Rogers's plight did receive some media attention at the time of her sentencing, and even more attention when she successfully sought a court injunction to force the government to continue her benefits and drug benefits as well. She was one of the very few Ontarians who dared speak up and go public. Many suffer in silence; how many, we simply do not know.

Nonetheless, it was not until her death that most Ontarians were made aware of the horrendous circumstances surrounding the last months of her life. When the news of her death broke, most of us expected the government to take swift action to ensure that such a tragedy would never again be allowed to happen. Instead, the Minister of Community and Social Services said he wanted to get the facts before drawing any conclusions. Over two months later, this is still his position.

That is why the first part of my resolution would have the government review the health and well-being of any Ontarian who is presently suspended from welfare, particularly those who are currently serving a penalty that might prevent them from obtaining an alternate job.

While no one on this side of the House believes that welfare fraud should be tolerated, surely no one on either side of this House believes the punishment for such a crime should put one's health or life in peril. My resolution, if passed and acted on, would see to it that no one else suffers the way Kimberly Rogers was forced to.

The next part of my resolution speaks to a much broader issue: the fate of the nearly 600,000 Ontarians who have left the welfare system since October 1995, six

years ago this month. The statistic revealing the number of Ontarians who have left the welfare rolls has been a point of monthly pride for this government. Each month a body count is prominently released to the media as evidence of more and more people evidently "breaking the cycle of welfare dependency," as this government likes to put it. Oddly, for the first time in years, the government has not released the monthly stats for several months running, presumably because the numbers are going up and the government wants to hide that fact.

But tellingly, what the government has not released at any point are the statistics as to where those people have gone. Indeed, it has never bothered to properly examine that issue. Unlike other provinces, including British Columbia, Alberta and New Brunswick, Ontario has never done a comprehensive study of the impact of its welfare reforms, reforms that have been described as the most far-reaching and draconian in North America.

These reforms include the first decision this government made when they came to office, which was a 22% cut in welfare benefits in October 1995 and absolutely no increases to reflect the cost-of-living increases since then. They've introduced a lifetime suspension for welfare recipients convicted of welfare fraud. They set up a snitch line for welfare fraud. They've introduced mandatory workfare. They've introduced mandatory literacy tests, which just started this month in a pilot project in the province. They've got a plan to introduce mandatory drug testing this year, which we believe is not only offensive but will not withstand human rights challenges. These are but a few of the measures this government has put in place. In addition, the government has withdrawn completely from the construction of affordable housing while private sector rents have skyrocketed as a result of the government scrapping rent control.

Instead, the government has clung to its theory that a rising economic tide raises all boats and points to the decline in the unemployment rate as the primary indicator of this theory. I fear they may be in great trouble now as we move to an economic downturn.

The government likes to claim that the people who are leaving welfare have moved into the jobs the robust economy in the past provided. Unfortunately, this claim is simply not true, and it would seem that the government tacitly acknowledges that fact.

Consider the following: the only information the government has ever bothered to gather on those who have left social assistance are two incredibly inadequate phone surveys of those former welfare recipients it was able to track down by phone. The fact is, it couldn't find a large number of the people, so the survey only indicated people they were able to reach. The methodology of these surveys was so shoddy that nobody accepted them as having any validity at all. Everyone knows the government essentially tried to cook the books to hide the truth, that people on the streets were increasing, homelessness was increasing and poverty was increasing. Perhaps this explains why the government has not

bothered to even try to conduct such a survey for over three years.

I suspect that some of these surveys may be part of the speaking notes of the government members. I hope they do not try to distort the facts.

It's alarming that a government that prides itself on measuring results and outcomes, be it student and teacher testing, hospital report cards, municipal performance measures or the constant flood of economic and fiscal analyses, has never conducted an audit of the outcome of its welfare policies. It is even more alarming that the government has never studied the impact of its reforms when you consider that it has paid Accenture, formerly Andersen Consulting, a staggering \$200 million to implement these reforms, which is essentially a \$200-million boondoggle that we are going to continue to track down.

The question here is, where is the accountability? The social audit I envision would set in motion a process to determine how the government's Ontario Works policies are impacting on low-income children and families by putting real measurements against real outcomes. It would evaluate the impacts of the government's social welfare changes with a determination to make improvements so as to improve the well-being, employability and economic security of individuals and families in need.

I want to conclude this portion of my remarks by going back to the comments of Minister Baird after the death of Ms Rogers, when he said he needed the facts before he wanted to draw any conclusions. I agree with the minister. We do need the facts, and that's exactly why we need a social audit. We need the facts, and that's what that will provide us. I would trust that the members on the other side of the House would support that call.

We know that our poorest citizens have become poorer since this government took office. We know that child poverty has doubled since 1989. We know that homelessness in our province has never been worse, and we know that food bank use is at its highest level ever. We know that the grocery bill for the very cynical Tsubouchi diet back in October 1995, when the government immediately slashed welfare at that time by 22%, is now 25% higher than it was then and that housing costs have risen dramatically since this government took office.

These are issues the Ontario Liberal Party would deal with by being committed to raising the cost-of-living factor in terms of the people on social assistance and people on the Ontario disability support program.

1110

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Mr Gravelle: Absolutely.

We know there are tears in our province's social safety net, and we believe these tears are related to this government's social policies and welfare reforms. I am calling on all members of the House to do the responsible thing as elected representatives with the responsibility to ensure the health and well-being of all its citizens. I ask all members to support my resolution and conduct a

comprehensive social audit so that we as legislators can be certain that our social policy strategies are as effective as they can be.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I listened attentively to the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, and I want to say to him this morning that I appreciate his bringing forward his resolution. I appreciate his call for a social audit. I think it is absolutely needed in this province. I don't suggest for a second that we don't have enough evidence now on the table after five or six years to in fact begin to ask this government to take some specific and immediate action. But it is really important, as we move forward, however, I believe, in the spirit of and looking at the intent of this resolution, to connect the dots, to paint the fuller picture, to understand how the system works as a whole and to understand how the programs of this government for those who are most vulnerable and most at risk in our community have been affected in a negative way, diminished, torn apart and in fact, in many instances, just plain don't exist any more.

So I say to the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North that we in this caucus will certainly be supporting your resolution, and we're hoping that the government, in all good conscience, responding from a moral and ethical position where these issues are concerned, will find it possible to support this resolution as well.

There is no greater responsibility that government has, there is nothing more fundamental to what a government is called to do when it gets elected, than to look after those in its jurisdiction who are most vulnerable and most at risk. It's with that in mind that the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North and I, and others of right conscience in this place, found it so astounding and so offensive when the first thing this government did in coming to power was not action on the economy, not action working with the business community, not action in terms of how we correct some shortcomings perhaps in the health care or education systems—although we have a lot to say about that too. The first thing they did, just like the bully who walks into the schoolyard, wanting to make an impression, wanting to send the message out to everybody as to who is in charge, they picked out the smallest and the weakest and the most vulnerable and they laid a beating on them.

Think about it: almost 25% of your income disappears overnight; you're already living on a meagre subsistence allowance to look after yourself and your children, to pay for your rent, to clothe your family, to feed yourself; and you're told by a government in a jurisdiction that's the richest in this country, one of the richest jurisdictions in all of the world, that we can no longer afford to give you the money you need to look after yourself and your children. What else can you say in terms of understanding the approach that this government takes, where the most vulnerable and the at-risk are concerned in this province?

Today I'm calling on this government to respond to the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North's call to

carry out a social audit. But I'm also asking the Liberals and the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North to join me in calling on this government to take some immediate action now, because there are people out there today, there are families out there today, who are at risk. We have to look no further than the Kimberly Rogers case in Sudbury to understand just how at risk these people are, to begin to take some action. They have it within their power, they have it within their purview to make decisions right now, this minute. The Minister of Community and Social Services, Mr Baird, if he wanted to, as he has done on so many occasions in bringing in some of the initiatives that have pounded and battered and abused those who are in need of assistance, could, as simply and as easily, call a press conference this afternoon and say that he is actually going to take some action to relieve the pressure on those in our province who are experiencing the most difficulty at this particular point in time in their lives.

One of the things I've put forward, which I suggest we could all support in this place if we had the political will and the moral fortitude to do so, is to stop the clawback of the child tax benefit supplement. That would be close to \$100 a month to every poor family for each child, to go to feeding, clothing and housing those children in a way that speaks to the inherent dignity that exists in every human being who calls Ontario home. They could do that. Other provinces have done it. They could do it today. They could make that announcement today.

As a matter of fact, I announced this morning at a press conference that I will be tabling this afternoon in this place over 7,000 signatures on a petition that I carried across this province for the last six months, telling people—shocking people, in some instances, because they didn't know—that this government was in fact clawing back from the very poorest of our families, on average, \$100 a month per child that the federal government gives them that they could be using to feed themselves, to clothe themselves, to house themselves, and to stop doing that.

I'm asking the Liberals to join me in asking the government to stop that clawback. Please do that today, because that would go a long way in relieving some of the pressure that many of our really poor families are having to deal with out there.

Another thing they could do is join me on Monday when I bring before this House a bill that would ask the government to increase the pension that goes to people on the Ontario disability support program in this province, the disabled. They haven't had an increase in their allowance for six years, members of the government and members of the public out there. We've had inflation of some 12% over that time. They haven't had an increase, so they've lost purchasing power; they've lost the power to look after themselves by some 12%, never mind not getting an increase.

I will be tabling a bill in this place on Monday asking the government to increase the allowance given to people with disabilities and to tie that increase, a regular in-

crease on an annual basis—not dissimilar to what they've just introduced, by way of the Integrity Commissioner, for ourselves, the members of this place—to the Ontario cost of living, which would automatically go to those who are disabled in this province so they could look after themselves and their children and their families in a way that speaks to their need to participate in their communities, live with some dignity and be able to afford the very basics that we all need if we're going to get on with our lives.

The other thing I would ask the Liberals and the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North, as we support him in his call for a social audit, to join us in asking the government for would be to raise the minimum wage. We know from listening to members of the government that they brag on a regular basis. I've heard about this across the province as I travelled since last December. Many of you will remember the dramatic statement I made by stepping down from my position as Deputy Speaker and setting up the People's Parliament on Poverty, an alternate venue for people to come and speak about poverty because we can't, except for the odd occasion like this morning, get that topic on to the table of this place in any significant way. They're telling me that, as a result of this government pushing so many people off assistance across this province and into the workplace, all of those people are still living in poverty, because the minimum wage, \$6.85 an hour, doesn't produce the kind of income they need to cover the ever-increasing cost of, for example, housing—rent.

1120

This government has done away with the Rent Control Act and has brought in a Tenant Protection Act that doesn't protect tenants. What it does is it allows landlords to increase rent without any increase in minimum wage or income for people on assistance to deal with that changing circumstance in any important and significant way so that they have money that they need left over after they've paid the bills to actually buy the food they need to feed their children.

I'm asking all of you people in the House here today to support us in giving those people who, yes, have left the welfare rolls in this province, have gone and taken the jobs that were or are available and are working for minimum wage, an increase in that minimum wage so they can afford to pay the rent, buy the food, clothe themselves and their children. Because as I said of the instance of the disabled, it is the same for those who live in poverty.

Everybody that this government brags that they've pushed off the welfare rolls find themselves, if they're able to get a job—many of them have simply given up. They can't handle the hassle any more. They cannot deal with the pressure. They're finding other innovative and interesting ways to look after themselves. But many of them, yes, have gone out to take jobs that pay minimum wage and are finding it very difficult.

As a matter of fact, I was listening to the member from Beaches-East York last night on the Michael Coren

show. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services was there as well. He said to her, and to the listening people out there across Ontario, that in fact there are some 3,000 people living in shelters in Toronto today and another 1,000 or so living, as he said, rough on the streets. He said something I found interesting. Most of those people in fact are working, but they can't afford a place to live or they can't find a place to live that they can afford. That's the Ontario that is evolving out of the programs and initiatives of this government. The evidence is there. To do a social audit wouldn't be a huge challenge. It's all in front of you.

As I travelled the province over the last six to nine months, listening to people in places like Huntsville, Sault Ste Marie, Ottawa, Toronto and Elliot Lake, they told me stories, that brought me to tears, of the efforts they're making to look after themselves given the meagre assistance and support they get from their government, given the challenge they face every day that they wake up and another announcement is made, trying to figure out how they deal with this, the latest attack on their dignity, on their lifestyle, on their ability to look after themselves and their children.

In Huntsville people are sharing rooms in hotels in the off-season because that's the only thing they can afford. I don't know what they do during the on-season, but mostly it is summertime. I guess they're in tents or they're finding part-time work so they can afford some perhaps more suitable accommodation during that period of the year. But during the toughest and harshest weather of the year in our province, these people in that area which is, I believe by statistics, one of the lowest-paying areas in the province, are living in hotel rooms, two and three together; sometimes two families together.

In Wawa they're couch-surfing. They're living and sleeping on each other's couches as they try to deal with the reality of this government's initiatives and programs that are out there to be taken advantage of.

In Ottawa we heard some people whose mental health is very delicate say to us that sometimes, with the ever-changing circumstances they confront as they wake up every morning, the most important decision they make now is whether to live or not. They have to ask themselves every morning when they wake up, "Is it worth the effort to go through another day?" What a terrible circumstance to be put into, and all driven in significant and important ways by the initiatives of this government.

And so I say to the members of this House, we should all be supporting a social audit. We should all be trying to get to the bottom of how all of these initiatives that this government—and the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North laid a few of them out for you. Every other month, it seems, there's a new initiative slamming the poor, because it's a hot-button issue, I guess; it's politically expedient or correct.

I'm asking this government to act out of their moral and ethical centre and do something different. Support the audit, but also support us in our call for immediate action now to help people who are in desperate need across this province.

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): I am pleased to take the opportunity today to speak about the resolution put forward by the member from Thunder Bay-Superior North.

This resolution is another indication that the Liberals on the opposition side of this House will never agree to the reforms that we have made in welfare and that have helped hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario. Since we took office, we have turned welfare around to make sure that it's a hand up, not a handout.

In 1995, when our government was elected, we were given a strong mandate by the people of Ontario. We had the highest per capita caseload in the country. Over a million Ontarians were trapped on welfare. No doubt this was a result of the lost decade of the Liberals and the NDP. We cut welfare rates in 1995 because our welfare rates were out of control. More and more people were trapped in the cycle of welfare dependency. Voters in 1995 knew that the country club welfare policies that existed during the Liberal and NDP governments were unacceptable and had the province in dire straits. People were actually paid to stay home, and many of them were not even required to look for a job.

The good news is that our government's reforms are working. Ontario Works is getting people off welfare and back into the workforce.

I had the opportunity to visit a home for the mentally and physically challenged, and the head of the volunteer organization in that location told me that she's losing volunteers because they are finding jobs. There are volunteers coming into the centre through Ontario Works, and they are moving their way into jobs. That's what Ontario Works is. When this happens, everyone wins: the government wins, the taxpayers win, but most importantly, the person who was on welfare and finds a job is the biggest winner.

We are proud to stand behind our record. Let me give some indications of what that record is.

With Ontario Works, we have helped close to 70,000 throughout Ontario find work placements. We have helped 3,628 in starting their own business, giving themselves and their families a solid footing to the future. Through our basic education and job skills training, we have helped 104,548 Ontarians by improving their ability to compete for jobs. Through structured job search, which helps people find a job, we have helped 134,482 people in Ontario feel proud when someone calls them to say, "You got the job." Our earnfare program, working to earn the difference between the old rates and the new rates, is helping over 52,000 people. Through our Learning, Earning and Parenting program, we provide help to 3,000 young single mothers so that they can finish school.

This resolution that is put before the House today is just another ploy to stop or delay, through studies, the good work that this government is doing. We need strong leadership and strong action to help all of those who are still on welfare, not more reports and studies that sit on the shelves and gather dust.

1130

I want to spend a moment talking about the case in Sudbury the member alluded to as part of this resolution. It's important to get all the facts on the table. The coroner has called an inquest into this tragedy and the member quoted parts of that inquiry. We, as a government, will provide our full co-operation, but let's be careful not to use this tragedy to make political points, as those on the other side of this House have been so quick to do, especially when all the facts are not yet in.

I think the Sudbury Star editorial from August 18 of this year speaks volumes on this issue. I want to quote from that article:

"Rather than follow their respective political agendas ... politicians and social activists should hold off drawing conclusions without evidence—which will take time to gather...."

"In the meantime, opposition politicians and local activists should allow Rogers's family the peace to grieve her loss and allow the coroner's office to conduct its investigation.

"Railing against changes to the social assistance program and linking those changes to Rogers's death ... does both Rogers and their cause a disservice."

I invite the members opposite to ponder the very useful insights of that editorial before they start using this tragedy for political ends.

The Liberals have constantly shown both in office and in opposition that they're just not up to the job on welfare reform. They don't have any idea what it takes to help people get off welfare. This evidence is clear. Our welfare reforms are working for all the people of Ontario.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I'm very honoured to have a chance to join this debate in support of the resolution by my colleague and in defence of the people I represent. Too many of the people in my riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale are poor and have been subjected for going on seven years now to the kind of stigma and stereotyping that member just participated in.

When she talks about Ontario's country club welfare system, she is appealing to the lowest common denominator among people this government has worked to narrowcast, a government that does not see its responsibility to work on behalf of all, but in favour only of those who choose to vote for it. I say to that member, I look forward to the day when the coin drops and you understand that time has passed your rhetoric by. Your six-minute speech that you just gave on this thoughtful resolution of my colleague shows just how out of touch you are with the economic circumstances that confront Ontario today, with the challenges that are presented as a result of September 11, and with the utter reality of the circumstances in which poor people find themselves in our province.

I wish I could offer my time today to some of the people who are in the galleries here, like Josephine Grey, who has been a courageous leader on this issue, who works for Low Income Families Together, and Kira from

the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee, people who work every single day, who confront the kind of challenges you could not imagine and whom you subject to the kind of stigma you've been a participant in for too many years.

This government uses the rhetoric of, "We want to give people a hand up." The only hand that too many poor people have seen from this government is the back of the hand, from a government that uses phrases like "country club welfare recipients."

I encourage you over the lunch hour or at any time convenient to you to come for a walk with me through the streets of downtown Toronto to meet the people you have been a participant in stereotyping.

We want to build people up, but this is a government that at the same time it cut welfare rates also cut the crucial, critical supports for people who are living with challenges that many of us could not imagine. We stopped building housing—talk about creating opportunities.

But I want to know, and this audit would get at it, the most important thing. Last night I had an opportunity to be at the Ontario chamber dinner, which was the Premier reporting back to his core constituency on all he had done to make them richer. He talked about the reduction in welfare rolls. I want to be part of a governmental institution that celebrates a reduction in people on welfare, but I also want to be a participant in the celebration of people leaving poverty, and that is the missing link here. Yes, of course, through all these government actions and through a more buoyant economy, fewer people are on welfare, but if we look at children, as an example, and at child poverty rates, children have not left poverty.

In my inner-city riding of Toronto Centre-Rosedale, the forced cuts of this government to the Toronto District School Board have meant that the crucial programs in our inner-city schools that were designed to do what your rhetoric talks about, which is to lift people up out of the circumstances into which they have been born, have been cut.

We talk about excellence in education. There used to be a gifted program at Winchester school, which serves the most multicultural community perhaps in Canada, St James Town. It's gone. That's a result of your government and your cut.

This is one of those days when I'm saddened by the fact that I have to sit here and take that, but you fuel me, Ms Molinari, member for Thornhill, to work even harder to make sure that the people in your riding and the people of the province come to understand that we can no longer take a very significant portion of our people and simply throw them on the scrap heap of life, because that's what the actions of your government have the net effect of doing.

What has the member from Thunder Bay presented? This is not some rhetorical flourish. This is a thoughtful suggestion that maybe we ought to look a little beyond the rhetoric and do some statistical analysis, an audit, and determine the extent to which people are still living in

poverty, and see what we might do about that as a province.

I ask any member on the opposite side, any member of the government who doesn't believe what I say, to come for a walk with me. No media. We'll go anywhere you want, at whatever hour you want. Come for a walk with me and meet the people I represent, the people you have been a participant in stereotyping, and find out what it's like to carry the burden of poverty every single day, find out about the harmful effect of the words you use.

I want to say just one more thing: I want to see a leader of this province where parents can say to their children, "This is someone I want you to meet." On November 17 Nelson Mandela is coming to Regent Park and he will be welcomed there as a great man. But if Mike Harris were taken to Regent Park, parents would not be grabbing their children and saying, "I want you to meet this man, this Premier of Ontario." I think that, at the end of six years of that kind of rhetoric and stigmatization, is a very sad commentary.

The Deputy Speaker: Stop the clock. I want to draw members' attention to René Fontaine, the former member for Cochrane North and a former Minister of Northern Affairs and Mines.

Further debate?

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to stand and join the debate on this issue, especially after listening to some of the stuff said across the floor. It's very interesting how, after six years of successful welfare reform in Ontario, the parties opposite can continually stand up and say that 600,000 people off the dependence of welfare is a bad thing. They want to go back to the years between 1985 and 1995 when 12% of the population of this province was collecting welfare. It is tragic that they want to take that step backwards. I continue to be astounded.

Over one million people between 1985 and 1995 were on welfare. We came in after the election of 1995 with a clear path: bringing in workfare, moderating welfare rates, and a whole host of programs to get people from the dependency of welfare into the workplace. As I said, 600,000 people today are off the dependency of welfare. We know that about 800,000 new jobs have been created since 1995. We actually did two studies on this, and most of those people who left welfare went to jobs.

1140

What are some of the other things we've been doing to help people, aside from workfare placements, which have been a tremendous success? Some of the other things we are doing is providing help for folks to find a job, providing basic education and training, providing job skills training, providing supports for teen mothers on welfare to finish school and providing incentives to find paid work.

One of the members opposite just got up and talked about the rate cut. Well, let me tell you something, to the member opposite: you better figure out what your party's policy is on this. They do flip-flop, that's true, but the member opposite clearly doesn't understand that his own

leader said in a Liberal news release in December 1998, "I fear I may have left the impression that it was my intent to fully restore the 22% welfare cuts to our recipients. That is not my intention." The member opposite complained about the rate cut; his own leader is not in favour of reinstating that rate cut. Not only that, but you should realize that right now Ontario still has the highest welfare rates in Canada, more than 10% above the average that is paid in the other provinces.

On workfare, which has been a great success—and I'm going to read you a lot of quotes because, as I said, we've done two exit studies to find out where people were going when they moved from welfare to work. We've also worked on a constant basis with, mostly, regional governments, upper-tier-level governments that deliver welfare. We've got a constant dialogue between those people who are on the front lines delivering the welfare services, the social assistance services and the workfare programs, and they continually tell us that people are moving from welfare to work.

What was the Liberal position on workfare? They saw that the public in Ontario thought workfare was a good program. So what did they decide to run on in 1995? Mandatory opportunity. What was that? No one knew what it was, including the Liberals. They could never really define it. What did Dalton McGuinty say in 1996 about this? He said, "I don't believe in workfare but I do believe there is one exception. I don't think we can accept that anybody under the age of 30 can simply stay at home and collect welfare." I guess he believes that if you're under 30 and on welfare, workfare is OK for you, but if you're 31 or 32, somehow workfare is not OK for you. I don't understand the Liberals' position on that either.

As I said, we deal a lot with the municipalities and the upper-tier levels of government that deliver welfare. We've had a constant dialogue. Minister Baird is constantly in the offices, meeting with the front-line staff at social service agencies across the province. What do they have to say? Some of the members opposite should pay attention to some of these quotes because these are quotes from people on the front lines, delivering social services in their ridings.

Let me start off. Eddie Alton, the chief administrative officer, district of Timiskaming, says, "We do have a lot of people going off social assistance who are finding employment, and considering that we haven't had any major employers move into the area to take a lump sum of them, it is impressive. Some of our placements have been very successful. In doing placements for about two to three months, they get a current resumé and then they are able to get a job." That's someone talking about how successful workfare has been in his area in Timiskaming.

Here's another one, from Chatham-Kent. Lucy Brown, manager of social services and children's services for Chatham-Kent, says, "It's a win-win situation. Non-profit housing groups can get things done that are not being done now, while the placements can develop references and get a more recent work background.

Paul Beaton, who is the manager of Ontario Works in Woodstock, says, "The province's 1997 act is giving people the opportunity to actively get involved in something that will increase their employability rather than just collecting a cheque. Ontario Works helps people get off welfare by expanding the opportunities that we know help people succeed."

Again, members opposite should pay attention to what's being seen by the front-line caseworkers all around the province.

Here's another one from Woodstock. Listen to this, Speaker. This is from a front-line social assistance deliverer in Woodstock: "The idea that they are driven off the system into despair and homelessness is not accurate." That's someone on the front lines.

Do we need to go out and do more and more studies, to follow individuals and find out where they are? Well, we've done it twice. As I said, we have this constant dialogue with people on the front lines.

The director of Grey county social services, David Hughes, says, "I can tell you that we've got more individuals leaving the system for employment than we've had in a long, long while. We've had more individuals going into education and training programs."

Carmene Cousineau from Stormont-Dundas-Glen-garry, another gentleman on the front lines of delivering welfare: "It's making a real difference in their self-esteem. They're learning that people want them while they are developing these skills. Many of them who were reluctant in the beginning to participate have come back to thank us." I've heard that all over the province. I was the parliamentary assistant to Minister Baird at community and social services for a little over a year. The minister, I'll tell you now, has binders in his office of letters from people who were on welfare, who were hesitant to participate in workfare, participated in workfare and now are working. He has binders and binders of letters of people explaining their situations and how their life has dramatically improved.

Members opposite just want to put that aside. "Let's go back to the old days when we had over a million people on welfare in this province." It's a tragic position that they take and one that they continually flip-flop over, as I told you before.

Here's another quote, from Neil Seaman: "Prior to workfare, the percentage of welfare recipients who partook meaningfully in any working activities was negligible. Whatever you may think of workfare, it is plainly an incentive for poor people to seek jobs."

I can't resist this. I'm going to be in trouble, because I think Minister Baird would really like to use this quote, but I can't resist the opportunity to use it. There used to be a gentleman on the other side of the aisle, a Liberal member from Ottawa. He's now the mayor of Ottawa. On his very own Web site, he takes pride in the welfare changes of the province of Ontario. He expresses pride in workfare placements and the process of getting people off welfare and into work in Ontario. Here's what his Web site says: Bob Chiarelli, the current mayor, the

Liberal member opposite prior to leaving. It says, "The number of social assistance recipients in Ottawa-Carleton has declined by more than 31%. That represents an average of 850 people who leave welfare for paying jobs every single month—more than 30,600 people since Bob was elected.... Taxpayers saved more than \$51 million," this year. That is a former Liberal member, a current mayor in Ottawa, bragging about our welfare reforms.

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: We have some very special guests in the House today. There are some students from École secondaire Sainte-Famille up in the gallery. I want to welcome them. You can't applaud—don't get in trouble—but I certainly want to welcome you here.

The Deputy Speaker: As the minister knows, that is not a point of order, and we welcome you.

Further debate?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I'm glad these secondary school students are here in the audience today, listening to what the government is saying.

I stand in support of the resolution by the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North. Indeed, what he asks for is what the people of Ontario want.

Thomas Fuller once said, "Rigid justice is the greatest injustice." This is the fear that's been expressed by the people of Sudbury and all Ontarians regarding the death of Kimberly Rogers: that in the name of justice, this government's definition of justice, Kimberly suffered a grave injustice. The death of Kimberly Rogers has resonated throughout our community, throughout our province, by virtue of the shocking circumstances as we know them, the profound questions that remain unanswered, and quite simply the sudden and sheer sadness of the events.

The members opposite can quote anyone they want to quote, but when government policy can lead to the death of one or more individuals, then that government policy is wrong. We are mandated by the honour that is placed within us by our constituents to ensure that bad policy is gotten rid of as quickly as possible. The reality is, the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North wants to ensure that there is not another Kimberly Rogers event out there. That's all he's asking for. It's not government rhetoric; it's not a cute ploy used in private members' hour. It is a serious request for a social audit, something that has been asked for by many different groups across this province. Our critic, Michael Gravelle, is responding to their desire to have a social audit. The government is mandated, by the power it is given through the electorate, to ensure that that social audit takes place.

1150

Throughout this province, many groups have come together to question the government's policies regarding and surrounding the death of Kimberly Rogers. For example, today in Sudbury, the Ontario Common Front will be gathering in front of the courthouse to discuss the tragic death of Kimberly Rogers, raising questions about provincial welfare policy, access to post-secondary edu-

cation and the administration of justice, all very important items to be discussed. Next Monday, October 22 at the Steelworkers Hall, the committee to remember Kimberly Rogers will be coming together in an open forum. The government could attend it if they had the courage. They could attend it and give their side of their policy with regard to treating people like Kimberly Rogers.

I suggest to you that human beings not only have natural rights, but the very purpose of government is to protect them. Laws that subordinate life, liberty and safety are wrong. I challenge this government to do a social audit.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I am proud to stand in support of the resolution of my colleague from Thunder Bay-Superior North. I guess I shouldn't be shocked, after six years of sitting in this place, about the arrogance and lack of understanding that this government shows toward poor people in this province. It feels that it was given a mandate in 1995 to punish people who are poor in the province of Ontario.

I represent the riding of Hamilton East, a riding that has many people who are struggling. I have been in the homes of single moms in the middle of the month when they have no money and the fridge is empty and the shelves are empty and they've got to go to the food bank to try and scrape by. I've been in those homes in the middle of winter where the single mom cannot afford to buy boots for her kids or a winter coat. Let me tell you, much of that is a result of the policies of this government. They have continued to exploit poor people in Ontario; they have continued to exploit those who cannot get by in the way this government wants them to get by. The reason is that many of these folks never met or talked to a welfare recipient in their lives.

This government has been brutal toward welfare recipients in this province. It's a hot button that you've pushed for political exploitation and gain, and you don't give a damn who you hurt in this province if you can score cheap political points.

I remember what I think is the most disgraceful performance by a cabinet minister that I have seen, when the Minister of Community and Social Services announced drug testing for welfare recipients and held a press conference with a backdrop of someone injecting a needle into his arm, and then opened up the press conference by throwing out on the desk a box of syringes. What a disgraceful performance. What an exploitation of people on welfare. That man should not be the social services minister in Ontario. That kind of performance is an embarrassment to every single Ontarian.

But that typifies this government's approach toward people on welfare. They claim to have great numbers, but they can't tell us where these people have gone. Check with any food bank. Check with any shelter and see where their numbers have gone in the last five or six years in this province. Look at the number of homeless people in Ontario. Look at the number of poor people.

How do we have this tremendous contradiction, where you sit there and claim such tremendous success when it comes to welfare reform and then every social indicator of how people have been affected shows the opposite? You have had an opportunity through good economic times to make some real meaningful change to welfare reform by supplying more affordable daycare, increasing the cap on what someone can work and earn and putting in some meaningful programs that get people into meaningful jobs. Instead, you've blown a tremendous opportunity.

And they sit and accuse us of somehow pandering to people on welfare. Let me tell you, I will never, ever, ever apologize to anyone for sticking up and fighting for those in our society who need our help—the poor, the single moms, those on welfare. We cannot continue to play hot-button politics of exploitation the way this government has continued to do with welfare recipients.

You just don't really understand. That's the problem. They really don't understand how difficult it is for people who are trying to get by. They don't understand how you can struggle. They think that a single person living on \$500 a month in downtown Toronto is somehow living high off the hog. They don't understand the reality that people face.

What this resolution is saying is, let's get an audit here. Let us understand what is really happening to these folks. Let us ensure that the tragedy that occurred will never occur again. What is wrong with that? What is wrong with trying to get real understanding of where these folks have gone who are supposedly off the welfare rolls?

But you know what? They're not going to support it, because it would not serve their propaganda war against the poor. It would not fit into their hot-button Republican approach to governing in Ontario.

I say to you, it is an injustice that has been committed against hundreds of thousands of Ontarians. It is an injustice that started in 1995 and it's an injustice that continues. I can tell you, I hope these folks sleep well at night knowing in their heart of hearts what they've done to hurt and punish the most vulnerable Ontarians. It is disgraceful.

The Deputy Speaker: Response?

Mr Gravelle: I certainly want to thank my colleagues from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Sudbury, Hamilton East and Sault Ste Marie in particular for their support of this resolution. I certainly want to address some of the comments made by the government members, the member from Thornhill, the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services, and the member for Niagara Falls. I find their approach to this quite appalling. They're the ones who in fact turned this into a political issue. The fact is that what we are asking for today, which we think is very reasonable, is: can we not at least look at those people who are suffering as a result of your policies? Can we not at least do an assessment of your policies? If you're so sure that your policies have been positive, you would think you'd be very proud to do so.

What I found quite alarming, particularly about the remarks made by the member from Niagara Falls, was what he was really saying to us was, "It doesn't matter how we get people off welfare; we just want to get them off welfare. It doesn't matter if children are not getting food to eat every day. It doesn't matter. We just want to get our numbers fixed up. It doesn't matter that one in three people on welfare is a child."

We want to assess the value of that. We want to know what's happened with them, and I think that's a reasonable, fair thing to do. In that sense, this was not the least bit of a political speech. We've looked at this and we've tried to find a way to get something the government could actually agree to.

In terms of the issue related to Kimberly Rogers, there is no question that the tragic circumstances surrounding her death should be something we should all be concerned with. What we are saying is, surely the government's responsibility at least can be to ensure that other people who have been suspended from welfare—how are they doing? Can the government not make some effort to find out how they're doing?

It doesn't seem to matter. All that seems to matter is that they want to be able to say, "We've kicked more people off welfare," and they'll continue to bring forward their policies and not do anything to assess their impact or value. That is all we are asking. We think it's about time this government started caring about people in this province.

I'll tell you, it's not about going back to the past; it's going back to a time when we treated people with dignity and respect. All people in our province should be treated that way.

The Deputy Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item number 26.

RETAIL SALES TAX
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA TAXE
DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 25. Mr Parsons has moved second reading of Bill 54, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide an exemption for fire education equipment.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will hold the vote following my putting the question of ballot item number 26.

SOCIAL AUDIT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We will now deal with ballot item number 26.

Mr Gravelle has moved private member's notice of motion number 16, that in the opinion of this House, the Ontario government must conduct an immediate review of the health and well-being of any Ontarian, or their family, suspended from welfare benefits, and launch a broader social audit to assess the impact of the government's unprecedented welfare reforms. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will first deal with ballot item number 25.

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

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

RETAIL SALES TAX
AMENDMENT ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA TAXE
DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Parsons has moved second reading of Bill 54. All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called.

Ayes

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Gravelle, Michael | Ouellette, Jerry J. |
| Arnott, Ted | Hardeman, Ernie | Parsons, Ernie |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Hoy, Pat | Patten, Richard |
| Bisson, Gilles | Kormos, Peter | Peters, Steve |
| Bountrogianni, Marie | Kwinter, Monte | Phillips, Gerry |
| Boyer, Claudette | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Prue, Michael |
| Bradley, James J. | Levac, David | Ramsay, David |
| Bryant, Michael | Marchese, Rosario | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Caplan, David | Marland, Margaret | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Churley, Marilyn | Martel, Shelley | Sergio, Mario |
| Colle, Mike | Martin, Tony | Smitherman, George |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Martiniuk, Gerry | Spina, Joseph |
| DeFaria, Carl | Mazzilli, Frank | Tascona, Joseph N. |
| Di Cocco, Caroline | McLeod, Lyn | Tsubouchi, David H. |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | McMeekin, Ted | Turnbull, David |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Miller, Norm | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Galt, Doug | Molinari, Tina R. | Wood, Bob |
| Gerretsen, John | O'Toole, John | Young, David |

The Deputy Speaker: Those opposed will please stand and remaining standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Barrett, Toby | Hastings, John | Newman, Dan |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Hudak, Tim | Sampson, Rob |
| Clement, Tony | Jackson, Cameron | Snobelen, John |
| Coburn, Brian | Johnson, Bert | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Ecker, Janet | Maves, Bart | Stewart, R. Gary |
| Elliott, Brenda | Munro, Julia | Stockwell, Chris |
| Gill, Raminder | Mushinski, Marilyn | Witmer, Elizabeth |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 21.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask that this bill be referred to the standing committee on economic and affairs committee.

The Deputy Speaker: Agreed? All those in favour of the member's request that this bill be referred to the standing committee on finance and economic affairs will please stand.

Please be seated.

All those opposed will please stand.

Please be seated.

A majority is not in favour. Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to the committee of the whole House.

We will now open the doors for 30 seconds.

SOCIAL AUDIT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Gravelle has moved private member's notice of motion number 16.

All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Dombrowsky, Leona | McMeekin, Ted |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Gerretsen, John | Parsons, Ernie |
| Bisson, Gilles | Gravelle, Michael | Patten, Richard |
| Bountrogianni, Marie | Hoy, Pat | Peters, Steve |
| Boyer, Claudette | Kormos, Peter | Phillips, Gerry |
| Bradley, James J. | Kwinter, Monte | Prue, Michael |
| Bryant, Michael | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Ramsay, David |
| Caplan, David | Levac, David | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Churley, Marilyn | Marchese, Rosario | Sergio, Mario |
| Colle, Mike | Martel, Shelley | Smitherman, George |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Martin, Tony | |
| Di Cocco, Caroline | McLeod, Lyn | |

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

| | | |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Hudak, Tim | Sampson, Rob |
| Baird, John R. | Jackson, Cameron | Snobelen, John |
| Barrett, Toby | Johnson, Bert | Spina, Joseph |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Marland, Margaret | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Clement, Tony | Martiniuk, Gerry | Stewart, R. Gary |
| Coburn, Brian | Maves, Bart | Stockwell, Chris |
| DeFaria, Carl | Mazzilli, Frank | Tascona, Joseph N. |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Miller, Norm | Tsubouchi, David H. |
| Ecker, Janet | Molinari, Tina R. | Turnbull, David |
| Elliott, Brenda | Munro, Julia | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Galt, Doug | Mushinski, Marilyn | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Gill, Raminder | Newman, Dan | Wood, Bob |
| Hardeman, Ernie | O'Toole, John | Young, David |
| Hastings, John | Ouellette, Jerry J. | |
| Hodgson, Chris | Runciman, Robert W. | |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 34; the nays are 43.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

All matters relating to private members' public business now being complete, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1214 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TENANT PROTECTION

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Once again the Harris government is making it harder and harder for tenants to defend themselves at the Ontario Rental Housing Tribunal. On September 10 this year, the tribunal quietly issued a memo to its stakeholders to tell them that once again there would be a further consolidation of filing centres in Ontario. To you or me here in Toronto, this is not an urgent matter, but let's look at what these decisions mean to other parts of Ontario.

Before you started closing these centres, someone in Bancroft could attend a local place to file their papers. They didn't have to have a fax machine or a credit card; they could just show up and file the papers to help them stay in their homes. Now let's look at what's happened. Two years ago you closed the document filing centre in Bancroft and moved it to Napanee. Now you've closed the centre in Napanee and moved the service to a government information centre in Belleville. This is probably close to a three-hour drive each way, and that's if the weather is good. In Belleville, the people on staff will not be trained in any landlord and tenant issues.

By the way, if you're fortunate enough to be able to pay monies to the tribunal itself, you have to travel to Kingston. This isn't limited to people in Bancroft. Now if you don't have access to a fax machine and don't have a credit card and you live in Brantford, you have to travel to Kitchener to file documents. If you live in Port Elgin, you have to travel to Owen Sound instead of being able to stay near your home. Doesn't the government have any concern for tenants without cars who have to attempt to file papers in locations one to three hours away just to stay in their apartments?

This government has removed most tenant protections. The minimal opportunities that exist to access justice are being diminished by the actions in this regard. Why is the government making it harder? It's time to stop the assault on tenants and reconsider the closures they have already made. The tenants of Ontario deserve it.

ISLAMIC ART EXHIBITION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): On Saturday, October 13, I had the honour to attend an exhibition of Islamic art and science at the Scarborough Civic Centre. The exhibit was to showcase works of cultural, social and Islamic spiritual significant in the arts. It gave adults and youth alike the opportunity to learn about Islam, and the Muslim community and their place in Canada, and it was to promote a cultural understanding and tolerance.

I also had the opportunity to speak to this group about its values, culture and heritage and how, with a large Muslim community in Scarborough, it has been a pleasure to participate in the many community events through-

out the years. I expressed my appreciation to this community and the appreciation that this community has made a significant contribution both in Ontario and to Canada.

I quoted Premier Mike Harris in my speech. I said, "I want all to know that Ontario will not harbour prejudice. Ontario will not allow hate crimes. Ontario will not allow racism to dim the light of hope, which so many of you are helping to burn brighter."

I want to extend congratulations to Musa Rasa and his organizing team of tremendous volunteers for organizing such a successful exhibition. The seventh annual exhibition runs from October 13 to November 3 at 150 Borough Drive, Scarborough Civic Centre, Scarborough, Ontario.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): I have here a government press release recognizing this week as School Bus Safety Week in Ontario. It is a self-serving litany of measures that are supposed to protect children. It speaks of doubling fines. What a joke. There is no conviction mechanism because the government refuses to implement my bill. Today I am reintroducing my bill that would use vehicle liability to convict drivers who endanger innocent children. If you over there are so eager to get tough on crime, give the law teeth to catch reckless drivers.

This release says MTO is working with school bus operators, the Ontario School Bus Association, school boards, educators, parents, students, public health and police services to promote school bus safety. But these are the exact same groups who support my bill that the government refuses to pass.

I also have a School Bus Safety Week release from the Ontario School Bus Association issued just this Monday. It says the government's funding model is strangling the school bus system. Since 1995, \$32 million has been cut, placing bus transportation and safety in jeopardy. Bus funding is stuck at pre-1996 levels, but costs have just skyrocketed. Yet the government has the gall to release this self-congratulatory drivel. Shame on you. Funding must be restored; the law must have teeth.

I presented 30,000 petitions demanding that my bill be passed. Turn off your spin cycle over there and get serious about protecting innocent children from guilty drivers. Lives are at stake. Pass vehicle liability for our children now.

PERSONS DAY

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I would like to take time today to recognize an important day in the history of our country, Persons Day. October 18, 1929, was an historic day for the women of Canada. That was the day that women in this country were legally recognized by the highest court in the land as persons under the law. And it all happened because of the determination of five

women, the Famous Five: Emily Murphy, Louise McKinney, Irene Parlby, Henrietta Muir Edwards and Nellie McClung.

These five women started a legal challenge to enable women to become senators, and they became a symbol of the right of women to participate fully in society, including public life.

It is especially important that we recognize this day, because it falls during Women's History Month, which began 10 years ago in honour of this milestone for women.

Thanks to the legacy of the Famous Five and other trailblazing Canadian women, we can point to a stunning record of women's contributions to this province. Today, we all owe a great deal to the Famous Five. They brought the principle of equality between men and women to the public's attention and opened the door of political opportunity to those women who would take the challenge.

I salute these great women. May their struggles and achievements be remembered by future generations.

LAND MINES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):

Land mines are among the cruellest of all weapons because they don't recognize the difference between a soldier and a child. They kill and maim long after the warring soldiers have left the battlegrounds. They are not only a weapon of terror but also an impediment to social recovery.

At this moment there are between 50 million to 100 million land mines in 70 countries, lying in wait to kill innocent people.

Last week, each member of this Legislature received information from Frank O'Dea, the president of the Canadian Land Mine Foundation. He is calling on all of us to host a dinner on Friday, November 30, for our friends and neighbours to raise awareness and funds. People from all walks of life in countries all over the world will join in this massive event, which is being called the Night of a Thousand Dinners.

Since the tragic events of September 11, we have all asked, "How can I contribute to fight terrorism?" In response, I would suggest holding a dinner. Terrorists need tools like land mines to create their havoc. By having a dinner in your home on November 30, Canadians can directly contribute to the worldwide de-mining operation.

Let's all work to create a world where children can walk and play without fear, confident that the earth below their feet is clear of land mines.

The funds raised at each dinner will be matched by the Canadian International Development Agency in Canada. Proceeds raised will go directly to clearing mines in the most heavily mine-affected countries in the world.

I would encourage all members and their constituents to host a dinner on November 30 and join individuals like Adrienne Clarkson, Colin Powell and Sir Paul McCartney in hosting a dinner as well.

I would ask that you visit the Web site at www.1000dinners.com and sign up or call toll-free at 1-866-611-7669.

Every step we take makes a difference.

HOMELESSNESS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I rise today to bring attention to the government of the ongoing crisis with regard to homelessness and housing as it relates to Ontario, and in Hamilton specifically.

In today's Hamilton Spectator there's an article headed up, "Homelessness Growing." It speaks about Brother Richard MacPhee announcing that the Brothers of the Good Shepherd are having their harvest gala fundraiser on October 24.

1340

Last week, on Wednesday, October 10, I attended an annual meeting of Freedom House at the Hamilton Association for Community Living. That meeting was called and chaired by Mary Sinclair. Some of those in attendance were Colin Gage of Victoria Park Community Homes; Gay Walton, president of United Disabled Consumers; and John Smith of the March of Dimes.

At that meeting, the issue of homelessness and the absolutely critical need for affordable housing in Hamilton came through loud and clear. In fact, I want to bring to the government's attention that as of August of this year there were 3,290 Hamiltonians on the waiting list for affordable housing. If you are a parent with children, in desperate need of affordable housing in this province and in the city of Hamilton, you are going to wait years before you have access.

This government is attending a federal-provincial ministers' meeting in November in Quebec City. It's time for this government to get off the spot and sign the matching funds agreement so we can build badly needed affordable housing in this province.

PREMIER OF ONTARIO

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I rise today to recognize the supportive comments offered by many prominent Ontarians upon learning that our Premier, Mike Harris, will be stepping down after more than a decade as our party's leader. The dignity and diplomacy of these people, including harsh critics of the government, does not go unnoticed.

Former Liberal leader and Premier David Peterson offered that, "Mike Harris came with a very tough agenda and he did what he said he would do, and I admire him for that."

Our Liberal Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien, said Mike Harris "served his province well and he had strong convictions that he tried to apply."

Earl Manners, president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation, sincerely wished "the Premier well in his personal decision to retire from politics."

But there are still those who act without tact, without decency, without dignity, and with a completely crass attitude during such a challenging and emotional period as a resignation from public life can be.

One such individual who cannot go unnoticed is Allan Rock, who once again has displayed his true grit and true colours of indignation. Allan Rock could not even pause for one day, unlike his other Liberal colleagues, who acted with decency and class in recognition of a fellow parliamentarian. No, Allan Rock instead continued to play crass politics and issue cheap shots at Mike Harris in all of the local media. Allan Rock once again has demonstrated a callous attitude toward Ontarians. It is important that Ontarians recognize this, for no one has done more damage to health care in Canada than Allan Rock and his failure to fight for fair federal dollars for the health of Canadians.

SOCIAL AUDIT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): Earlier today, the Mike Harris government made a very clear statement to the people of the province about recipients of social assistance. By forcing a vote to defeat my private member's resolution for a social audit of the massive overhaul of the welfare system in our province, they told us a couple of important things.

First of all, they simply don't care about what happens to people who are forced off welfare. They just want them gone. They don't want to know why our food bank use has never been higher, they don't care that poverty levels have doubled over the past 10 years, and they aren't worried about children on the streets going hungry.

But there is something else more ominous about their determination to stop any analysis of their vicious welfare reforms, and that is, they are hiding something. They don't want an investigation into the \$200-million Andersen Consulting/Accenture boondoggle that is the ugly linchpin of their effort to stigmatize and attack our poorest citizens. They realize that a social audit would force them to open up their books wide, to analyze why these extraordinary amounts of money have been spent with so few benefits in return.

My resolution today was aimed at seeing that the Kimberly Rogers tragedy is not repeated in this province. One would hope that our government would share that desire. But it was also an honest attempt to do an evaluation that is legislatively mandated in other jurisdictions because of a recognition that major social changes require an equally major review. What is becoming clear is that the Mike Harris government will not allow this to happen under their watch, obviously for fear of what we will find.

This battle is not over.

DENTAL HYGIENE WEEK

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Speaker, do you have sore teeth? Do you have bleeding gums? When I

ask you these questions, who do you think of immediately? Hygienists.

I'm delighted to stand today to acknowledge national Dental Hygiene Week, which runs from October 14 to October 20.

Dental hygiene is vital to oral health care and overall health. Think about these facts: although the occurrence of tooth decay is decreasing among young people, it is increasing among seniors. The health of teeth and gums is linked directly to overall health. The link between oral infections and other diseases in the body is becoming well documented and accepted within the health care community. A dental hygienist's job is to help prevent gum disease and tooth decay and to promote oral health. Dental hygienists are not just teeth cleaners; they also assess, plan and implement preventive treatments and customize education for individual oral care needs.

Currently there are approximately 6,200 registered dental hygienists practising in Ontario. This makes dental hygiene one of the largest regulated health professions in the province. As we begin National Dental Hygiene Week, we acknowledge the important role dental hygienists play in promoting overall wellness through optimum oral care. This week, thank you hygienist.

OPPOSITION DAY MOTIONS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Members will be aware that there appears on today's Orders and Notices paper two notices of opposition day to be debated next week.

Under standing order 42(d), the Speaker is required to select one of the notices for consideration, taking into account the order in which they were received.

I would like to advise the members that the motion by Mr Hampton will be the one that will be selected for debate next week.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MUNICIPAL ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LES MUNICIPALITÉS

Mr Hodgson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 111, An Act to revise the Municipal Act and to amend or repeal other Acts in relation to municipalities / Projet de loi 111, Loi révisant la Loi sur les municipalités et modifiant ou abrogeant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne les municipalités.

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

The member for a short explanation?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): In minister's statements.

PROTECTION OF CHILDREN
ON SCHOOL BUSES ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001
SUR LA PROTECTION DES ENFANTS
DANS LES AUTOBUS SCOLAIRES

Mr Hoy moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses / Projet de loi 112, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en vue de protéger les enfants lorsqu'ils sont dans des autobus scolaires.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Pat Hoy (Chatham-Kent Essex): This bill addresses a long-standing need to protect Ontario's school children. It would provide a conviction mechanism for a vehicle that illegally passes a school bus with its red warning light flashing.

FIREFIGHTERS' MEMORIAL ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001
SUR LE MONUMENT COMMÉMORATIF
EN HOMMAGE AUX POMPIERS

Mr Wood moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to honour firefighters who have died in the line of duty / Projet de loi 113, Loi visant à rendre hommage aux pompiers décédés dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions.

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

The member for a short explanation?

Mr Bob Wood (London West): The people of Ontario are well aware of the skills, dedication and courage our firefighters bring to what they do. Some firefighters lose their lives in the course of this work. This bill sets in motion a process which will result in a memorial to fallen firefighters on or near the precinct of this Legislature. I hope it will be supported by all members of this House.

1350

CARLEIGH AND EMILY'S LAW
(EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT -
SPECIAL EDUCATION ADVOCATE), 2001

LOI CARLEIGH ET EMILY DE 2001
MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION
(CONSEILLER À L'ENFANCE
EN DIFFICULTÉ)

Mr McMeekin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Education Act to provide for a Special Education Advocate / Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en vue de prévoir un conseiller à l'enfance en difficulté.

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

The member for a short explanation.

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): This bill would amend the Education Act to provide for a special education advocate who would investigate and report to the minister on special education matters, make recommendation to the minister on those matters, including recommendations for changes in provincial funding, and advise and assist the parents and guardians of pupils in special education matters.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm very pleased today to introduce a new Municipal Act for the province of Ontario. This has been a long time coming. The legislation governing Ontario's municipalities is more than 150 years old. It has been changed and amended and added to, but it has never had the comprehensive overhaul that it so badly needs.

Municipal politicians and staff across this great province work very hard to deliver important services to our collective citizens. People take these services for granted, but I can tell you that municipalities need the tools to provide good police protection, pick up garbage, clear our streets, and make sure our communities are better places to live.

Over the last century and a half, people at the municipal level have faced increasingly stressful times. Services that weren't even thought about to be delivered 150 years ago are now expected. In fact, today's municipalities are doing things their predecessors even 50 years ago never dreamed of. Each time municipalities took on some new responsibility, the Municipal Act was added to or amended to reflect the change. The result is a body of municipal legislation that is very long and very complicated.

For many years, municipalities have been asking for a comprehensive reform. When this government took office, we announced our commitment to a new, modern, more streamlined, easier-to-use Municipal Act. The members will realize that overhauling such a long and complicated piece of legislation has been a monumental task. We have consulted extensively with municipalities, the business community and others with an interest in municipal government. We needed to make sure that a new act wouldn't upset the delicate balance that had been achieved over the years among various competing interests. Now, after a century of promises, the Mike Harris government has found a way to maintain the essential balance between good municipal government and service delivery and the need to ensure a dynamic, barrier-free economy in which Ontario towns and cities can maintain their competitive position.

I'd like to take a moment and thank my colleagues who have worked so hard to build a consensus on this issue since 1995: former ministers Al Leach, Steve Gilchrist and Tony Clement, and former parliamentary assistants Ernie Hardeman and Brian Coburn.

I'd like to recognize the important contribution of many municipal associations and employees who gave of their time to bring this new act together. We will continue to rely on them as we work on the regulations. President Ann Mulvale from AMO and past presidents Michael Power and Terry Mundell have all been instrumental. Past president, and present mayor of the city of Mississauga, Mayor Hazel McCallion, I want to personally thank you. Joining Mayor McCallion in the gallery today are Toronto Board of Trade representative Elyse Allan, president and CEO; and the president of the Ontario Restaurant Hotel and Motel Association, Terry Mundell. I've appreciated the work these people and other business associations have done to bring this act forward to where it is today: groups like the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Urban Development Institute, the homebuilders' association and countless others have volunteered their time to try to get this act right for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

I'd also like to thank Premier Mike Harris, who has been instrumental in building a new, stronger relationship with the municipal sector. I'd like to thank staff at the ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, who have been committed to Municipal Act reform over the past several years and have worked extremely hard.

Let me briefly outline the thrust of the new Municipal Act. If it is passed by the Legislature, the new Municipal Act would give municipalities the tools they need to tackle the challenges of governing in the 21st century. It would allow municipalities to organize and deliver their services as they see fit, involving the private sector where appropriate in keeping with local needs. It would give municipalities broad, flexible authority in 10 areas of jurisdiction. It would give them what we call "natural person powers," to be used in areas in which they have the authority to act.

This broader authority would be balanced by a substantial accountability framework. Municipalities are already subject to a great many accountability measures. The proposed legislation would add a few more. For example, licensing and user fee processes will be made tighter and more transparent. Municipalities would be required to report to the taxpayers on improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of their service delivery, and they would be required to pass bylaws setting out procurement procedures. These measures are already standard procedure in many municipalities across this province.

The proposed new act also includes measures to give municipalities more authority to make their communities safer. It would deliver on our Blueprint commitment to give municipalities new power to ask the courts to close crack houses as public nuisances, and it would help municipalities deal with fortified buildings used by

motorcycle gangs as clubhouses or by others, by allowing municipalities to enact bylaws to address excessive fortification of buildings.

The proposed act would also contribute to Smart Growth by giving municipalities more authority to set up corporations and to involve their private sector partners in financing and undertaking public projects.

There's one more key element to this new act. For the first time in the history of Ontario, it would acknowledge, right in the introduction, that municipalities are responsible, accountable governments. It would formally recognize the importance of prior consultation between the province and the municipalities on matters that directly affect them.

This new Municipal Act, if it is approved by the Legislature, will become the cornerstone for a new, more mature, more productive relationship between Ontario's municipalities and the provincial government. That's a big step forward for municipalities and for the people they serve: the people of Ontario.

I would encourage all members of this Legislature to support this act and usher in a new era of better, more accountable, responsible government in our communities.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Responses?

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): At the outset, I just want to take a moment. It's been drawn to my attention that Mrs Linda Carey is here. My private member's bill is subtitled the Carleigh and Emily bill, and Mrs Carey is Emily's mother. Welcome, Mrs Carey.

I had the good fortune to attend today's announcement. I want to begin by applauding the minister for his initiative. I'm pleased that after a few false starts we've finally taken the first step in the process of developing this new Municipal Act. That said, I want you to understand that I'm not here to be the government's cheerleader.

The Municipal Act is as complex and important as it is historic. The response that we heard this morning and have heard in the House today is coming from the same government that created many of the problems that municipalities have been saddled with over the last six years. Let me remind you that this was the government that promised that downloading would be revenue-neutral and that they wouldn't force amalgamation on to any community. It's going to take a lot more than a new Municipal Act to have the people in my community forgive this government for what it's done.

1400

It's truly difficult to get a feel for the act; we've just received it. Rest assured, Mr Minister, I'll be spending the rest of the day reading it.

This is a government that has a track record of not being upfront with municipalities. Let me tell you about the minister's predecessor, Mr Clement. When he was Minister of Municipal Affairs he also talked about trust and respect. I hope the chaos that was created in municipal affairs under his tenure isn't repeated in his new portfolio in health. Don't take my word for it. Just

look at the AMO study that was completed in August, just after Mr Clement's tenure, where 88% of the respondents said the government wasn't communicating well and where 74% said they were clearly on the wrong track. Frankly, Mr Minister, your predecessor seemed intent on turning municipal friends into enemies with his legacy of insensitive treatment and his tendency toward abandonment and betrayal of Ontario municipalities.

I want to make a suggestion here and now: if you want to do something right for municipalities, why don't you take my leader's advice and fast-track the \$1.5 billion in funding for SuperBuild projects across Ontario? It's well and good to talk about trust and respect, and the need for a memo of understanding about the need to consult, but that's a far cry from what is needed, particularly given this government's chaotic recent history with municipalities. I can still remember that Who Does What exercise and I know there are some people in the gallery here today who will recall that with me. This government sought the very best advice possible before proceeding to completely ignore it, shamefully. It's no wonder that relationships have been in some trouble.

I want to conclude by referencing trust and respect and a set of principles that we on this side of the House intend to template over the act as we go through it, Mr Minister, as you know we will. There are eight basic principles that will guide our intervention on this bill:

(1) Will this bill end the war of attrition between municipalities and the province?

(2) Will responsibilities be handed off to municipalities with tools other than hammers and screwdrivers?

(3) Will the time be taken for full debate and discussion? If this bill is half as good as you and members on the opposite side think, you'll have no difficulty seeing it forged in the fires of debate.

(4) Does this Municipal Act help municipalities be more accountable?

(5) Will the mayors of municipalities be allowed sharp scissors when they cut ribbons or will that be part of some obscure accountability mechanism?

(6) Are there additional spheres of influence that need to be added?

(7) Will this act enhance the ability to build stronger, healthier communities?

(8) Will real power be ceded to municipalities?

This is a start. It's an important start. It's one I want to commend the minister for. Mr Minister, it is a day to give credit to you and our municipal colleagues but it is not yet a day to celebrate.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I would like to thank the minister and the page who brought me this little package to read. Unfortunately, I didn't have a chance to read it all before I stood up to speak. It's only, though I thank you, about half the size of a city of Toronto council agenda meeting, so that I was able to get almost halfway through it in the brief time, and I did find a typographical error in subsection 346(1) that I will bring to the minister's attention.

Ontario's cities and towns are in need of bold solutions. They are in need of revenues. They are in need of legislative authority. They need the tools to look after economic development so that our people have work. They need the tools to look after housing so our people have places to stay and to live. They need the tools to look after transit so that we do not have gridlock and we do not have problems in our cities. They need the tools to look after urban sprawl.

Mr Minister, I commend you for bringing in a new Municipal Act and I commend you for reducing it from 1,100 pages to 566. That is going to save at least half the time looking up all the things that need to be looked up every time a municipal bill comes before this Legislature. But there is little in the bill, with the greatest of respect, that has changed since 1849. Cities are still creatures of the province in this bill, and that is not acceptable in this day and age. In the last 150 years, revenues have gone up enormously—enormously—for federal governments and for provincial governments but they have been flatlined, unfortunately for too many years, for our municipalities, especially the bigger municipalities. They have not had the tools nor the money to do what is necessary, and we are starting to see urban decay. The cities need bigger tools than a memorandum of understanding, as good as that is and as forward a step as that is.

The large urban mayors will be meeting in Toronto this weekend to talk about charter status for our cities. That's where we should be heading. The city should have charters and rights under the Constitution. They should have that. They should have constitutional protection. They should have the authority—and they have no authority—to challenge things like amalgamation, which many cities do not want and which was forced upon them. They should have the authority to not have forced downloading of things they do not have the money to look after. They should have the authority to look after demolition of historic properties. They should have the authority to look after the reduction in the number of councillors, which happened recently in Toronto, from 57 to 44, and which is rumoured might be from 44 to 22. They need the authority to look at the lack of opportunities they have of being able to raise tax revenues. There is nothing in this bill that will do that.

The cities and towns of this province need a new deal. I welcome a very timid first step, but that is all, with respect, this is: a very timid first step. We need to immediately sit down and do a memorandum of understanding, which must include concrete proposals like giving cities charter status; giving them constitutional rights; making sure they cannot be downloaded, as is going to happen in BC; making sure they cannot be amalgamated against their will, as has happened to so many municipalities across this province; making sure they can look after things like rent control. People in large cities and towns are having a very real problem which is not universal to all of Ontario. It is absolutely endemic to large cities and towns like Toronto, like Hamilton, like Ottawa, like Peterborough, where the vacancy rates are low.

We are asking you, with respect, to take this first timid step, to send it but to be bold, to look to the 21st century, not to look to what we needed 20 or 30 years ago, which I would suggest this bill addresses—and that's much better than 1849—but to look to the 21st century and the 22nd century, because it's going to be a long time, I would guess, before this bill gets looked at again; to make sure the cities are constitutionally empowered, that cities are able to do what large urban cities all across the world are doing: developing and being the engine of economic progress.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): Give him five more minutes.

Mr Prue: Thank you, Mr Stockwell. You're always brilliant.

Interjection.

Mr Prue: Well, no, I don't recognize that.

Mr Minister, I am asking you to take those extra and bolder steps. I am asking you to do what needs to be done to make sure that this is not only a first step but a very good first step, and that the future for cities is much stronger than it is today.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin with oral questions, today is the last day for our group of pages. I'm sure all members would like to join in thanking our pages for the job that they've done.

1410

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, we learned yesterday that you have fired five scientists who do the research on public health in this province. You repeatedly assured us yesterday that you are hiring more people to do testing. That is fine, but it's not the issue.

We are concerned that you fired these five people: Dr Ching Lo, who chaired the 1999 conference on bioterrorism—incidentally, the same Dr Lo that you asked to help you deal with the West Nile virus just this past summer; microbiologist Catherine Smitka, who received an award for her groundbreaking work on infectious diseases in children; Dr Martin Preston, who developed the method for fingerprinting E coli 0157, the bacterium involved in the Walkerton tragedy; Dr Norma Harnett, who is a noted expert on antibiotic-resistant superbugs; and Dr Stephan Wang, who is an expert on chemical toxins.

Minister, some of these scientists are in the Legislature with us today. Will you tell them and us that you have reconsidered their firings and that you are going to keep their expertise in the Ministry of Health?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): Let me say at the outset that I wish to assure you that the safety of Ontarians has not been compromised in any way. In fact, it has been increased due to the redeployment of all available staff resources to the lab testing.

We have added a total of 50 people throughout the province. Next year we will be adding more personnel on an as-needed basis for the testing. The individuals to whom you refer are analysts who are not bioterrorism experts. They have never done any work on organisms associated with bioterrorism nor have they indicated any expertise as long as they've been employed but the Ontario government.

I wish to assure the people of Ontario that all available resources for testing will be ongoing and will indeed be increased as the need arises.

Mrs McLeod: That is absolutely incredible to me that 24 hours after these questions get raised in the Legislature you still fail, as Minister of Health, to understand the difference between research and testing and you are still prepared to abandon any responsibility for understanding the kind of threat to public health that the people of this province may face.

Of course we need to be able to test people who may have been infected, but the people doing the testing need to know what they're looking for, what to test for and what tests to do. That's exactly the kind of knowledge being produced by the five scientists you are firing.

Minister, you are Minister of Health in the most populous province in this country and your public health department has a responsibility to investigate and manage anything which is a hazard to public health. In fact, according to your mandatory programs, you are required by law to ensure that there is an investigation and management of health hazards.

It is ever more important that you accept that responsibility and I ask, why are you firing the very people who give you the ability to carry out your responsibility for the public health of the people of this province?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me assure Ontarians that their safety has not been compromised. The individuals to whom you refer, the analysts, have never been involved in research, planning, testing or response to bioterrorism. They have not been involved in that research, they have not been involved in that planning, they have not been involved in that testing and they have not been involved in anything relating to the issues to which the honourable member refers.

From my perspective, we are putting the resources where they are necessary. We have added 50 staff to date when it comes to testing and we will continue to add personnel as and when needed by the province of Ontario to protect the safety of our citizens.

Mrs McLeod: It seems strange to me that you would suggest that identifying the means of recognizing the E coli bacteria is not important in research for public health. Minister, it seems to me that you are dealing with public health in exactly the way you are dealing with

your entire ministry, that you are lurching from crisis to crisis and you keep creating the conditions for the crisis.

You've just fired five scientists who give you the knowledge to investigate new health hazards. You're planning to cut more mandatory public health programs. You've downloaded the responsibility for public health programs and for public health funding on to municipalities. We're hearing from medical officers of health from across this province that you're taking absolutely no responsibility for coordination or direction or support on a critical issue like managing the threat of bioterrorism. We're being told that those 37 individual public health units are out there all on their own.

Minister, I tell you, we have already had a crisis in our public health system. It was in Walkerton and it led to the deaths of seven people. We cannot risk another crisis, not when we're talking about something like the threat of anthrax.

Will you today finally accept some responsibility for public health and take immediate action to prevent another crisis? Will you start by rehiring these five scientists?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me assure this House that indeed we are meeting that threat to which the honourable member refers: 50 people added to our staffs, including the three I mentioned yesterday in the Etobicoke branch. I can tell you that when it comes to the public health units, we have been in constant communication, either through my medical officer of health for Ontario or through other officials, with every single public health official. We are supporting them; they are supporting us. We are working together. Indeed, we are working with our federal counterparts in Health Canada.

That's the way it should be in times of crisis. We are taking this seriously. We are working together regardless of political hue, regardless of political perspective. We are working together with the people who have to make some difficult but necessary decisions to protect the people of Ontario and Canada, and that will continue.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): My question is to the Deputy Premier. Our firefighters and police officers rely on suits called hazardous materials outfits and biological-chemical bomb suits to keep them safe when they are dealing with dangerous, potentially deadly chemicals. Municipalities are responsible for providing these suits. They can cost up to \$20,000 and they can only be used once. They are very necessary, especially now with the new threat of bioterrorism. These suits protect the men and women who put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe: our front-line officers, our first-response teams.

My municipality, like all other municipalities across Ontario, cannot afford the cost of training and the purchase of the equipment necessary to keep us safe against bioterrorism. Yesterday my leader, Dalton McGuinty, outlined a plan that would help make Ontario

safer. McGuinty's Ontario security fund would give municipalities the funds they need to keep us safe, with access to money to buy hazardous materials outfits.

Minister, on behalf of the firefighters and police officers across Ontario, will you implement the McGuinty plan for Ontario security that would commit funds to ensure municipalities across the province can protect their people against this threat?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): Public safety is of course a top priority at this time in the western world. We are all concerned about the issues that follow on the tragedies of September 11. I think it's fair to say that we are also concerned that people not get frightened or change their normal work habits or stop travelling or stop enjoying life and economic activity in Ontario. I'm sure the member opposite would share the view that we don't want to discourage people from normal economic activity.

With respect to the issue raised of emergency management workers, certainly everything is on the table. We're prepared to look at what needs there are across the province in terms of emergency services. These are major issues. But I would again say that we want to make sure people do not enter into any sense of panic or anything like that with respect to issues that, fortunately, are mainly hoaxes and not genuine threats to the health of people.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Minister, your government is about to require municipalities to update their emergency response plans, and I applaud that, but as you know, 70% of those municipalities haven't even practised those plans, of the 90% that already have them in place. A lot of it is due to funding. This law will be meaningless if they can't afford to carry out those plans and train their people. You have to be part of this. That means you can't just download that responsibility and not pony up.

Dalton McGuinty's Ontario security fund would provide municipalities with the funds they need to update their plans, train their staff and keep Ontarians safe. It would also ensure there are sufficient funds at a provincial level to ensure that those emergency plans are integrated, that our nuclear power plants are safe, that our government buildings are safe and, more importantly, that all the people of Ontario are safe. The McGuinty plan will do that. We've looked at the numbers and they do bear it out. Will you act on that today, Minister?

Hon Mr Flaherty: Our government takes these issues extremely seriously, as you know. These are issues of public security. They're not issues that are confined to municipalities or to the provincial government or to the federal government. All levels of government share these concerns to support and ensure public safety in the province.

1420

Throwing money at the problem simply is not the answer. Intelligent analysis of the security issues is the answer. Necessary funds may well have to be committed

for additional resources. But I think the first step ought to be, and I think the member opposite would likely agree with this, that we need to analyze the security concerns, make sure emergency workers make us aware of the needs that they have, co-operate with the municipalities and co-operate with the federal government in the interests of the protection of all of the people of Ontario.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): This government has been seized by a paralysis of analysis when it comes to constructive, pragmatic proposals from Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals. I say to the Deputy Premier, this agenda of inaction has got to end. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have been calling upon this government to beef up hate crimes enforcement, increase security in nuclear plants, increase security at water reservoirs and water treatment plants, bring on the antiterrorist legal amendments to Bill 30 and sign on to the national counterterrorism plan. To this and much more this government has said nothing, nothing, nothing and more nothing.

I say to the Deputy Premier, stop accusing Ontarians fearful of their security of fearmongering. Call it the Flaherty fund, for all we care, but it is time to implement the McGuinty security fund. It is time to get down to the hard work of restoring Ontarians' personal and economic security and that first step is signing on to the Ontario McGuinty security fund. Do it soon, do it now.

Hon Mr Flaherty: I remember as Attorney General introducing legislation that would help deter organized crime and money laundering in the province of Ontario. I wish the member from St Paul's had shown the same enthusiasm in supporting that legislation as he now says he does for antiterrorism legislation. As he should know, money laundering is one of the major concerns with respect to ways in which terrorist activities are supported in the world. So now I'm pleased that he, representing I'm sure other members opposite, supports more security and tougher laws so that the people of Ontario will be more secure from terrorist activity in the world.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Health. We watch as our neighbours to the south in the United States struggle to do the research to understand how anthrax may have been changed or a delivery mechanism for anthrax may have been developed. At the same time that the United States is struggling with that research, you are going to fire here in Ontario five internationally respected experts in the field of biology and in the field of biochemistry, experts who have helped your government before.

Minister, you claim to be a candidate for the leadership of the Conservative Party. Can you tell us, at a time like this, is this what you mean by leadership, to fire the very expertise that is now so much in demand in the United States?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I can assure this House and Ontarians that

we are not dispensing with the expertise related to bioterrorism. I can assure you that safety has not been compromised. I can tell you that the staff to which the honourable member refers were never involved in research or planning or testing or any response at all to bioterrorism. The research capability is still there, the testing capability is being enhanced. We have five new staffers who were added last year alone to testing and we will continue to add to the staff on an as-necessary basis. Let me assure this House that we are responding to the threats of bioterrorism, we are putting our resources where they are needed, and that will continue.

Mr Hampton: Minister, the work that these scientists do is on the leading edge of discovering and learning how to deal with mutations of existing biological agents, looking at the new kinds of bugs and doing the research which tells us how to address new developments in the field of biology. One of them identified the new strain of E coli which killed seven people.

But you told us something else yesterday. You said you would ensure that the work that needed to be done would be done at the Health Canada laboratory in Winnipeg. We contacted the Health Canada laboratory. They have to find \$12 million in order to hire more scientists because they cannot keep up with their work as it is.

Can you explain now how firing the scientists in Ontario and then sending the work to Winnipeg is going to get done when they say point blank they don't have the budget or the staff to do it?

Hon Mr Clement: I would say two things. First of all, their budget and staff have just been enhanced. Perhaps the honourable member should read the press clippings from Health Canada. Secondly, our budget and our capability has been enhanced. I reference the 50 new staff from last year. We are adding staff this year on an as-necessary basis, and that will continue.

Our commitment to the safety of Ontarians, to the public safety in Ontario, will continue and will continue to be enhanced on an as-necessary basis. The individuals to which he referred were not involved in bioterrorism research, were not involved in bioterrorism planning, were not involved in bioterrorism testing and were not involved in any form of response to bioterrorism. But we are putting the resources where they are needed right now and that will continue.

Mr Hampton: It's so evident that this government believes that once you put a stamp of "bioterrorism expert" on someone, then they qualify. You're right; they don't have stamp that says "bioterrorism expert." What they have is international respect and international acknowledgement as being leading scientists in their field who can bring their knowledge to bear on these problems. And you're firing them.

I want to point out something else you said yesterday. You said that the Centers for Disease Control would be able to help you. Well, we contacted the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta. This is what they said: they are so overworked, so overloaded, they can't even

respond to media requests for information within 48 hours, never mind respond to the needs of a foreign government.

Tell us again, Minister—the federal lab can't do it, they don't have the people, they don't yet have the budget; the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta says they are overworked, they can't do it—who is going to do this work in Ontario after you have fired these scientists? Because you're not going to get help anywhere else?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me again assure this House that countering bioterrorism is part of our top priority in the Ministry of Health and the government of Ontario. I myself am meeting with Allan Rock tomorrow to discuss how we further integrate the response of Health Canada and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in Ontario to ensure that we are protecting Canadians and protecting Ontarians. We are working together, two different levels of government—different political parties, I might add—and yet we are working together to help keep Canadians and Ontarians safe and secure.

The honourable member mentions the Centers for Disease Control. Let me again remind this House that on the very day after September 11, on September 12, our officials were directly in contact with the Centers for Disease Control and we in fact disseminated the protocols that the CDC had employed throughout the province of Ontario, with emergency personnel, with ambulance personnel, with hospitals and with doctors. That is the kind of foresight and leadership that this government has shown and will continue to show.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Education, and we'll see what kind of leadership she can provide.

Minister, I'm going to send you a memo from the treasurer and superintendent of business of the Bluewater District School Board. In this memo he points out that they don't have enough money in their operating budget for all of the school operations this year. In fact, they're \$1.1 million behind, thanks to the inadequacies of your funding formula. But then he goes on and he makes an incredible request in the memo. It asks schools to contribute "school fundraising dollars" to the board's budget.

Minister, is this your idea of leadership in the field of education, that boards of education now go after our children's chocolate bar fundraising money in order to meet the boards' budgets?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): The honourable member obviously hasn't noticed that there has been more leadership talent on this side of the House in our current Premier and in this caucus than we've ever seen from that caucus over there.

But to the point he raises, fundraising through schools, as he knows, has been happening for many years. This is a board that has continued to receive funding above the

enrolment stats they have. We recognize that many boards that cover large areas, remote and rural areas, have unique challenges in meeting the education needs of their students. That's why those boards have received additional funding. We have special factors in place that recognize the unique needs of remote and rural boards, and we're going to continue to support our school boards in delivering quality education for our students to help improve student learning.

1430

Mr Hampton: Minister, we already know the Minister of Finance is running your ministry by remote control, and your comments today just prove that. We saw earlier the Minister of Finance take \$300 million out of public education to fund private schools, and you had nothing to say. Now we have a memorandum from a treasurer of a school board that says, "The funding formula is not adequate. We're \$1.1 million behind in the school operating budget." And then he says to all the principals, "Can you get some money out of the children's fundraising efforts in order to help the board with its budget?"

Minister, show some leadership. Tell us you're not going to allow that to happen. Tell us that you are going to show some leadership and that you're going to fight for some more money for our schools so we don't have to steal from the chocolate bar fund.

Hon Mrs Ecker: To the honourable member: I would rather have any other minister on this side of the House running education than the honourable member, with all due respect to him.

We recognize that investments in our public education system are an important priority. We have continued to do that. We have continued to increase the money available for our public education system. But at the same time, our school boards, in the same way as any organization, in the same way as working families, in the same way as any other organization, have to set their priorities and live within their means. That is a fair way to treat the taxpayers of this province.

Continuing to increase investments in public education does not on its own get us improved student learning. If he thinks the answer to our students who may not be meeting acceptable literary standards is just to wander out there and increase money, he doesn't know what we need to do to improve student learning, and that's setting higher standards and putting in place the supports to have those children meet those standards. That's what's working, not their failed policies.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Deputy Premier. The Deputy Premier would know that the government appears now to be engaging in unilateral disarmament again in the fight against bioterrorism, if we are to watch what the Minister of Health did yesterday. Yesterday the Minister of Health was busy firing five of the top research scientists in the Ministry of

Health, scientists whose knowledge and expertise are essential in combatting bioterrorism.

Five years ago, without ever considering the consequences of your action, your government closed all the regional laboratories of the Ministry of the Environment, a mindless, reckless, irresponsible action if I've ever seen one. We need those laboratories today to be able to respond quickly and with quality to crises that might arise.

Will you now admit that the closing of the laboratories was a tragic mistake, and will you now re-establish the high-quality, reliable Ministry of the Environment laboratories so Ontario is in a position to respond to the kind of bioterrorism threats that unfortunately are likely to be with us for some time to come?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Deputy Premier?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): To the member opposite: I can certainly appreciate the concern that is being expressed at the present time in the province of Ontario, but certainly, as the member full well knows, we have very capable and very competent private labs in the province which are quite capable of dealing with any initiative and any actions that would be required of them.

Mr Bradley: One of your predecessors slammed the door shut and nailed the windows of the building because you have regional laboratories in London and Kingston and Thunder Bay that are today closed, and the people who work there fired out the door. Today we'll need a quick response. We don't like this happening, but we're going to need a quick response in case of danger.

Dr Richard Schabas, the former chief medical officer of health, said, "Occasionally, health departments are involved in non-communicable disease outbreak investigations involving exposure to lead, fluoride, or nitrates/nitrites. Boards of health are mandated by the mandatory programs and services guidelines under the Health Protection and Promotion Act to respond immediately to such outbreaks. Testing of water supplies often plays a vital role in these investigations. Traditionally, health departments have relied on the Ministry of Environment and Energy laboratory to assist in these outbreak situations. Is it possible for the Ministry of Environment and Energy laboratory to continue to provide this special service?" This was a memo to your ministry in 1996.

I ask the minister, will she now implore the Treasurer and the Premier of this province to reopen those high-quality, very reliable laboratories that are regionally around Ontario to deal with not a perceived but a real threat of bioterrorism and the everyday problems that confront us in terms of water quality and disease?

Hon Mrs Witmer: Certainly I can understand the basis of the question that has been posed. I think we need to take into consideration the fact that there is presently an inquiry going on regarding the entire situation at Walkerton. This well could be an issue that is being

considered. We may need to await the recommendation of the Walkerton commission.

But I want to assure you that the labs we have available to us in Ontario today, also the ability we have to use the lab in Winnipeg, are certainly responding to the needs of Ontarians at the present time. I know that the emergency response team is very carefully monitoring what else might be required. Obviously, if this is a priority, we will need to take action.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Correctional Services. As part of this government's ongoing mandate of accountability, we introduced an action plan in the budget to deal with fiscal accountability in the entire public sector. The Mike Harris government knows that accountability is required, not just of Ontario's government but of all governments and indeed all the institutions funded by taxpayers. The taxpayers of Ontario know that their hard-earned dollars are being spent by this government and their institutions in a responsible and efficient way.

I read with great interest recently a publication by the correctional division of OPSEU called *The Correct View*. In the October 11 issue, there was mention of a new section being added called "Waste Watchers." This new section is apparently an effort by the union to highlight examples of waste within the Ministry of Correctional Services. The union is asking their membership to report on any incident of waste within—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Sorry, the time is up. Minister?

Hon Rob Sampson (Minister of Correctional Services): I thank the member for Scarborough Centre for her question. Yes, indeed, the correctional section of OPSEU has said that they're going to be looking for waste within the Ministry of Correctional Services. I welcome that.

I think we can take all the support and help from Ontarians across the province to look for waste throughout all the ministries of government. In fact, this government, the Mike Harris government, has taken significant steps toward reducing waste within government and looking within ministries, in what effectively is a zero-based budgeting process, to make sure we are spending taxpayer dollars wisely and effectively and we can report to taxpayers to that effect. I say to the members that across all of the correctional services, within all our institutions and outside of the institutions, as well as any public servants within Ontario, if you can help us save taxpayers' money, let us know. We're there.

1440

Ms Mushinski: Minister, as part of the Mike Harris government's commitment to have safer, more secure, efficient, effective and accountable correctional services, you have also partnered with the private sector to deliver services. By the introduction of public-private partnership, our government believes that Ontario's correctional

services can reach a proper balance of detention, correction and accountability, something that we know the Liberals never understood when they were in power.

Public safety can be protected and taxpayers' dollars will be spent effectively. On May 5, 2001, you announced Management and Training Corp as the first private operator of an Ontario adult facility in Penetanguishene. Minister, can you tell us how you will hold private operators like MTC accountable?

Hon Mr Sampson: There are some people in this House, I say to the member and to the rest of the members of the Legislature, who think that the decision on who should run our jails should be based on ideology. We don't think that. We think the decision on those who run jails should be based upon how they run them, especially if you're looking at running jails safely, securely, effectively and efficiently. If you want to be publicly accountable for those particular aspects of running corrections, then you need to take a look at all operators, public and private, non-profit, whatever, who can help you achieve those objectives.

To stand and say that those who run jails should be based solely on some particular ideology is wrong. We need to take a look at results and we need to challenge those who are running the facilities to get those results. Indeed, that's what we've done with Management and Training Corp and will continue to do throughout all of our institutions.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Finance. He will know that there's major concern in Ontario about our economy. I think it's fair to say the concern is growing more every day. Bank economists are now telling us that Ontario's performance will be the worst of all the provinces this year and next year.

The budget you presented just six months ago promised 150,000 jobs this year. In the last four months alone we've lost 26,000 jobs.

Ontario needs from the government a clear outline of where we stand economically and fiscally and what the government plans to do about that. We've now got the second-quarter fiscal results in, so there's nothing that needs to delay you.

My question is, will you commit today to the people of Ontario that you will provide us with a revised economic and fiscal outlook, and with your plan of how to deal with the slowdown? Will you promise to do that before we have our one-week break that will be coming up in just three weeks?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I thank the member opposite for the question. Yes, we've already committed to doing the traditional Ontario fall financial statement. That will happen in the normal course. I would expect it would be during the month of November. I'll take under advisement the member opposite's suggestion that it be before the break in November.

I expect to be meeting at the end of next week, I believe it is, along with the other provincial and territorial finance ministers and with the federal Minister of Finance in Ottawa. We're going to be reviewing the fiscal situation across Canada. The provincial and territorial finance ministers met together for two days last week in Vancouver.

The member opposite is correct that there are concerns, of course. There's an economic slowdown and there are the consequences of the tragedies of September 11. He's quite right that all of these facts affect the economic performance of Canada and of Ontario and need to be reflected in a fall economic statement. I hope that he'll encourage his federal counterpart, Paul Martin, to produce a full budget, which we have not seen from Ottawa in 18 months.

Mr Phillips: You might focus on the challenges Ontario faces. Last year you presented the economic outlook in December. I say that's too late. I say that we have a serious problem on our hands that's getting worse daily. There's nothing that prevents you now from presenting this fiscal and economic outlook.

The one thing you have done is, you have announced that corporate taxes in Ontario will be 25% below our competitors in the US. In our opinion, that puts at risk our health care and our education system. Obviously, when you made that announcement to speed this up to October, you had the analysis done that would show that we could sustain our education and health care systems. I would ask, in addition to this fiscal and economic update, that you provide the people of Ontario with the analysis that you must have had done that shows we can have corporate taxes 25% below the US and still sustain our education, health care and community services. Will you commit to presenting that study?

Hon Mr Flaherty: When the members opposite formed the government in Ontario, we had high taxes. We had increasing taxes, year after year, in good economic times, from 1985 to 1990. You put Ontario in a position, by 1990-91, that Bob Rae and Floyd Laughren had difficulty bringing this province back out of recession. Despite the fact that the US economy started to recover in 1991-92, it wasn't until Premier Harris was elected in 1995 that we were able to start to turn the ship around in Ontario and create low, competitive taxes, a balanced budget and fiscal responsibility.

That's what we've had in Ontario under the leadership of Michael Harris since 1995. That's why we have a strong, diversified economy. That's why we're in a position now to build on that foundation at a time of economic slowdown. Would that the NDP government had been left in that position when your government was thrown out of office in 1990.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Soldiers Memorial Hospital in my riding—it's in Orillia—has a long and proud history of providing excellent health care

for children. For instance, they operate a regional level 2 perinatal program. The hospital recently announced that they have joined an information exchange system with various children's hospitals in Ontario called eCHN, the electronic child health network. Minister, could you tell this House more about the program and how it will help children throughout our province?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I want to thank the member for Simcoe North for the question. Let me please present to this House a bit of information about the electronic child health network. It's a non-profit organization which is dedicated to using computers to share child health care information among parents, children and health care providers. It promotes the sharing of resources and knowledge, to reduce costs and create efficiencies.

There are three components: there's a Web site of health information, an electronic forum for health care professionals and a health information system called HiNet. The announcement that the member recently attended was the final component of the pilot, the launching of the health information network, HiNet.

I can tell you that these benefits include faster access to patient records, more complete information available to health care providers and a reduction in duplication of X-rays and diagnostic tests, all the better for children's health.

Mr Dunlop: Thank you very much for your answer. I'm sure members on both sides of this House are extremely happy to hear the ways that our government is helping children through the use of technology.

I would also like to know what level of support the government of Ontario is giving to this very important program.

Hon Mr Clement: I thank the honourable member for the second part of his question. Not only as the Minister of Health but as a parent as well, I want to inform this House of our government's full support for this excellent and fantastic program.

We directly funded the start-up of the electronic child health network. Our commitment to this was \$11.5 million. I'm pleased to say that all of this funding has flowed to the participating hospitals.

We support the integrated communications of hospitals across the province. It provides better care to patients who need those services. Thanks to this kind of technological improvement, we can see a reduced need for repeat tests; health care providers make the best treatment decisions based on information available across the network; there is better follow-up care; and emergency room physicians have instant access to a child's health information.

I look forward to other hospitals around the province being linked into HiNet. It is important for the children of Ontario.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Minister, I

think you would agree with me that the Walkerton disaster was probably the worst environmental disaster we've ever seen in Ontario. The people suffered greatly, and some are still suffering and are still sick today.

1450

They were promised a long-term health study to deal with all the unknown effects of the poisoned water they drank, and your Premier agreed to that. But now, because of political interference by the Tory MPP for the area, the Minister of Health has changed direction. Walkerton has lost its voice. Community control has been taken away. The focus of the study has been narrowed from what they were promised. The function of the new Walkerton clinic has been changed to research instead of the treatment they were promised. The funding has been transferred to London.

I'm asking you today, as Minister of the Environment, to show some leadership and overturn the decision made by your Minister of Health and your government and give the people of Walkerton what the Premier promised.

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of the Environment): I'm going to refer that to the Minister of Health, who has the responsibility.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd like to share with this House the fact that we have accepted the advice of the Walkerton committee. In fact, the two co-chairs of that committee, of the original committee to which the honourable member refers, are involved in the new study. Premier Harris committed in this House to do a health study in Walkerton, and this is responding to that declaration. Any delay in launching this study would compromise the outcome of the study.

I can tell you that the physicians involved are experts in their field. They were among those who attended to the patients who became ill during the E coli outbreak. I can tell you that all of the individuals involved are highly qualified and will be there both for the long-term research as well as the clinical aspects to this study.

Ms Churley: Minister of the Environment, to you: this answer is not acceptable to me and it's not acceptable to the people of Walkerton. I hope you, as the Minister of the Environment, will stand up for the people of Walkerton.

The Premier promised to do a comprehensive health study that involved the citizens of Walkerton in the design and implementation of that study. The reason there have been delays to this point is because the citizens have had to continually argue and fight with the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who does not want to put a community member on who was involved throughout, but a person who voted against the proposal for the health study and hadn't even applied to be part of the committee. That is what is going on. Your government caved and changed the plans because of direct crass political interference from the member, who doesn't like some members of the community because they speak out against the government from time to time.

This is unacceptable. Minister of the Environment, I'm asking you what you are going to do to help the people—

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

Hon Mr Clement: Let me again state for the record that we are accepting the advice of the original committee to which she refers. They wanted a study; they wanted clinical assistance. They are getting a long-term study. They are getting in Walkerton, in the area, clinical assistance. We are responding to their concerns. We have the best experts in the field available and part of the study.

Let me take the remaining time that I have to say one thing. There has been no person in Ontario more concerned about the citizens in his area, more concerned about the Walkerton community, than the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and we are very proud of our response because we are proud of him.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Health. On October 11, a two-year-old Brampton girl, Aislinn Connor, critically ill, was turned away from Sick Kids in Toronto because there were no beds. She then could not be accepted at McMaster medical centre because all the intensive care beds were full, and had to be driven to London, Ontario, before they could finally find a bed for this critically ill two-year-old girl.

McMaster University is one of five children's hospitals in Ontario. However, McMaster University does not have a dedicated intensive care unit for children. We have a crisis here, we have a crisis in London, we have a crisis in Toronto, in dealing with services and particularly in dealing with critically ill children. You've been aware of this for years. You've been made aware of the problems there. Again, can I ask you clearly, will you commit today to ensure there's sufficient funding to open up a dedicated intensive care unit for children at McMaster medical centre in Hamilton?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I thank the honourable member for the question and for his suggestion.

Let me share with him and with this House the fact that since 1998, this government has invested over \$750 million to improve access to our emergency wards throughout Ontario, \$225 million over four years to implement the expert recommendations of the emergency services working group, more flex beds, more interim long-term care beds, expanding home care services, training nurses in emergency and critical care. All of those things, I believe, have made a difference for our emergency departments. We have fast-tracking of the expansion of 56 emergency departments, one of them in Toronto, but in many other communities as well.

That is our commitment to emergency care. The particular issue that the honourable member has mentioned,

I'd certainly like to take it under advisement, but I want to reiterate our commitment to excellent emergency care for the people of Ontario.

Mr Agostino: Minister, I'm sure those kind words will mean a great deal to the little girl's mom, who said, "It was a long journey and I kept thinking, 'Will she be OK?' It was late at night, it was pouring rain and we were under a lot of stress. It was a long way to go under those circumstances. It felt like a lot longer than two hours."

Minister, the specific proposal has been made by McMaster medical centre for 12 to 14 dedicated intensive care unit beds. We have a children's hospital there. We do not have beds in the intensive care unit for children in that hospital. It would make a great deal of sense to provide that service so kids don't get driven halfway across Ontario, when they're critically ill, in an ambulance.

Minister, all the rhetoric, all of your stats sound wonderful. It doesn't deal with the problem that this young girl and her family faced on October 11. Kids get put at risk every time this happens.

I'm asking you again, very simply: will you commit today to the 12 to 14 intensive care unit beds that have been requested by McMaster medical centre to deal with sick kids who desperately need help? Sometimes a matter of minutes can make a difference between life and death. Will you stand up and commit to that here today?

Hon Mr Clement: Whenever there is a situation where a person's life is needlessly put at risk, I think as individuals we should be concerned about that. So I share the honourable member's concern.

I have been advised that the ministry is following up with the hospital to ensure that all the best procedures either in place or that should be in place were either followed up or are in place. I can assure the honourable member that we are having that discussion with the hospital in mind.

I can tell the honourable member that if the hospital or any other members of the community have some advice to us on how best to deal with these procedures so that these things do not happen, certainly we have an open mind on this. As I say, the resources have been there. Some \$750 million over three years is a lot of money, and it should be spent to ensure that we get the best results; not that we just spend the money and are happy that we spend the money, but we actually get the results that Ontarians deserve. I'd be happy to work with the honourable member in this regard.

MUNICIPAL LEGISLATION

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I have a question for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Minister, as you are aware, the Municipal Act is over 150 years old. Considering that we are in the 21st century, this Municipal Act could not be considered as an effective tool for the issues facing municipalities in today's age.

Minister, what have you done to ensure that municipalities will have the tools to enable them to ensure vibrant, healthy communities?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and through you to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, it's a good question. As you are aware, the Harris government today announced a new Municipal Act. If it's passed by this Legislature, it will be a cornerstone of a better, more constructive relationship between the province and the municipalities.

Over the last century and a half, the Municipal Act has been amended numerous times. It now has, with different compendiums and additions, about 1,100 pages. The new act will be more streamlined and give more flexibility, and it will also allow municipalities to react to the local conditions in their community more quickly, which should help. There are also natural person powers, the ability to form partnerships that will be able to be enacted to provide better service for our residents across Ontario.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Minister. You've talked about what the proposed legislation will do, if passed. Would you please inform the House how the business community and small businesses will benefit from this new act?

Hon Mr Hodgson: As you know, the act is a delicate balance between competing interests, which, I think if people step back, are really the same interests. They want to have better communities to live in. They want to make sure their businesses can thrive. Municipal politicians are elected, they're accountable and they're responsible for those challenges. So we've tried to bring together groups representing small business, chambers of commerce and boards of trade with municipal associations, municipal mayors, clerks and treasurers and others to see if we can bring in a modern act to meet their needs. We found a consensus and we've tabled an act that will guide us in the next century to allow for more transparency and accountability, which will help our small business people, rules around procurement and procedures that municipalities deliver to give predictability and access for local businesses to compete in providing services and goods.

I think it's a good-news announcement for both municipalities and all the small businesses that reside in their community.

1500

TRANSIT SERVICES

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. In his absence I'll indulge myself and ask the Deputy Premier. You and your government keep making big announcements, but the money is never forthcoming. Last September 27, the Premier announced a 10-year, \$9-billion plan to ensure a transportation system that would strengthen the economy and protect the environment at the same time. The announce-

ment included a \$3-billion investment targeted to renew and expand transit.

The project I am addressing today is one that meets and exceeds the aims and criteria of your announcement. It supports economic growth, unlocks traffic gridlock and meets environmental objectives. The Spadina-York subway line must be made a top priority of your government. Vaughan council, York region, York University, local organizations, local unions, all are indicating strong support for the Spadina-York line. The extension would create a gateway at the doorstep of the Toronto-York region boundary and be the first interregional 416-905 seamless transit system serving the new Vaughan Corporate Centre.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Question?

Mr Sergio: On the principle of your transportation commitment, will you announce today in the House that you will make the Spadina-York line your priority?

Hon Jim Flaherty (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance): I share the member's concern with the comments that came from the federal government yesterday, from Minister Collenette's office as I understand it, that the federal government may not keep its commitment with respect to sharing in funding transportation in Ontario.

As sincere as the member opposite is in his concerns for transit issues, not only in Toronto but through the greater Toronto area and beyond, in the Ottawa area and other urban areas around Ontario, I'm sure he is disappointed in those comments, particularly given the comments by the federal Minister of Transport just over a month ago, at the 80th anniversary celebration of the TTC, where he said, "In both the speech from the throne and the red book, the government of Canada has committed to working with partners across Canada to help improve public transit infrastructure." Hold his feet to the fire on that, I say to the member opposite. It's too important for Toronto not to have the federal government abrogate on a promise.

Mr Sergio: Minister, when are you going to get serious and show leadership on this issue? Make the Spadina-York line your priority. Do it for the benefit of the 50,000 students and staff who attend York University on a daily basis. Do it to spur business growth in the area. Do it to reduce congestion in transportation and for the benefit of the environment. Just do it because you stand by what you said in your September 27 announcement. Don't look elsewhere, pointing fingers for your inaction. Show us today that the Spadina subway line is a priority of this government and that indeed you consider this a priority. Show us some vision and make sure that York-Spadina transportation meets your standards. Announce the approval today.

Hon Mr Flaherty: A well-planned transportation strategy is needed to ensure economic growth and prosperity. That's what the announcement by Premier Harris a few weeks ago was all about. It was a courageous announcement of a vision for Ontario in transit and transportation. It addresses gridlock. It's a \$300-

million, on-the-table commitment from the province of Ontario, and we say to our federal partners, "Keep your promises to the people of Ontario." All of those Liberal MPs who were elected, who ran on a policy that they were committed to helping with transit and transportation, your brother and sister Liberals—speak to them, get them to bring their money to the table as our money in Ontario is on the table. That's what will create the right transit, the right transportation networks for all the people of Ontario. You can help. Do your part.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Earlier today I attended a workshop, a conference, with the Ontario Real Estate Association and I was happy to participate. I was very impressed with the way you were received, respectfully, Minister. This is certainly a good starting point.

Recently the Law Society of Upper Canada has raised a strong concern with the proposed Real Estate and Business Brokers Act. Apparently some lawyers are arguing that they should be free to act as real estate agents, as is done in Edinburgh, but that is explicitly forbidden in the new proposal, at least this is what they're suggesting.

One lawyer has a column in the Toronto Star, which is questionable to start with, suggesting that you want to "eliminate competition by strengthening a crumbling monopoly," criticizing the real estate agents, the very lifeblood of our local economies, by which he means the real estate brokers. How do you answer this concern?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I think this is an important question for the some 33,000 real estate agents and brokers across Ontario. Mr Speaker, as you may know, I at one time practised some law prior to being a member of this Legislature. At that time there was never a contemplation by the legal community that they were going to sell real estate, as real estate agents have in this province since around 1922 or something like that.

However, when we've been changing this Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, the law society has come forward and said, "We want to be able to sell real estate like real estate agents do." I say, "Fine, but let's all play by the same rules. You want to sell real estate? You're subject to the act. You're subject to the same rules as real estate brokers and real estate sales people are." What's good for the goose is good for the gander.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you, Minister, for that response. I might remind the House that you're not only a lawyer, you're an engineer, and you're also now in another profession, as a politician.

In the same Toronto Star column, which has even gone so far as to accuse you of being a hypocrite—regrettable—he said that despite your call for enhanced consumer protection, you don't care enough to protect billions worth of so-called "owned property" sales under

the new legislation. How do you respond to this spurious claim?

Interjections.

Hon Mr Sterling: I don't know whether to thank you for that question or not. I have never met this particular gentleman, and I use the term lightly with regard to this claim of hypocrisy, but basically his claim was that when we sell a new home, new home builders are not subject to this act. But I want to point out to him and to the public of Ontario that new home builders are subject to other regulations and other rules, and that these consumers who buy new homes are in fact protected under law, under regulation. In fact our government has a new home warranty plan that even provides further protection.

I believe this particular columnist is taking one side and not looking at the other side. Real estate agents have provided a valuable service here for over 50 years and we continue to support them.

Applause.

FOREST MANAGEMENT

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): I appreciate the applause as I get up. It's most appreciated. I really do; it warms my heart. In fact it warms my heart so much that I have a question to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, you will know, as many other people in this province know, that you're in the process now of trying to get approved, by way of the authority you have as minister, what are called fire emulation guidelines. Simply put, you're trying to say to the public of Ontario, through your ministry, that the logging operations of the province should reflect what's happening when we've got a forest fire. Last time I checked, we're trying to put forest fires out, not trying to start them.

1510

What's interesting is that many people are opposed, and today there was a press conference. Leading people from the scientific community gathered here at Queen's Park to say it was a bad idea. I want to quote one part of what they had to say with MNR. They said, "Yet the MNR admits, 'fire and logging are fundamentally different—fire is essentially a chemical process while logging is a mechanical one. For this and other reasons, there is uncertainty about the ability of this guide to achieve its ... objective.'"

Clearly, the scientists are saying it's a bad idea. Why do you want to have big forest fires replacing the type of logging that we're doing now? It doesn't make any sense.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Natural Resources): I thank the member opposite for the question, particularly at a time when my colleagues are so willing to applaud an answer.

I can say that obviously the ministry is compelled by the environmental assessment under which forestry is done in the province of Ontario to have cuts that emulate natural disturbances. I think that makes good sense to everyone in this chamber and probably everyone across the province.

What we want to do is make sure that our forests are managed properly, that we have the best harvesting modalities and methodologies in the whole world—and I think we're very proud of those—and also to make sure that we take a good part of our forests and protect them for future generations. That's why, with Lands for Life and permanently protecting 6.2 million more acres in the province for future generations, we've made a giant step forward in that regard.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin petitions, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery members of the National Committee Thank You Canada from the Netherlands. They are in Toronto to present the Medal of Remembrance to Canadian veterans who took part in the liberation of Holland during World War II. Please join me in welcoming our honoured special guests.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Government House leader.

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

Monday afternoon we will debate on government notice of motion number 61. Monday evening we will continue to debate Bill 110.

Tuesday afternoon we will begin third reading debate on Bill 65. Tuesday evening we will begin third reading debate on Bill 56.

Wednesday afternoon will be NDP opposition day. Wednesday evening we will continue debate on Bill 110.

Thursday morning during private member's business we will discuss ballot item 27, standing in the name of Mr McGuinty, and ballot item 28, standing in the name of Mr Guzzo. On Thursday afternoon we will continue debate on Bill 60.

PETITIONS

HOME CARE

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

"Whereas the need for home care services is rapidly growing in Ontario due to the aging of the population and hospital restructuring; and

"Whereas the prices paid by community care access centres to purchase home care services for their clients are rising due to factors beyond their control; and

"Whereas the funding provided by the Ontario government through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term

Care is inadequate to meet the growing need for home care services; and

"Whereas the funding shortfall, coupled with the implications of Bill 46, the Public Sector Accountability Act, currently before the Legislature are forcing CCACs to make deep cuts in home care services without any policy direction from the provincial government;

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

"(1) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to take control of policy-setting for home care services through rational, population-based health care planning rather than simply by underfunding the system; and

"(2) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to provide sufficient funding to CCACs to support the home care services that are the mandate of community care access centres in the volumes needed to meet their communities' rapidly growing needs; and

"(3) That the Legislative Assembly make it necessary for the provincial government to notify its agencies about the amount of funding they will be given by the government in a fiscal year at least three months in advance of that commitment."

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

NATIONAL CHILD BENEFIT SUPPLEMENT

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I have a petition here that has well over 7,000 names from across the province, almost every community. It's asking the government to stop the clawback of the national child tax benefit supplement. It goes like this:

"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 a 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 the extra money they desperately need to begin to 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 have signed my signature to this petition.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Petitions? The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I will cede the floor for a moment to my colleague.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Thank you very much, Mr Hastings, for that.

I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas the Criminal Code of Canada considers animal cruelty to be a property offence; and

“Whereas those who commit crimes against animals currently face light sentences upon conviction; and

“Whereas those who operate puppy mills should, upon conviction, face sentences that are appropriate for the torture and inhumane treatment they have inflicted on puppies under their so-called care;

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

“That the Ontario provincial government petition the federal government to move forward with amendments to the cruelty of animal provisions in the Criminal Code as soon as possible.”

I'd like to pass this on to my page and constituent, Owen Moffitt. I know this is his last day. I wish him well, and I congratulate all of the pages in the House today. They've done an exemplary job for the past few weeks.

NURSES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is signed by a number of people from the Guelph and greater Toronto areas. I affix my signature in full agreement once again with their concerns.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows. It's a petition for the Saving for our Children's Future Act, 2001.

“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”—the Ontario student awards program—“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 children” throughout Ontario.

I proudly affix my signature to this excellent piece of legislation.

1520

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I've got petitions from thousands of people all across Ontario, asking the provincial government to do something about puppy mills. It reads:

“To the provincial Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities are unregulated and unlicensed in the province of Ontario;

“Whereas the Ontario SPCA needs more power to inspect and control animal kennels or breeders;

“Whereas Ontario consumers have no way of knowing if the animals they purchase as pets have been abused;

“Whereas there are no provincial penalties to punish people guilty of abusing animals that are bred and sold to unsuspecting consumers;

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

“That the province of Ontario pass legislation that outlaws puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities, and that strengthens the powers of the Ontario SPCA to establish a provincial registry of kennels and breeders subject to SPCA inspection, and to allow the SPCA to impose fines and jail terms on those found guilty of perpetrating cruelty to animals for the purpose of selling these animals to an unsuspecting public.”

I strongly support provincial government action in this area, and hopefully it will pass legislation. I affix my name to it.

PERSONAL NEEDS ALLOWANCE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):

Further petitions from the Hamilton second-level lodging home tenants' committee:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas individuals who are tenants (residents) in facilities such as care homes, nursing homes or domiciliary hostels under certain acts are provided with a personal needs allowance to meet incidental costs other than those provided by the facility; and

"Whereas the personal needs allowance has been fixed by the Ontario government at a rate of \$112 for nearly a decade and has not kept pace with cost-of-living increases, and furthermore is inadequate to meet incidental costs such as clothing, hygiene products and other personal essentials;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately review and amend provincial legislation to increase the personal needs allowance from \$112 a month to \$160 a month for individuals living in care homes, nursing homes or other domiciliary hostels."

On behalf of my NDP colleagues and myself, I add my name to this petition.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): "Whereas the Criminal Code of Canada considers animal cruelty to be a property offence; and

"Whereas those who commit crimes against animals currently face light sentences upon conviction; and

"Whereas those who operate puppy mills should, upon conviction, face sentences that are appropriate for the torture and inhumane treatment they have inflicted upon puppies under their so-called care;

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

"That the Ontario provincial government petition the federal government to move forward with amendments to the cruelty of animal provisions in the Criminal Code as soon as possible."

I want to give this to Meg Allenby, who will present it to the House. This is Meg's last day and I've thanked this fine young lady a number of times.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): It's my pleasure to enter this petition to the House to shut down puppy mills and to stop cruel animal breeding activities by passing MPP Mike Colle's private member's bill.

"To the provincial Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities are unregulated and unlicensed in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario SPCA needs more power to inspect and control animal kennels or breeders;

"Whereas Ontario consumers have no way of knowing if the animals they purchase as pets have been abused;

"Whereas there are no provincial penalties to punish people guilty of abusing animals that are bred and sold to unsuspecting consumers;

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

"That the province of Ontario pass legislation that outlaws puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities, and that strengthens the powers of the Ontario SPCA to establish a provincial registry of kennels and breeders subject to SPCA inspection, and to allow the SPCA to impose fines and jail terms on those found guilty of perpetrating cruelty to animals for the purpose of selling these animals to an unsuspecting public."

I want to congratulate my colleague Mike Colle for this bill, and I affix my signature.

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I want to congratulate the pages for doing such a great job, before I read my petition. They've been excellent. My petition is to the provincial Legislature of the great province of Ontario:

"Whereas puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities are unregulated and unlicensed in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario SPCA needs more power to inspect and control animal kennels or breeders;

"Whereas Ontario consumers have no way of knowing if the animals they purchase as pets have been abused;

"Whereas there are no provincial penalties whatsoever to punish people guilty of abusing animals that are bred and sold to unsuspecting consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario pass legislation that outlaws puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities, and, that strengthens the powers of the Ontario SPCA to establish a provincial registry of kennels and breeders subject to SPCA inspection, and to allow the SPCA to impose fines and jail terms on those found guilty of perpetrating cruelty to animals for the purpose of selling these animals to an unsuspecting public."

I affix my name to this petition. I support the SPCA and all people fighting for animal rights.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I am pleased to read out a petition for citizens who petition the Legislature of Ontario to shut down puppy mills and to stop cruel animal breeding activities by passing MPP Mike Colle's private member's bill.

"To the provincial Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities are unregulated and unlicensed in the province of Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario SPCA needs more power to inspect and control animal kennels or breeders;

"Whereas Ontario consumers have no way of knowing if the animals they purchase as pets have been abused;

"Whereas there are no provincial penalties to punish people guilty of abusing animals that are bred and sold to unsuspecting consumers;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario pass legislation that outlaws puppy mills and other cruel animal breeding activities, and, that strengthens the powers of the Ontario SPCA to establish a provincial registry of kennels and breeders subject to SPCA inspection, and to allow the SPCA to impose fines and jail terms on those found guilty of perpetrating cruelty to animals for the purpose of selling these animals to an unsuspecting public."

I very gladly affix my signature to this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

"Whereas the Harris government has now spent over \$245 million on blatantly partisan government advertising in the form of glossy brochures and television, print and radio ads;

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

I affix my signature; I'm in agreement.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

QUALITY IN THE CLASSROOM ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA QUALITÉ DANS LES SALLES DE CLASSE

Mrs Ecker moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 110, An Act to promote quality in the classroom /
Projet de loi 110, Loi visant à promouvoir la qualité dans les salles de classe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Debate?

1530

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I'll be sharing my time with the member from Simcoe North, the member from Kitchener Centre and the member from Parry Sound-Muskoka. I am pleased today to speak on the second reading of Bill 110, the Quality in the Classroom Act. I will be sharing my time with my colleagues whose advice has been helpful in putting this legislation together.

This legislation is the next step in our government's comprehensive plan to improve student learning. Our goal is to ensure student success by building an education system that supports achievement and excellence through setting higher standards and through greater accountability.

Our plan for quality education includes a more rigorous curriculum for our students, from kindergarten through the end of our new high school program; a new province-wide code of conduct to help ensure our classrooms are safe and respectful learning environments; standardized testing to ensure that our students are learning what they need to succeed and that our parents know how well their children are doing; a new early reading strategy which requires schools to set goals to improve the reading skills of students from junior kindergarten to grade 3; improvement teams to help improve students' reading skills in 16 schools selected to receive extra help.

I think it's important to note that we have continued to increase overall resources for education significantly. For example, with the additional \$360 million that we are providing this current school year, education spending has increased from \$12.9 billion, which is where it was in 1995, to \$13.8 billion today, an increase that is greater than the growth of enrolment.

These and other initiatives in our plan for quality education demonstrate our continued commitment to improved student learning.

One of the most important foundations of quality education is excellence in teaching. We know that excellent teachers are vital in helping students succeed and in helping our students to meet higher standards. Excellent teachers can motivate, inspire and challenge their students to achieve in ways that those students never thought possible. We all know that Ontario has many excellent teachers. One of the benefits of this particular job as education minister is the opportunity I have to continue to meet the dedicated and committed teachers who make such a positive difference in our schools on a daily basis.

We also know that in today's rapidly changing world it is essential for teachers to be able to continually enhance their skills, to adapt to new technologies and to keep their knowledge current. It is helping to meet that challenge in our schools that has led our government to announce the Ontario teacher testing program, a comprehensive plan to ensure that all our teachers are able to meet those challenges. It was a program, as I know

members have heard me mention before, that we announced back in 1999 during the election campaign that, if elected, having such a program was very much part of our plan to improve student learning.

The key elements of this program are a language proficiency test for new applicants to the teaching profession who took their training outside Ontario in a language other than English or French; professional learning requirements leading to recertification every five years; a qualifying test or an entrance-to-the-profession test for all new teachers in Ontario's classrooms; an internship program for new teachers; a consistent province-wide performance appraisal system for teachers; and an initiative to recognize teaching excellence.

In developing our program, we took a number of important factors into account.

First, we recognized that teachers are not alone in facing the constant need to remain current and up to date. Meeting client, consumer and public expectations for excellence and accountability are daily realities for many other professions in this province. For example, ongoing learning is compulsory for other key Ontario professional groups ranging from architects to dental surgeons.

Second, in looking at professional development practices elsewhere, we found that in many other countries and provinces, teachers face requirements to update their knowledge and skills through various mandatory professional development activities and assessments or other tests.

Finally, in looking at the existing professional development system here in Ontario, we found that in some cases teacher training, teacher upgrading and assessment were not as consistent, as fair, as effective and as rigorous as they should be on behalf of our students.

In particular, the Council of Directors of Education pointed out that the standards for evaluating in-class performance were inconsistent across the province. It is because of their recommendations and the input of other education partners, parents and students that all of these factors led us to create the comprehensive teacher testing program, to ensure that professional development and assessment would be both comprehensive and fair for all Ontario's teachers.

We've been moving to implement this program, and we recognize that it is comprehensive, that it is asking for a lot from our schools and our teaching profession. We have been implementing this very much in a step-by-step fashion, after extensive consultation with our education partners.

For example, the language proficiency test requirement has been in place since last year, last fall. This year, in June, we passed Bill 80, the Stability and Excellence in Education Act, which establishes the foundation for the professional learning requirements for all teachers. As I mentioned, this was a key promise made during the last election. This particular piece of our program was also a recommendation from the Royal Commission on Learning in 1995, an important commission that did a lot of work in making recommendations on how to improve

the education system. Its recommendations were very strongly supported by all three parties. We have drawn on that commission a great deal in our teacher testing program.

The professional learning program that is set out in the Stability and Excellence in Education Act is both detailed and comprehensive. It requires teachers to take part in a series of professional development activities over five-year cycles throughout their careers. During each cycle, each five years, teachers must successfully complete seven core courses and seven elective courses from an approved list that the College of Teachers is responsible for. Approved courses include many of the kinds of professional development activities and programs that many teachers already take part in regularly in order to teach new subjects or improve their skills.

Those courses are focused on a few key areas, core competencies, standards of the profession, things like curriculum knowledge; student assessment; special education, the needs of special-education students; classroom teaching strategies; classroom management and leadership; the use of technology; communicating with parents and students. All courses, the courses that are related to these criteria, will include assessments at their conclusion quite simply to ensure that they have been completed successfully by those who are taking them.

Finally, Bill 80 requires that the professional learning program actually begin this fall, and 40,000 randomly selected practising teachers, as well as 6,500 new teachers, began their five-year program this year. All other members of the college, all certified teachers, including principals and vice-principals, will begin their five-year cycle next year. So we've been phasing this in.

A couple of quick points, because there have been misunderstandings about this approach to our program, and I'd like to take a moment to clear up a few of those: first of all, as to the confusion about teacher testing, it is neither a single test nor a simple test of teacher knowledge, because as I think teachers and many of our education partners recognize, simply having knowledge doesn't mean a teacher is able to impart that knowledge, to teach that in the classroom.

The approach we have taken is to have a comprehensive program of ongoing professional learning and assessment that covers both knowledge and skills, that covers both knowledge and performance in the classroom.

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Secondly, what we are proposing in our comprehensive program is not going to detract from the current activities of school boards around performance appraisals, their responsibilities as employers. Instead, what we are proposing putting in place will actually strengthen and improve these activities and make them fairer to all teachers by establishing clear and consistent province-wide criteria.

Thirdly, the other criticism I hear that concerns me greatly, and I know it causes great anxiety to teachers, is that somehow or other this is an attempt to single out

teachers for some reason. One particular federation called it “punitive discipline.” These claims simply do not survive simple scrutiny because many other professional groups, from doctors to architects to nurses to dental hygienists to occupational therapists, to name just a few, face similar kinds of certification and professional development requirements. The challenge is the same in those professions as it is in teaching: to ensure that all the members of that particular profession can stay as up to date as they possibly can in their knowledge and their skills.

The legislation we’re talking about today, Bill 110, now moves us forward with the next steps in our plan to ensure that all teachers have the ability to do this, to meet that challenge. The Quality in the Classroom Act proposes additional initiatives that support quality teaching, that will lead to improved student learning in two key areas.

As I mentioned previously, the first one is the qualifying test or the entrance to the profession test. This legislation would establish the legislative framework for that for all new entrants to the profession, to ensure that as all teachers begin their careers in this province, they are able to have the knowledge and the skills we would expect Ontario teachers to have in the classroom.

Secondly, the bill establishes comprehensive performance appraisal standards consisting of regular, fair and consistent evaluations of a teacher’s skills in the classroom. The performance appraisal requirements, I should note, would also apply, should the legislation be passed, to principals, vice-principals and supervisory officers, which I think is an important accountability mechanism to have.

I would like to briefly provide a few more details on this. I know my colleagues will as well. The requirement for new teachers to pass the qualifying test—this is teachers out of teachers’ college and teachers new to Ontario—in order to receive a certificate of qualification to teach: as I mentioned, the test would assess the readiness of candidates to enter the classroom to ensure that all teachers have the necessary level of knowledge and skills they need.

The test is going to be administered to all new graduates from Ontario’s faculties of education and to teachers new to Ontario, similar to the entrance to the profession tests used by other bodies.

The government also recognizes that in developing this kind of test, we have to ensure that it is relevant, that it has credibility for what is expected of teachers in a classroom, for what teachers should know in the Ontario educational environment. We have a variety of education stakeholders. We’ve put together the Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test Advisory Committee. It includes a range of Ontario educators. The purpose of this group is to advise us on the development and validity of the test, and on the kind of written materials that should assist and should be part of such a test of knowledge and abilities.

The test development process involves several trials with faculty of education students and some new

teachers, as well as continued review and validation of the test.

As I indicated earlier, Bill 80, passed in June, established the framework for a comprehensive system of professional learning, but what we now need to make sure is that there is a matching requirement about performance appraisal in the classroom where improved student learning takes place. While we know many school boards currently conduct teacher performance appraisal systems, we also know, as I mentioned, that it has not been as consistent, as effective, as fair as it needs to be.

The Council of Directors of Education did a report, a review, of what was currently happening out there. They surveyed the practices in different boards and the different performance appraisal models in use across the province. What they found was that there were many exemplary practices, guidelines and policies, and in this legislation we’ve drawn from those. We’ve used those best practices to guide how we’ve developed this legislation for performance appraisal for teachers in the classroom. One of the good things they found was that some boards are moving “from pure assessment and recording to progressive assistance and skill building,” which is what it’s all about. Good performance appraisal is supportive of teachers, is supportive of excellent teaching, is certainly supportive of improved student learning if it is done well.

But CODE, the directors of education, also found some serious gaps and oversights in school boards’ current teacher appraisal policies. For example, while some boards link together appraisal to meeting board goals and promotion, “definitive statements for conducting performance appraisals are scarce and very general when actually found.” While some boards have established guidelines for evaluators to follow, “none indicated any special training or workshops to assist the evaluators in their responsibility.” “Virtually all policies lack specific remediation for weak teachers and particularly those placed on review,” teachers who have not met the appropriate standard.

Finally, another observation from this report: “It should be noted that nowhere in the 56 policies” that they reviewed of all the boards “is there any mention of peer, student or parental input into the appraisal process,” something I think is a serious lack that this legislation proposes to fix.

We believe those findings confirm the need for a comprehensive approach to teacher evaluation to improve and enhance teacher performance. We need to have province-wide performance review standards. That is what is proposed in this legislation, standards that are consistent, fair and effective, standards that improve student learning by improving teaching in the classroom.

I mentioned that none of the other policies in existence make reference to parent and pupil involvement in the teacher appraisal system. This is something CODE noted. Yet parents and student groups have told the government, have told me, that they would like to see their views

included when teacher performance is being evaluated. So this legislation proposes to provide for the input of parents and the input of senior students into the evaluation of a teacher.

The input would be obtained through a standard survey instrument, if you will. Actually, this is not an uncommon practice for many performance evaluation systems that are in place. I remember myself that at a previous position I had, a performance appraisal on a regular basis required extensive evaluation from some of your subordinates and some of your peers, some of your colleagues, and that all went to your supervisor and was part of the evaluation they did. While it certainly can promote great anxiety sometimes on the part of the employee, I also know that with that kind of performance appraisal evaluation that was done in that organization on all the employees, we were all much better employees for that particular performance appraisal system. So this is very much modelled as well on best practices throughout many other professional groups.

One of the key things here is to make sure we can capture parental input, the input of senior students. I think it is also important to note that, yes, that input is important, that input needs to be part of the performance appraisal evaluation of teachers, but to be fair and to be balanced, that input on its own cannot lead to negative consequences for a particular teacher. The responsibility for assessment, the responsibility for making some of these judgment calls resides with the principal and ultimately with the school board as the employer, if there is a particular individual who is not able to meet the standards that are necessary for our students in the classroom.

I think we would all agree that the teaching profession is challenging. Teachers play a critical role in influencing young minds, in helping our students reach their full potential and in shaping lives for the better. It's therefore essential that the evaluation of a teacher's training and learning be a continuous process that is as consistent, effective and rigorous as possible. That is the purpose of our teacher testing program: to ensure that all teachers have the up-to-date skills, the knowledge, the training they require to provide our students with the best possible education.

This legislation, the proposed Quality in the Classroom Act, is another step in our path toward an education system that is able to do that. We have listened to what our partners have advised. We have looked at what best practices are followed in other professions and the teaching profession in many other jurisdictions. We've also looked at what best research shows. All of this has gone into the input of the performance appraisal system that assesses, that is supportive, that will lead to improved student learning, that will make sure that our parents also are involved and are key members of the team.

I would certainly encourage all members of this House to seriously consider supporting this bill, because I think it is another important step in improving student learning in our education system.

1550

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to speak today on the second reading of Bill 110, the Quality in the Classroom Act, 2001. I'd first of all like to congratulate the minister for bringing forth this legislation and all the staff people at the Ministry of Education and the stakeholders who worked on it. But as well, I'd like to congratulate the minister and wish her a very happy birthday today.

The purpose of our education reform is to set higher standards for student achievement in Ontario and to provide the tools and resources for student success.

Excellence in education starts in the classroom, with the best possible teachers. It is essential that they instill a love of lifelong learning in our students as well as provide them with the tools to meet the challenges of changing jobs and new careers.

Ontario has many excellent teachers, and many of them recognize the need to keep their knowledge and skills current. They are actively involved in professional development activities to build their qualifications and develop new knowledge and skills.

That is why our government has introduced our comprehensive teacher testing program: to ensure that all teachers, both new and experienced, have the capabilities to help our students succeed and achieve higher standards.

We continue to build on this commitment with Bill 110, and it has two purposes. First, subject to the approval of Bill 110, all new graduates of Ontario faculties of education and all teachers new to Ontario would be required to take the Ontario teacher qualifying test. Passage of the test would be a requirement for becoming a member of the Ontario College of Teachers and receiving a certificate of qualification from the college.

The qualifying test would assess the readiness of teachers to start their professional life and ensure they have the minimum level of knowledge and skills to begin teaching in our schools. Its purpose and form would be similar to exams administered by other professional regulatory bodies, such as the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board and other groups such as nurses and occupational therapists.

The ministry is taking a number of steps to ensure that the Ontario teacher qualifying test will be unique to Ontario as well as being fair, valid and reliable. Development of the test is being supported by consultations with a broad range of educational stakeholders. We consulted with parents, students, principals and vice-principals, teachers, trustees, deans of faculties of education and the Ontario College of Teachers.

The ministry has established the Ontario teacher qualifying test advisory committee to advise on test program issues. It will provide the ministry with advice on test development and validation as well as on the written materials to assist those teachers taking the test. For example, there would be a brochure describing the test program that would also include an application package with registration information, sample test questions and preparation test items.

It is important to note that Ontario is not the only jurisdiction to be moving in the direction of spelling out entrance-to-the-profession tests. In fact, the ministry is drawing from the best experience of what other professions and jurisdictions are doing in this area. For example, the United Kingdom recently introduced a test for new applicants to the teaching profession. In addition, France, Belgium and Switzerland use civil service exams to evaluate those who wish to teach, and most American states require their teacher candidates to pass one or more certification exams to become licensed to teach.

The proposed qualifying test in Bill 110 would have questions based on areas of knowledge and skills derived from the standards of practice for the teaching profession established by the Ontario College of Teachers. The college is mandated by statute to establish standards of practice for all teachers in Ontario.

Once aspiring teachers have completed the qualifying test, the results would be available in four to six weeks. All test-takers would be advised of their personal scores.

The test provider would advise the Ontario College of Teachers of pass/fail results for each participant. Candidate teachers who meet all the requirements for certification, including passing the qualifying test, would be placed on the college's register, which lists its members, their qualifications and their status with the college.

Finally, for 2002 and 2003, the ministry will cover all costs associated with taking the test.

In addition, Bill 110 provides for an appeal process to be available to all teachers who take the qualifying test. All appeals on test scores would be reviewed individually on a case-by-case basis.

The qualifying test proposed by Bill 110 is an additional step taken by this government to improve the quality of education in Ontario. In a rapidly changing and increasingly competitive world, the need for quality assurance among all professions, and especially among teachers, is imperative.

The second purpose of Bill 110 is to create a comprehensive performance appraisal system to evaluate teachers on their performance in the classroom. The new provincial standards outlined in the legislation would ensure that principals and school boards regularly and consistently evaluate teachers' knowledge and skills.

Bill 80, which the Legislature passed last June, established a comprehensive framework for professional learning by Ontario teachers. Bill 80 requires all teachers to participate in a series of professional development activities and courses in a five-year cycle throughout their careers. Bill 110 would now establish the regulatory authority necessary for the establishment of teacher learning plans. These plans would be developed by teachers in consultation with their principals. They would map out an action plan for professional growth. Mandatory professional learning ensures that teachers' knowledge and skills are up to date.

Performance appraisals provide the necessary quality assurance that professional learning has been effective, that the teachers in our classrooms are the best that they can be.

Equally important is the way that Bill 110 would bring consistency to teacher appraisals in reference to their frequency, timing, standards and methods. While many boards have been developing excellent performance review practices, few school boards have policies and programs in place to help weak teachers meet the standards they need to achieve. In addition, few boards currently have evaluation policies that recognize teacher excellence or identify possible mentors or exemplary teachers.

These findings reconfirm the value of Bill 110 and the need to provide consistent province-wide standards for teacher evaluation. The creation of such standards would clearly be a major factor in ensuring that our teacher appraisal system is fair to all members of the profession, no matter where they teach in our province. These are the reasons that the bill would provide for every experienced teacher to have an evaluation every three years, with at least two evaluations of their classroom performance during that particular year.

Our government strongly believes in the involvement of all parents in their children's education. Another important milestone in Bill 110 is that parent and student input will be an integral part of a teacher's performance appraisal. Bill 110 would also provide the regulatory authority for parent and pupil input. However, parental and pupil comments would not be the sole factor in an unsatisfactory rating of a teacher.

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The important aspect of the teacher appraisal system is to provide support and facilitate teacher improvement. The point of Bill 110 is to ensure teaching excellence. Bill 110 provides a very detailed and fair approach to teachers receiving a less-than-satisfactory rating, with a real emphasis on opportunities to help strengthen a teacher's classroom skills. I believe the performance appraisal system in Bill 110 is consistent and fair to teachers.

In closing my remarks, I would like to summarize the key features of the performance appraisal system that would be established by the legislation.

Bill 110 provides for: regular evaluations of all teachers; a consistent standard for teacher appraisals, including an objective rating system that will be used throughout our province; parental and student input into the appraisal process; and support for teachers who need to improve their performance.

Bill 110 is win-win legislation. With the passage of the Quality in the Classroom Act, 2001, parents will know their children are being taught by teachers who can call upon the best classroom skills and knowledge. Taxpayers will know they are receiving value for their education dollars, and all Ontarians will know we are moving closer to an education system that is firmly focused on quality, accountability and improved student achievement. Thank you for the opportunity to speak here this afternoon.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): It's pleasing to me to have the opportunity to speak today on

Bill 110, the Quality in the Classroom Act, 2001. I don't think we can overemphasize the importance of providing Ontario's students with an effective education; I don't think it has ever been greater than it is today. The baby boom generation that has dominated our workforce for years is aging. The Toronto Dominion Bank forecast that fully one third of Canada's workforce will be in a position to retire before the end of this decade. By 2010, almost 40% of machine operators, bookkeepers and registered nurses are forecast to be at retirement age. All industries are expecting higher than average retirements over the next 10 years.

While all this is happening, technology and the new economy are rapidly changing where we work, how we work and the skills we need to bring to the workforce. It is now estimated that as early as 15 years from now, half of our jobs will demand skills to handle technology that has not yet been invented. Fifteen years—I'm going to stress that—from now half our jobs will demand skills to handle technology that has not yet been invented.

In order for Ontario to remain the best province in which to live, work, invest and raise a family, we clearly need to meet some important challenges. The foundation for meeting those challenges is an education system that provides Ontario's young people with the start they need for productive and successful lives. Ontario's education system must equip our students with the skills they will need to prosper in a fast-paced and competitive world.

Since 1995, our government has been working to put in place the key elements of the education system that we will need to meet those challenges. For example, we committed to introduce a demanding new curriculum that focused on core subjects like math and science and provided our students with better preparation for post-secondary education or workplace destinations.

I don't think it's any surprise to anyone when I say that in the 1950s and the early 1960s we had the best education system in perhaps the whole world. We were the envy of many jurisdictions. But this did not continue. We lost our pre-eminent place by the early 1990s. Jim Downey, the then president of the University of Waterloo, told me in 1995 or 1996 that academics couldn't have been more pleased than they were with the changes that we were proposing for the education system.

We are now close to completing the most comprehensive modernization and overhaul of Ontario's kindergarten to grade 12 curriculum that has ever taken place. You notice I said "kindergarten to grade 12." Grade 13 is gone. We were the only jurisdiction in North America that still had a grade 13 when our government came to power.

This fall, implementation of the new high school curriculum reached grade 11. It contains a number of important innovations to prepare students for the more competitive workplace and for lifelong learning. Career education and planning are now requirements for all high school students. High schools are now expected to provide programs to help students make the transition from school to work through co-operative education

programs, work experience, job shadowing and youth apprenticeship. Destination-based courses are now a key part of the high school program. They help students develop the knowledge and skills they will need to make successful transitions to work, apprenticeship, college or university.

For students to be exposed to all these opportunities places significant expectations on their teachers. Research clearly demonstrates the difference that a good teacher can make in the lives of children. Excellent teachers foster a passion for learning that students will carry with them throughout their life.

Both individually and as a profession, most teachers constantly enhance their skills, adapting to new technologies and keeping their knowledge up to date. For the rest, I believe they must do so.

This government is not alone in recognizing the importance of the professional development of teachers and its importance to excellence in education. In 1995, the Ontario government received the report of the Royal Commission on Learning, which was commissioned by the NDP government. Among its many recommendations was the following:

"The professionalization and continuing development of teachers [is] the single most important key to any possible improvement in the quality of schooling.

"We are recommending that participation in professional development be mandatory for all educators, and that continuing certification be contingent on such participation."

That, as I said, was recommended in the report of the Royal Commission on Learning, commissioned by the previous government.

Our government responded positively to this recommendation in 1999 through its Blueprint document. We promised to bring in comprehensive teacher testing to assure Ontario parents, students and taxpayers that the knowledge and skills of teachers are always current and up to date.

We took that step because in today's demanding world, the need for quality assurance has never been greater. Since June of 2000, the minister and the ministry have been working to put in place the Ontario teacher testing program. While some people were concerned that this program would be simplistic and unsophisticated, I have confidence that the teacher testing program is comprehensive and balanced. The various elements of the program do fit together and support each other, and they build on the efforts already being made by many teachers to stay up to date and learn new skills.

The key elements of teacher testing include: a language proficiency test, since last fall, for teachers coming to Ontario who received their training in a language other than English or French; a qualifying test for all new teachers in Ontario; an induction program to support new teachers; and a mandatory professional development requirement. I know that some teachers have said, "Well, we were already doing some of that," and they were—some—but it was under the auspices of

their union as opposed to something a little bit more standard through the Ontario College of Teachers.

A comprehensive performance appraisal system is also part of the teacher testing program, and a teacher excellence recognition program.

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Last fall we put in place the language proficiency test, and this past June, through Bill 80, we established the foundation for a comprehensive professional learning program. Bill 80 requires all certified teachers to complete five-year cycles of professional development, to stay up to date and to maintain their certification.

During each five-year cycle, all teachers are now required to complete seven core courses and seven elective courses from an approved course list. Approved courses will, of course, include many of the professional development activities and programs that many teachers already participate in regularly to improve their skills or to teach new subjects. Courses will focus on curriculum knowledge, student assessment, special education, teaching strategies, classroom management and leadership, the use of technology, and communicating with parents and students. The amount of time required to complete each course will vary, depending on the learning requirement of each topic. They will range from one-day workshops to longer courses designed to upgrade qualifications. All courses will include assessments or other tests to ensure that they have been successfully completed.

Through Bill 110, the Quality in the Classroom Act, 2001, the government is now moving forward with the next essential steps to ensure that Ontario's students are always taught by the best teachers in the country.

Bill 110 would create a qualifying test for new teachers to ensure that they are ready to enter the classroom. It would also establish province-wide standards for teacher performance review.

In the time I have today, I would like to address the details of the new requirement for a qualifying test.

Subject to approval of Bill 110, all new graduates of Ontario faculties of education and all teachers new to Ontario would be required to take the Ontario teacher qualifying test. Passage of the test would be a requirement for becoming a member of the Ontario College of Teachers and receiving the certificate of qualification from the college. The qualifying test that would be established by the Quality in the Classroom Act, 2001, is an entrance-to-the-profession test. It would assess the readiness of teachers to start their professional life and ensure that they have the minimum level of knowledge and skills to begin teaching in our schools. Its purpose and form is not unlike exams administered by other professional regulatory bodies, such as the National Dental Hygiene Certification Board, and for such other groups such as nurses, occupational therapists and lawyers.

The ministry is taking a number of steps to ensure that the Ontario teacher qualifying test will be unique to Ontario, as well as being fair, valid and reliable. Development of the test is being supported by consultations

with a broad range of educational stakeholders, including parents, students, principals, vice-principals, teachers, trustees, deans of faculties of education and the Ontario College of Teachers. Ontario educators are directly involved in the writing team that will develop the test items for field trials and for the first administration of the test that will take place next spring. The writing team is made up of teachers, principals and faculty members whose members represent elementary and secondary schools, Roman Catholic, English- and French-language schools.

In addition, the ministry has established the Ontario Teacher Qualifying Test Advisory Committee to advise on test program issues. It will provide the ministry with advice on test development and validation, as well as on the written materials to assist those teachers taking the test. For example, there will be a brochure describing the test program that will also include an application package with registration information, sample test questions and preparation test items.

It is important to note that Ontario is not the only jurisdiction to be moving in the direction of spelling out entrance-to-the-profession tests. In fact, the ministry is drawing from the best experience of what other professions and jurisdictions are doing in this area. For example, the United Kingdom recently introduced a test for new applicants to the teaching profession. In addition, France, Belgium and Switzerland use civil service exams to evaluate those who wish to teach. Most American states require their teacher candidates to pass one or more certification exams to become licensed to teach. To that, I want to add that in Germany it takes eight years after graduation from high school to become a teacher. One year of their training is devoted entirely to pedagogy.

I would like to provide all members with some of the details of how the qualifying test would work. Test questions would be based on areas of knowledge and skills derived from the standards of practice for the teaching profession established by the Ontario College of Teachers. The college is mandated by statute to establish standards of practice for all teachers in Ontario. The first section would be comprised of classroom scenarios that a teacher might face. Questions based on these scenarios would explore and assess both professional knowledge and teaching practice in relation to the expectations of beginning teachers.

The second section would contain multiple choice questions. For example, it could be used to assess teachers' knowledge of legislation related to teaching in Ontario, the Ontario curriculum and uses of technology in the classroom.

Once aspiring teachers have completed the qualifying test, the results would be available in four to six weeks. All test takers would be advised of their personal scores. The test provider would advise the Ontario College of Teachers of pass or fail results for each participant. Candidate teachers who meet all the requirements for certification, including passing the qualifying test, will be placed on the college's register, which lists its members, their qualifications and their status with the college.

Finally, for 2002-03, the ministry will cover all costs associated with taking the test. In addition, Bill 110 provides for an appeal process to be available to all teachers who take the qualifying test. All appeals on test scores would be reviewed individually on a case-by-case basis. The qualifying test proposed by Bill 110 is an additional step being taken by this government to improve the quality of education in Ontario.

In a rapidly changing and increasingly competitive world, the need for quality assurance among all professionals, including teachers, and especially teachers, perhaps, is imperative. The Ontario teacher testing program will strengthen teacher education and training through initiatives that support both new and established teachers. The qualifying test and teacher appraisal system that would be established by this legislation will help ensure Ontario's teachers have the most up-to-date knowledge, skills and training. They are additional steps that will make sure Ontario's teachers will always be the best.

I ask members to join me in supporting Bill 110.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It's my pleasure today to join in the debate on the Quality in the Classroom Act, 2001, Bill 110. I'd like to start by wishing the Minister of Education a happy birthday today.

This bill is very important to me. I have four children who are in the education system, three currently in the public education system in Ontario. Our oldest daughter, Abigale, is in her first year of post-secondary education. I have my daughter Renée in grade 11 at Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School, having a wonderful year, involved with all the student activities. Every morning we have to drive her to school early because she's very much involved with some other project with the student council. Our son Stuart is in grade 9 at Bracebridge and Muskoka Lakes Secondary School. He is enjoying the volleyball team and getting right involved as the new kid on the block in high school. Our son Winston, who's 12, is in grade 7 at Monck public school, a very fine school that all of our kids went to. He's in French immersion there, doing wonderfully and really enjoying his time. We're very lucky to have had excellent teachers. Our kids have been extremely fortunate. Hopefully, this bill will go a long way toward creating the sort of excellence that our kids have experienced, right across this province, enhancing the quality of education for this province.

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Bill 110 is the latest step in our government's comprehensive plan to reform publicly funded education in Ontario. It's really about bringing forward the qualifying test and also the performance appraisal province-wide for teachers.

The purpose of our education reform is to continue to set higher standards for student learning in Ontario and to provide the tools and resources for students' successes. That's what it's really all about: improving the outcome for students.

However, excellence in education starts in the classroom, with the best possible teachers. Every one of us here today carries with us memories of teachers who made a difference in our lives. When I think back personally, I think of Mr Pope, who was my economics teacher, and how much I enjoyed him, how effective he was as a teacher. I remember he'd come in every day with current newspaper clippings from that day, talking about the current situation in Ontario at the time. I certainly found it very stimulating and interesting. It made me work hard to do the best I could in his class. He was also, I remember, a bit politically involved. He'd run as an NDP candidate in his earlier days. By the time he got around to teaching me, he'd switched over and become more conservative in his views.

When we were kids, we probably didn't realize how challenging the teaching profession is. Teaching is a very challenging profession. I am proud that Ontario has so many excellent and dedicated teachers, because good teachers are vital to helping our students to reach their effective potential. I read the education report this summer, and it noted that teachers are the most important factor in improving the outcome for students.

As parents we want to know, and have the right to know, that when a teacher stands in front of a classroom, he or she has the skills and knowledge needed to give our children the best possible education. We then have to understand what teachers do. Today, teachers must prepare our kids for lives of success and fulfillment tomorrow. But in our constantly changing world, teachers must do something else: they have to create an environment where students want to learn and, quite frankly, like to learn. They have to teach students how to learn and, most important, provide them with the tools to meet the challenges of changing jobs and new careers.

Teachers are the most important factor affecting our children's learning, and we never stop learning. Learning should be a lifelong activity. I've been learning a lot since being elected on March 22, all about Queen's Park and the various issues around the beautiful riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. I've certainly been enjoying it, and I'm honoured to have been the representative for Parry Sound-Muskoka over the past seven months.

In order for teachers to be able to get students ready for tomorrow's world, teachers themselves must be continually enhancing their skills, adopting new technology and keeping their skills up to date. Of course, we must all realize that teachers are not alone in facing these challenges. Many other professions are faced by challenges of meeting tough expectations for quality and excellence from clients, consumers and the public. Other professions are accepting these new realities. They realize it is a competitive world out there, where comparisons and appraisals of professional performance are very important.

There are many professions today that have a variety of entry requirements and ongoing assessment and accountability practices. There are regulatory bodies for dental hygienists, nurses and occupational therapists.

They all require candidates to pass exams that test their basic knowledge and skills to become fully licensed or registered to practise in Ontario. The Ontario Association of Architects also has a mandatory continuing education requirement for all licensed members.

A month ago I was talking to my boyhood friend, Robbie Jones, who is now a professional pilot flying for Canada 3000, and he was just getting ready to do his annual instrument flight rules test. In his case, in his profession, if he doesn't pass it, then he gets some help in doing it again. I think he gets a couple of more tries at it, but if he doesn't pass that, he's out of a job in his case. Certainly we can understand that. We do want the pilots who fly our airliners to be competent.

The Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario requires its members to complete a mandatory program of professional development over a specified time period.

Ontario has many excellent teachers and many of them recognize the need to keep their knowledge and skills current. They are actively involved in professional development activities to build their qualifications and develop new knowledge and skills. That is why our government has introduced our teacher testing program: to ensure that all teachers, both new and experienced, have the capabilities to help our students succeed and achieve higher standards.

Bill 110 would establish a qualifying test for all entrants to the profession, whether trained in Ontario or elsewhere. This test would ensure that teachers in Ontario would have the basic knowledge and skills expected to teach our children. New teachers would be required to pass the qualifying test to be certified by the Ontario College of Teachers to teach in Ontario.

The second purpose of Bill 110 is to create a performance appraisal system to evaluate teachers on their performance in the classroom. The new provincial standards outlined in the legislation would ensure that principals and school boards regularly and consistently evaluate teachers' knowledge and skills.

In addition, the legislation would provide for parents and students to have input into the appraisal process, and this is very important. Low-performing teachers would be given the time and support they need to improve.

In the time I have today, I would like to focus on the details of the performance appraisal system proposed by Bill 110. Bill 80, which the Legislature passed last June, established a comprehensive framework for professional learning by Ontario teachers. Bill 80 requires all teachers to participate in a series of professional development activities and courses in five-year cycles throughout their careers. As I understand that, it's 14 courses over five years; seven which are mandatory and seven which are the choice of the teachers in specific areas of interest to the teachers.

Bill 110 builds on the provisions of Bill 80 in several ways. The bill would allow for a regulatory authority to establish teachers' learning plans. These learning plans would be developed by teachers in consultation with their principals and would map out an action plan for professional growth.

There is a strong link between professional learning and evaluating performance. Mandatory professional learning ensures that teachers' knowledge and skills are up to date. Performance appraisal provides the necessary assurance to parents that the teachers in our classrooms are the best they can be.

Equally important is the way that Bill 110 would bring consistency to teacher appraisals in reference to their frequency, timing, standards and methods. There would be province-wide standards. This is a critical need that was drawn to our attention by a number of education partners, especially the Council of Directors of Education.

As we were developing this legislation, we asked the Council of Directors of Education to conduct a survey of teacher appraisal practices across the province. What that survey found confirmed the need for taking a much more comprehensive approach to evaluating teachers' classroom performance. While boards have been developing tighter practices in this area, few boards today have policies and programs in place to help weak teachers meet the standards they need to achieve.

The new performance appraisal standards would focus on the key areas of teacher performance. Those areas are commitment to students and student learning; communication with students and their parents; professional knowledge; teaching practices; participation in the life of the school and school community; and participation in ongoing professional learning.

These findings reconfirm the value of Bill 110 and the need to provide consistent, across-the-province standards for teacher evaluation.

I can see I'm running out of time, so I'm going to skip toward the end of my speech.

In closing my remarks, I would like to summarize the key features of the performance appraisal system that would be established by this legislation. The most important foundation of quality education is excellence in teaching. Excellent teachers are vital to helping students achieve higher standards.

1630

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Rosario Marchese, who is the education critic for the New Democratic Party of Ontario, is hoping to commence his lead-off later this afternoon. He'll be speaking to this bill for an hour. He will undoubtedly be speaking about the fact that, while no one for all intents and purposes quarrels with the proposition that any professional should have their work subjected to scrutiny, teachers have been subject to scrutiny throughout the history of their profession. When principals and vice-principals are performing their administrative and supervisory roles within their schools, they are scrutinizing teachers.

Like so many other people, I know a whole lot of teachers. I can't think of any other profession that is as self-critical as teachers are. Our teachers here in the province of Ontario know that they are dealing with kids and that they are the single most important adult, next to

a parent, in that little kid's life, and, in terms of the formal education process, the single most important adult in view of the fact that so many parents are so pre-occupied with so many other things in an effort simply to keep the mortgage payments made and food on the table.

Mr Rosario Marchese, the education critic for the Ontario New Democratic Party, is undoubtedly going to point out that what this government has done again, though, has been to create two classes of teachers. It has acknowledged the very highly skilled teachers in the public sector—in a backhanded sort of way, mind you, because this government's been demonizing, vilifying, attacking those professional teachers in the public sector, in the public schools, the elementary schools and high schools in the province of Ontario for the six years that it's been in power here.

Teacher testing: oh, fine, teacher testing for public teachers. But this government wants to let private school teachers operate untested, without scrutiny, without any supervision, and at the same time hand over millions upon millions of public tax dollars to those same private schools—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's always nice to follow the member from Welland-Thorold down there.

The comments made by the minister, the member for Simcoe North, the member for Kitchener Centre and the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka were enthralling. I was spellbound by them and touched by the clarity with which they spoke to the bill.

Doctors in this province have to be tested, lawyers have to be tested—and I know we've made these arguments before—real estate brokers and real estate salesmen have to be tested in this province. Funeral directors have to be tested in this province at various points in time. Nurses have to be tested.

Mr Kormos: What about MPPs?

Mr Chudleigh: In fact, the member for Welland-Thorold makes a good point: the NDP should be tested every once in a while. All professionals have to be tested, and in fact all MPPs are tested at the polls every four years. So for a person to call themselves a professional in this province and yet not undergo some form of testing is inconsistent.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): Lawyers? Engineers?

Mr Chudleigh: Lawyers, engineers: they all need testing. All need testing at consistent points through the term.

I would argue that teachers are perhaps the most important professionals in our society, the most important, as they are the ones who direct and guide the most important assets that any jurisdiction has anywhere in North America or indeed the world. They look after our children; they guide our children in those first formative years to ensure they get a good start on life. I think it is imperative that these professionals get this testing to ensure that they are of as high a quality as the vast majority of them are in the province.

This kind of thing is happening all over the world. This isn't just happening in Ontario; it's happening everywhere.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I think the government members who spoke neglected to recognize the single most important thing in quality education, and that is a highly motivated teaching staff.

Virtually everything this government has done has been designed to demotivate our teaching staff. And so while this bill is before us, designed—and frankly, in quite a bureaucratic way. This bill is written by a bureaucrat. If you were in the private sector, you would never run your organization like this. Frankly, in my opinion, rather than motivate, it demotivates.

What has the government done in terms of major steps in education? The biggest single step they've taken in the last 10 years is the funding for private schools. The Fraser Institute said this is the biggest education move in North America. The National Citizens' Coalition says it's a huge step. It is funding for private schools, taking money out of our public schools and giving it to private schools. Frankly, all of this "designed to improve quality in the classroom" is being completely undermined by the government's desire, for whatever reason, to see our private schools grow at the expense of our public schools. The most amazing thing is that Premier Harris argued strenuously only two years ago before the United Nations, saying he would never do this, that it was a huge mistake funding private schools. But because now there's a leadership race on, the Minister of Finance, I gather, has persuaded the Premier to proceed with funding for private schools. So this bill, designed to improve quality, is being completely undermined by the demoralizing move to fund private schools.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I rise to comment on the remarks of some of the members opposite. One of the comments was talking about teachers that they knew and remembered, and it sort of brought me back to all those many years ago and all those teachers who were subject to teacher testing. I remember those days when the principal or the superintendent walked into the classroom when I was a young student and you could watch the fear in the teacher's eyes. That was a fear of somebody they knew; that was a fear of somebody they trusted and of somebody they worked with.

What you are subjecting or intending to subject the teachers to now is very new. You are going to subject them to testing by somebody they don't know, somebody they don't work with, and somebody, quite frankly, I think, that many of them do not trust. Because of the poisoned example, the poisoned relationship that has developed between the teachers, their union and the members of this government, I think many of them are reticent to embrace something that they have done all along, something that they expect to do, something that they have done as part of their credentials.

The teachers are leaving in record numbers from this province, and one needs to ask why. Is it because they're

all getting old like me? I don't know; maybe that's the reason. But I think another fundamental thing is that this is not the profession they once thought it was. It's not a profession where they're helping people; it's a profession where they are subject to daily taunts from their employer, where the funds aren't there, where they are not able to teach, where they do not have adequate resources. I think that's why they are leaving. There is a brain drain in this province.

If the province is sincere about all of its employees, they should look at some of the people who are on their boards and commissions. There are people who are on the rent review tribunal, I would tell you, who need a whole lot more testing than the teachers in this province. Look to some of your others and do something about them first.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Simcoe North has two minutes to respond.

Mr Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members for Niagara Centre, Halton, Scarborough-Agincourt and Beaches-East York for their comments this afternoon on the second reading of Bill 110.

Interruption.

Mr Dunlop: Jeez, there's some noise out there.

I'm going to read a few comments from some people supporting the legislation and supporting some of the thoughts behind this legislation.

For example, on the performance appraisal, I'd just like to read a quote from Phyllis Benedict, president of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario. "It's classroom performance, as evaluated by a vice-principal or principal, that should be the judge. What improves teachers' performance is a good, thorough evaluation process."

From Jim Smith, president of OECTA: "...teachers firmly believe performance review is an essential feature of professional integrity..." again a positive comment toward the legislation.

Another quote on the teacher test projects from Moira Macdonald, the Toronto Sun columnist; she's been following this quite closely: "But I ask you, if you were having brain surgery, how would you like to know the surgeon is considered competent because he has passed his theoretical courses, yet has not been tested on how he puts that knowledge into practice on a live person's head? Why should it be different when it comes to teachers?"

I think that's the feeling of a lot of people in our province. They trust, they believe very firmly or very strongly in the fact that a number of hours of our children's lives are spent with their teachers. They want the best-quality teacher in the classroom. Our government is doing the very best we can to prove to the citizens of the province of Ontario that they can provide that.

1640

The Acting Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It is certainly a pleasure to be able to rise in this particular debate simply because some of what we are discussing

here today was rushed through at the end of the last session, Bill 80, another component part of this approach by this particular government. But we stand here in this wood-panelled room far away from the classrooms that we propose to impact with this particular bill. With this bill, the government would choose to continue to perpetrate the mismanagement of education that has denigrated and degraded the attainment of learning in this province for quite a number of years.

I want to say at the outset, Mr Speaker, I'm sharing my time with the member for Scarborough-Agincourt and the honourable member for Eglinton-Lawrence.

I say to the members opposite that when you hear from a member like the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, who has run successful private sector companies, tell you that this is bad management, these are demotivational kinds of approaches that are embodied in both this bill and in Bill 80—in fact, this is the one part of education that isn't just about the resources. It is about the total lack of an effective approach on the part of the government.

Let's remember, as the parliamentary assistant shakes his head, that Bill 80 was mainly about, not bringing in something new; it was about throwing out something the government had done a year before. What they managed to do with Bill 74, one year before Bill 80, was eliminate extracurricular activities that had been taking place for decades in this province; single-handedly, with a thoroughgoing stroke of incompetent genius, the government managed to get rid of sports and after-school activities. The things that enhance the development of children in this province to their full potential as adults got erased by a careless, stumbling, reckless government.

We have in front of us today, in the form of Bill 110, another in the series, another one that has to be put in its context, a context of earned—out and out brought in by artificial inducement—turmoil into our school system on the part of this government. Instead of addressing that turmoil and conflict which they made a professional practice of their government, to which they put public resources in the form of advertising, in the form of polls, in the form of all kinds of misdirected resources.

This fall alone it continues; \$6 million of money that should be in schools, enhancing the classrooms that we stand so remotely away from, is not available because it has been spent on useless advertising promoting this government; in fact, television ads promoting this very bill. It has the gall, it doesn't have the gumption to do something about the issues that they have brought: the turmoil, the lack of attention and the lack of focus that happens in our schools when you do these kinds of things from this very remote place.

For those social scientists on the other side who would say they are going to micromanage our classrooms, this so-called Conservative government is actually a fairly corporatist outfit that would say to themselves, "We're going to push buttons from our plush chairs in Queen's Park and we're going to cause some effect to happen in 5,000 schools all around the province." They are actually

going to write the evaluation standards here in this House; that's what they're asking us to do today. The toll is palpable. We are here today with a bill that would say to the people of Ontario that laterally, six years into its mandate, approximately seven years, the government has woken up to some kind of burning need to set standards on its own for how teachers are treated in schools—six years later.

In that time, what has occurred? We're in the midst of a teacher shortage. The member opposite spoke about other professions being stripped of retirement. We have no professions in this province that have people leaving at the alarming rate they're leaving the teaching profession, exclusively under the mandate and the misdirection and mismanagement of this government. We are losing qualified teachers in front of the classroom right now, today, and it's happening in direct consequence of the actions of this government. We lost 5,000 teachers for reasons other than retirement last year, a 55% increase in teachers who left the teaching profession as a consequence of this government being unable to handle the number one management requirement to get the best out of their staff, to provide the inspirational leadership, to provide the kind of intangible need we've got to put into that classroom.

I will articulate that in the hope that it will find its way into this debate. We have to give to teachers the ability to convey to students a sense of development, a sense of learning; in other words, success in what they're doing. That's what will keep teachers in this province, not a bunch of phony-baloney tests written by some American outfit. This government is spending literally million of dollars bringing in an American company to write tests for teachers starting out rather than focusing on the real issues.

We learn in a study by Queen's University two weeks ago—lost a little bit in all the other newsworthy events in the world and of the government benches and so forth—that 50% of the leadership in our schools is going to retire, is going to quit. They're going to leave at the first available opportunity. They're not going to stick around at all. The principals in our schools are voting with their feet on this government's policies, and these are the best-trained, best-qualified, best-vetted people we could find, who made education in Ontario something to be proud of, who won awards, ironically, in the region of Durham, worldwide recognition. What did this government do? It paralyzed that very school system with three years of tension and strikes and problems in terms of extra-curricular, problems in terms of collaboration between the school boards, the parents, the councils and the individual teachers and students.

Here we are, pretending somehow that we're not in that province, that this isn't Ontario after six years of mismanagement of education and that latterly we're going to bring in some things that might have something to do with the quality of education. That's a conceit that cannot be allowed to pass through this House. That is a central government, Soviet-style approach that is being

brought forward and promoted by these unlikely members opposite. They do it because they need a place to hide. They need something to point to, they need something to grasp on to in the absence of anything that really amounts to success.

We heard earlier this month that this caucus was briefed by the minister and told not to expect increases and improvements in test scores. We heard the minister talk about accountability. I'd like to know—and the minister had better provide this House; I believe it's her responsibility, almost a fiduciary one—how she got those test results ahead of the time they're published. They're not published for a few weeks. How does she know? But the accountability that she would exact on to students is not reflected in any of the accountability on this government. You see around the world the difference between governments that are successful in getting education systems to reform and improve and do better for students and those who find themselves in the backwater of discontent and turmoil. Our government in Ontario today is stuck right in that swamp.

Michael Fullan, the dean of OISE, has written extensively, has evaluated the system in the UK, and puts them clearly, without naming them, on the side with the people who do not have a clear vision of where to go, nor do they know how to get there. Why? Because all they can do is prod people. All they can do is take the stick. They can't provide the balance of support, the balance of incentives to actually get the standards in this province to improve, to get the people in this province to feel confidence in the education system. In fact, Michael Fullan says—to introduce some expertise into this debate instead of the notional things we've heard, and we'll see that every single one of the premises this government is resting on for legitimacy for this bill is false. Every single one does not bear out, but it is in this context of mismanagement that we need to understand most of all where this bill comes from and how it will fail. In education in Ontario, where so many students, teachers and parents have lost confidence in this government's ability to do something, it doesn't just matter what you're doing; it matters how you do it.

1650

We don't have a problem with entrance exams for teachers, but we question why an entrance exam would not be done at the faculty of education. Why are we duplicating? And why would it not be done in conjunction with the College of Teachers itself? Why does it say in this bill that this is a test devised and administered by the Ministry of Education? What kind of misguided, big-government group think produced that? This government wants to write the test for qualifying teachers. I would say, out of all the things we might be able to agree on in this House, there will be members opposite who may be willing to concede that they don't know how to write that test, and they would best put that in the hands of people who do.

The idea of being able to show people as they start out—we believe that teachers are well prepared in the

faculties of education in this province, but we should know that the consequence of not having an attentive government is there today. We can talk about these future provisions, we can talk about what's going to happen over five years, but today in our schools there are over 1,500 unqualified teachers who did not pass faculties of education, who did not get their degrees, who are not supposed to be teaching; they have letters of permission handed out by the same minister who earlier in this House was introducing this bill—shortages, lack of qualified people, made necessary because the government does not know how to lead, does not know how to inspire, does not know how to motivate, does not know how to get the most out of the people who have to be inside, the people in the classroom. The government confuses itself and tries to confuse the province by talking about unions and about other people. It's the classroom. That's what matters. Inside that classroom are teachers who are leaving and don't have confidence in what this government is doing.

Simply addressing an entry exam and, in fact, evaluation procedures—if the government has nothing else to do in education, if they want to standardize evaluation procedures, if they want to get into that administrivia, I suppose that's something that isn't, in and of itself, harmful. But I would say to you that the government is on very shaky ground when they try to tell us that this is legitimized by others, and I'll turn to that in a moment.

I would also say that we have here not just the turmoil and conflict the government has imposed on the system; we have as well a government totally handcuffed by its ideology and political opportunism. They can't do the right thing for students in this bill. They are totally prevented from that. They are handcuffed because they are committed to things like private school tax credits. Half of the students who are in private schools have no standards applying to them whatsoever because they do not have certified teachers. In fact, these tests will not apply to certified teachers in the private schools.

This is directly contradictory to the recommendation of the royal commission, which I will refer to many times. The government has misconstrued and in effect does not represent accurately what the royal commission said and what did get support from various people in this House. It says explicitly—and I refer you to the report of the royal commission, page 33—that this should apply. Any certification should apply to private schools. But the government can't do it because they are ideologically hidebound away from that.

Further, the government is stuck in this land of political opportunism. They made a promise. They threw it out there in the last election. It was in their so-called Blueprint. It said, "We're going to test teachers." That's what they told the public. That's what the Premier said on his whistle stops, that they're going to have a test for teachers. Well, the bill in front of us and its predecessor, Bill 80, don't contain tests for teachers. In fact, I have here a cabinet document that was leaked in May 2000, a year after the election, talking about how it is impossible.

They've scoured the world to come up with written tests for teachers. Who among us wouldn't like to see some of the teachers who administered exams to us in the past write a few tests of their own?

But the government shouldn't trip over that apparent public approval for tests to the extent that it would come to this House—the minister presenting this bill stood in front of, as she has no fewer than 16 times, a backdrop that says "teacher testing" on it. She may stand in this House and say, "We're actually bringing in performance evaluations and we're talking about recertification."

This government tries to milk every single political advantage it can out of the impression that it's forcing teachers to sit down and write tests. They do that knowingly. They create damage as they do it. I think they denigrate the bill they bring before this House by the way they conduct themselves in the political sphere, by the way they create the impressions.

I again refer you to the fact that the government failed to come up with such a test. They promised it in the election. What we have instead is this garbled version of things, this very garbled version of events. We stand more than two years away from the time this promise was made and, I guess, approximately five years away from when these measures will take place—five years to become qualified and so forth. What kind of government does that kind of delay if it really means what it says?

This is political insincerity of the highest order. This government doesn't mean it. It just knows that if it says over and over again "teacher test, teacher test," somehow out there, as my colleague from St Catharines often says, "It's a dog whistle to some people who can't stand the apparent privileges they see teachers having." That is a sad attitude to be promoted by a government of the day that is held responsible for the achievement of our students in our schools. We can't afford it. We don't have the luxury of that kind of irresponsible attitude.

Further, this minister and sundry people here have put themselves in a very vulnerable place. They have quoted the Royal Commission on Learning, something called For the Love of Learning, which for too many people in this province has become the furthest thing as they deal with power and control issues and political games of the type we have today. For the Love of Learning was a five-volume study, the last one done in this province. It had many of its measures endorsed, and it has been bowdlerized, taken apart, by this province, by this provincial government.

I refer you to what this report says about teacher recertification, about what happened in Bill 80. We're being asked today to provide regulations for Bill 80, to give further effect to this government's version of recertification, what it found in place of the phony test promise. It says that there should not be any specific qualification the ministry should require of teachers to take particular courses. It says explicitly that it should not be set by the government of the day or even by the College of Teachers.

What did the royal commission recommend on the way to strengthen the qualifications of our teachers? The

royal commission simply said that there should be a requirement to be successfully evaluated and to have taken professional development courses that were approved by the college. That is a far sight different from the total mismanagement we have here in front of us. The government of the day instead is going to be prescriptive and, incredibly, pick the seven courses every teacher in this province is going to do. Presumably they'll turn to the same American consultants for what those courses are. It's absolutely incredible and absolutely, diametrically opposed to what the Royal Commission on Learning said was in the interests of the children of this province.

We have a government that has just proposed a bill on the shakiest imaginable grounds, because we have a prescriptive approach that takes away from the one effective means we have in this province of making sure individual students will have a qualified teacher, and that is the effective efforts of the supervision in the schools and by the school boards.

This detracts from that; this takes away from it. That's what the royal commission said, that the school boards and the employers should be responsible for specifying what professional development would meet the standard. That should be done and it should be done in some kind of manner that allows people to buy in.

1700

There is a requirement in one other province in this country for mandatory recertification and that's in the province of Nova Scotia. You'll notice the minister and her assistants go vague when they talk about other jurisdictions. Let me be precise. The province of Nova Scotia has mandatory recertification, and it's run by the teacher federations because the government there recognizes that the teachers themselves know what needs to be done in terms of improvement, that self-prescribed learning is going to be as effective as anything some remote government sitting in a wood-panelled room like this or some plush office in the Ministry of Education is going to be able to come up with. It is diametrically opposed to the only model we have in this country for improvement by teachers if it's made mandatory by a government.

The government said, "Well, there's inconsistency by school boards in terms of evaluation." Our party has no problem with evaluations being done. We expect them to be done. We expect that is the best defence we have against those teachers, that small minority, who may not be up to their roles.

We took specific note how the minister made very brief reference to dedicated and positive teachers and then spent the rest of her time on what this bill apparently is still about: it's still about attacking teachers; it's still about calling into question their qualifications.

She talked about other professions. There is not a single profession in this province that writes recertification exams. Medical technologists write a test every 10 years. Nobody else does exams of this nature and nobody does them prescribed by the government of the day in some paternalistic manner.

The people in this House who want to endorse this bill stand in a unique position as overseers of the educators of

this province, and they put themselves in the place of the proper supervision that should be happening at the local school level. I think it takes an immense amount of audacity to do that. Respectfully, I wonder how this government can find itself putting teachers at such variance with other professions.

I went to one of the 17 previous announcements by the minister. It was being held at the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario. That institute has four public members. The College of Teachers was two doors down and the government hadn't even told it about the announcement it was making, one of its long series of politically motivated public relations. It wasn't even invited.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants works completely differently. They don't administer recertification exams, but if they did it would be their choice. That's what the royal commission recommended, that whatever is done should be determined by the College of Teachers. Instead, this House is usurping the function of the College of Teachers because this Harris government, or whatever it will be named in the future, is lost, trying to hang on to some of the political promises it made in the past, but it has no particular place to go. It's very clear. There is no other profession that has been put on a par with teachers in terms of the number of attacks that have taken place. I challenge the people opposite to a single study that shows that the inconsistency by school boards is hurting, in any way, the quality of teaching we have out there.

We have other issues that are affecting the quality of teaching. For example, this government party increased class sizes last year. In Bill 80 they increased the number of students who have to be dealt with. In their earlier efforts they decreased the amount of time teachers have to learn. They eliminated the mentors who existed, who were there to teach new teachers and help them learn, help them do better. They got rid of that. In other words, this government took teachers a huge step back in becoming more qualified.

Ninety-eight per cent of teachers, according to the studies that exist, are taking the improvement courses—88% in any one year, and 98% have taken such improvement courses. If the members opposite had availed themselves of our invitation last year to go back to school, they would have seen that the summer schools that exist to teach the teachers the new curriculum this government has thrown at them without satisfactory resources—another classic example of mismanagement. Those actual resources aren't there but they're being provided by teachers.

It was the teachers of the province who went to the government of the day and said, "We'll set up teacher institutes; we'll run summer schools for teachers." Every summer those schools are oversubscribed. The government of the day won't put enough resources into them to have enough teachers trained to deal with the curriculum in as effective a manner as possible. That is the real-world contradiction of the premise we're being served up with today on this bill.

So we have a bill that is refuted by the royal commission, that is refuted by the experience elsewhere, which says this is not the way you go about it, that is refuted by anyone with insight into how people are motivated and how people are made to feel that what they do is important. The members opposite instead denigrate it, and this has a cost.

I would like to read to the member for Kitchener Centre, who has heartily endorsed this bill, who has prescribed no fault, no problem with the whole course and conduct, a letter from someone in his riding. The letter, to the registrar and chief executive officer of the Ontario College of Teachers, says:

"I wish to withdraw my membership from the Ontario College of Teachers. I will not teach in Ontario to protest the government's implementation of teacher testing. It is insulting that I am required to take 14 courses regardless of my qualifications, level of training and expertise. I have a Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts degree, primary, junior and intermediate division qualification, a specialist qualification—special education, and principal certification. Additionally, I am an associate of the Peace Education Foundation in Miami, Florida.

"I have trained teachers and presented at conferences in both Canada and the United States on conflict resolution, mediation, positive discipline, classroom management, playground management, bullying prevention, gifted education and family life education.

"The present professional learning program treats someone with my background and experience exactly the same as someone with two years' experience. As a teacher I was expected to develop a program geared to the individual needs of my students, but apparently this does not apply to the government."

That is signed William Blair, who is quitting teaching, a member of the teaching profession in Kitchener whom we are losing as a direct consequence of the ham-handed management that we're presented here with Bill 110.

Why couldn't the government take more care? Why couldn't the government of the day actually look at the requirements? Why couldn't they look at more effective recommendations? Let's start with the recommendation that actually was in the royal commission. Stand back from this micromanagement, stand away from this political opportunism, to be seen to be in charge, to be seen to be in control, to be sounding out, as the member for St Catharines says, the dog whistle to certain people who want to see teachers attacked. Show some discipline.

I can tell you, as some of the polls have shown, that not everybody is onside with their version of teacher testing. In fact, if we're to believe the leaked caucus document, 83% of the people of Ontario are saying to this government, "Stop the turmoil with teachers." They understand it's a senseless, endless dead end. Instead, we have in front of us a bill with many of the prickly aspects, the assumptions that have led to that sordid, sad state of affairs that this government has to be held responsible for.

They could instead use some of the \$58 million the member opposite referenced, the savings from grade 13—\$58 million is going to be saved there. Some of that could be put into teacher development. If you listen to the experts in this world—and Michael Fullan at OISE and people elsewhere have evaluated what has happened in jurisdictions where they've actually improved the quality of education—they say that you've got to invest. You can't talk about teacher quality; you've got to invest in it. You've got to have leadership centres. You've got to be able to put in front of teachers the ability to take the courses that will allow them to improve, not simply demand it.

It's an old-style management process that comes from a government insufficiently committed. It's no wonder, because every student in this province is missing \$1,800 that used to be there—1,800 bucks, 15% of what they used to receive, and part of that found its way into the things that made for better teachers, that took some of the burden off them every day, that made the courses more available to more of the children, that allowed them to tailor things. But this government will not slow down, will not learn, will not find itself. Instead, they've increased class sizes and put themselves in a situation where they are forcing the William Blairs of this world out of the teaching profession. That, I believe, the government of Ontario will find itself held accountable for by the people of Ontario.

I think when we talk about teacher morale, probably there are not that many people inherently sympathetic. But when we talk about teacher shortages, everybody appreciates that means that children in this province are not getting the instruction, learning and support from the only people who can give it. The test I would ask the members to apply is, does this bill enhance that prospect? Does it send a signal of respect to teachers in this province? I would say it does not. Further, I would challenge once more each of the members of this Legislature before they pass this bill, before they next vote on this bill, to go back to school, to spend a day in their local schools. Start off with the earliest staff person, who is bound to be one of these teachers we are blithely talking about here, as if the people collected here have all the knowledge in the world to set those standards. Go to those schools, which almost half the members of the Legislature have not yet done. Everyone should go back this year and see and talk to the teachers, talk to the students and talk to the parents. When they find out what an impractical program you have, see what their suggestions are. Listen to them.

1710

I am going to propose that what we need so that we don't live in a Hippocratic environment—I don't infer that to any honourable member—is a test for MPPs that would test your knowledge of education in Ontario today, your insight into how we can best turn around the failed reforms of the last six years. You need to be in those schools. You need to be acquiring that knowledge. I would say to each of you in this House that this is a very important bill in that respect. It's a chance for you to

demonstrate to the students and parents of this province that there is now a will to get it right.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I think this is an important debate that we should be having in this House. It follows on a number of other measures this government has taken to undermine the education system. I believe what this bill, along with Bill 80, attempts to do is masquerade as a bill designed to improve the quality of our teaching profession.

This government has gone through a number of contortions in an effort to say to people, "Look, we're doing something about the problem in education." We've seen this over the past five or six years that this government has been in office, where education has become the scapegoat for all the problems that plague our system in general. This government sees that teachers have let Ontario down, "So we're going to ensure that the quality of teachers increases dramatically," as if that was the real problem, as if that was the only problem in education.

No one is opposed to performance appraisals and a proper system where teachers have the opportunity to develop their careers and improve their skills. I think that is something that has always been undertaken by teachers. I look at my wife's experience. She's been a teacher for 20 years, coming up. She has taken developmental courses throughout her entire career. She's a special-ed teacher. But I'll tell you this: the experience of my wife in the classroom has been that over the last number of years, since this government has taken office, there has been nothing but devastation with respect to her ability to do the job. The lack of funding and the lack of teaching assistants for special-ed teachers have eroded the quality of education in the classroom.

When we're talking about improving education in Ontario, let this government start by improving the amount of funding that ends up in the classroom. A series of initiatives that have been undertaken by this government has seen the erosion of quality because there has been an erosion of funding. I'm sure my good friend and colleague the member for Scarborough-Agincourt will allude to some of the problems that have plagued the education system with respect to funding.

At the end of the day, it does amount to a series of initiatives that have demotivated the teaching profession, that have made the teachers feel as though they are less than welcome in their profession and that have certainly created a great deal of turmoil and tension in the system. I don't think there is a person in Ontario who can dispute that with respect to our education system.

The question is, how is it going to be rectified? Does this bill do anything to improve that situation? I would argue that it does not. If anyone doubts that the measures this government has taken would improve quality in education, if they doubt what we say, then why is it that neither of these bills, Bill 80 and Bill 110, applies to the private schools in our province? Why is that the case? I know quite a few people who send their kids to private schools, and let me tell you, they believe, firmly believe, that the private schools in our province are better than the

public schools. That is the perception. I defy anyone to suggest here that somehow private schools don't need this form of testing, don't need the measures that apply to the public sector. I cannot for a moment understand how the government can make the argument that private schools should be exempt.

Furthermore, taking funds away from the public school system to fund the private school system through this government's tax credit scheme is nothing short of ridiculous, and damaging to the public school system. You cannot conclude otherwise. Simply put, funds taken away from the public system to go to the private system are going to hurt the public system. You cannot get around that basic fact.

So when all is said and done, I don't believe that requiring teachers to take additional courses that are prescribed by the ministry—a top-down approach, the ivory tower approach, with the Ministry of Education prescribing these courses—is somehow going to solve all of the problems with respect to quality in education. I think that is entirely the wrong approach. The College of Teachers should, in an ongoing fashion, determine what courses ought to be required to be taken. Professional development is an ongoing matter. That should be done; that should be undertaken. But I say to you, as I said earlier, this is not new. Teachers have always taken courses to upgrade their skills and knowledge base.

So I say to the government, it is an attempt to once again wrest control of the education agenda. It is top-down. It is very bureaucratic and very prescribed. I don't think that in the end this is going to serve our children well.

Furthermore, the fact is that this is not going to lead to a situation where we have a greater number of teachers entering the profession. We now have a tremendous shortage of teachers. There is a lack of qualified teachers. I fail to see how this in any way will enhance that and make it easier for teachers entering the profession or encourage them to enter the profession.

High standards must be maintained. Obviously, we need qualified and quality teachers in the system. But I don't understand how this government imagines we will face the crisis with respect to the shortage of teachers in the future by imposing this rigorous, top-down, bureaucratic approach, prescribing the kinds of testing that will be done and undertaken and not allowing for the College of Teachers to play a primary role in determining that.

So I'd say that this bill does not enhance quality in the classroom. I think there are some serious problems with it with respect to what the government is going to prescribe. Of course, we agree with performance appraisal, the approach to that; we agree with the principle of it. But the specifics, how to carry that out, are seriously flawed.

I think my colleague alluded to the fact that there was a teacher who had written who said he would now step down from the College of Teachers; he would be resigning. That is a real shame with someone who has

those qualifications, that level of experience and knowledge. We should not ever put these kinds of people in a position where they're going to walk away from their profession. That's the state of affairs, a sad state of affairs, in the province of Ontario today. With respect to education, this government has a long way to go. It has steered us in the wrong direction as a province. I can only hope that teachers are not dissuaded from continuing with their profession.

1720

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to continue the debate on Bill 110. I've had a little bit of experience in education. I was on a school board for 11 years and have some appreciation of it. To me, firstly, the importance of education can't be understated. If we are going to compete globally in the future, this is really the key: the quality of our education system, both our elementary and secondary but also our post-secondary.

Frankly, for me, virtually everything the Harris government has done in the last six years in education has undermined the morale in our education system. I'm of the belief that a key to education is, firstly, having well-motivated, enthusiastic, qualified teachers who are excited about their job. Nothing is more important to us. The government likes to use private sector analogies. If this were a business, your single most important product is your teachers. Virtually everything the government has done has been designed to stifle creativity, motivation, excitement and enthusiasm in the classroom.

I, like Mr Miller, look back—much before him—on my high school days, and I can still picture those teachers. As a matter of fact, David Suzuki was the student council president when I was at London Central. Just recently I happened to see a documentary on David Suzuki, and he was sitting there talking to one of his old teachers, who also was one of my old teachers. I think it was either Miss Wyatt or Miss Roddick, one of the two of them. I can still picture Coach Trout, Coach Rice, Coach Leyshon, Mr McKillop, the principal I saw slightly too often. They were excited and motivated.

Furthermore, we have to create a climate where young people, when they're thinking about a profession in Ontario, say, "I want to go into teaching. That's where I want to be." If we don't do that, we are sowing the seeds of our own future problems.

Virtually everything the government has done is to get at those few teachers who are not performing adequately, but in the process, we end up demoralizing and demotivating the rest of our teachers. I want to go into a school that is throbbing with excitement. I will be at a school tomorrow morning, Mary Ward school in the area I represent, a terrific school that does throb with excitement.

As I say, this bill, if you read the bill, is a bureaucratic bill. It's a bill written by bureaucrats to take the excitement out of teaching, not to put it into it. Yes, it will make sure that we get at whatever percentage of teachers it is that either need to be dramatically upgraded in their performance or need to be encouraged to go to another

profession. But in the process, we stifle the rest of the teachers, who have been the inspiration for our young people.

I've always been surprised with this government. I thought the Conservative government believed in decentralization. If you now look at the school boards in Ontario—I often go to Haliburton, and that school board goes for a thousand kilometres. They've lost touch with their school board. Here in Toronto, the area I live in and represent, one huge school board with no feeling of community involvement. The discussion from the minister here is all about funding formula. It's all about "multiply this by this and you get that." The elimination of the principals and vice-principals from the teachers' federation: in my opinion the primary motivation was, "We've got to have a plant manager at that plant. We've got to have our person running that place. We can't have a teacher running that. We've got to have the plant manager there." As I say, it disturbs me because if this were, to use the jargon of the government, a business, it's the last thing you would do, to stifle the fundamental creativity of our teachers.

I'd encourage anyone to read the bill. It's a mechanical, bureaucratic bill designed to measure the number of widgets being produced, as opposed to inspiring young people. I say again, as my colleague Mr Kennedy said, we need to make absolutely certain that teachers are evaluated and we need to make absolutely certain that those who need to be upgraded are upgraded and those who should be in another profession are required to be there. But in the process, we just put a wet blanket over the rest.

As I say, I've always been surprised at the degree of centralization this government has gone through. It's now like, "We at Queen's Park will control everything. If there's somebody misbehaving out there, we will impose the controls to get at that one person," but 99 other people are demotivated. I repeat, I think our talented young people looking at professions will increasingly look at the teaching profession and say, "That's not for me. I want to be able to express myself. I want to be able to expand. I want to be somewhere where I can use all of my talents. I'm not a widget."

In addition to stifling creativity and enthusiasm, on the practical side the government has not been adequately funding education. That's important in this bill because this is An Act to promote quality in the classroom. But the people of Ontario should be aware that the government is actually cutting spending on elementary and secondary education this year, 2001, by at least \$100 million. The per pupil cost is dropping quite significantly, while the rest of North America is saying, "Our most important investment is in education." We look at the jurisdictions we are competing most directly with: Michigan, New York, Ohio. When you look at how they are attracting businesses to their area, they talk about their investment in education. But here in Ontario we've chosen to not follow that lead. On the legislative side we're demotivating people from getting into teaching and

demoting the ones who are there and, on the financial side, doing the same thing.

As my colleagues have pointed out, the bill makes no mention of private schools, and yet the government has said, "We're going to take \$500 million of taxpayer money and we're now going to put that into private schools," in my opinion and in the opinion of my leader Dalton McGuinty, a fundamental mistake.

The area I represent is called Scarborough-Agincourt. It's a community that's gone through enormous change in the last 15 years, from essentially very much an Anglo-Saxon community—20 years ago probably 80% that background and now perhaps it's 20% that background. It is an incredibly diverse community culturally, religiously, ethnically, and it's gone through that with a minimum of problems and a maximum of goodwill.

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I always say that the major reason—not the only reason, but the major reason—is our schools; our elementary schools, but particularly our secondary schools. Tomorrow morning, as I mentioned, I'm at Mary Ward secondary school, a very diverse school with a very unique and quality program of independent learning, and tomorrow night I will be at a school called Stephen Leacock—both tremendously diverse. But I guarantee you, when this private school funding goes through, rather than the community coming together in the secondary schools, I believe there will be 10, 11, 12 different secondary schools, religious schools, in the area I represent. Suddenly we are fragmented.

As we are looking at quality education, the government, as it brings in this bill, is doing more, in my opinion, to undermine quality education by proceeding to fragment our public system, taking \$500 million and putting it into private schools. Rather than our young people coming together, we've decided that we are going to fragment them on the basis of these private, religious schools. I think it's a fundamental mistake that will do much to undermine our public schools.

I would also add, I quoted the numbers for funding. We are competing against Michigan, New York and Ohio. We are now the most export-oriented jurisdiction in the world. We will continue to compete against them. How are they competing? You watch Pennsylvania when they say, "Come to Pennsylvania." Governor Ridge, now heading up the internal security for the US, has been Governor of Pennsylvania for some time. The television commercial says, "Come to Pennsylvania because we've got the quality education system." And what have we decided to do in Ontario? I've quoted the figures in spending, but we've also decided we are going to compete, not on the basis of a quality education but, "Come to Ontario because we are going to have corporate taxes 25% below the US."

My leader and our caucus have said, "Competitive taxes, absolutely." We cannot have taxes in Ontario out of line with our competitors. But tell me again why we want to compete by saying, "Come to Ontario because we've got corporate taxes 25% lower." Inevitably, it

means that our health care system and our education system will not be able to compete with those jurisdictions. "Come to Ontario. We've got inferior health care and inferior education but 25% lower corporate taxes." I'll guarantee you, the corporations will end up where they're guaranteed a quality workforce, and that will be through our education system. We've decided in Ontario on a policy of corporate taxes 25% below the US. It makes no sense to us and, I think, to the business community, putting at risk the quality of our workforce.

It is important in this bill, as we are doing these quite mechanical—to use the jargon, we are micromanaging the system so that the government can go out and say, "Yeah, we are going to go after that bad teacher." And so we should. We should identify teachers who aren't up to standard. We should, first and foremost, help them get up to standard and, if at the end of the day, they simply can't perform properly and adequately, we should help them find another career, in their interest, in the interest of the students and in the interest of the public.

But while this is designed to say, "This is going to improve education," the real move by this government is to fundamentally undermine it, moving substantial numbers of students into private schools. I would add, when I say this is a big move, the Fraser Institute, quite a conservative think-tank by anyone's definition, has said that this is the biggest move in education in North America. I think the National Citizens' Coalition said this is the biggest development in 100 years in education. They realize that the Harris-Flaherty plan to fund private schools is going to fundamentally change, by shifting students out of public and into private.

So while that's going on, the government wants to be able to say, "Listen, we're going to improve the standard and the quality of our teachers."

I say that, first and foremost, we need to focus on motivating and enthusing and making sure our teachers understand how important their job is and how much they are appreciated and how fundamentally essential they're going to be for the future of Ontario. That's where we should be focusing our major effort. Yes, we need to deal with the ones who need improvement and need to be perhaps counselled to a different career.

I go back to my own personal experience, as we all do. I was blessed to have in my schools, when I was going, highly motivated teachers. I've told this story before in the Legislature, but our football team had a 40-year reunion. I went back to that, and 40 years later, our three coaches were there—I could hardly believe it—Mr Trout, Mr Rice and Mr Leyshon. They remembered every one of us. They remembered the numbers we wore. They remembered every game. They remembered every score, often remembered the good things we did and periodically the not-so-good things. But my point is this: they were motivated, they were enthused, they had not had the enthusiasm knocked out of them by, frankly, a continued bureaucratic approach to it.

I might add that the Ontario high school basketball championships were held in Scarborough, the area I

represent. My old school, London Central, was at it, so I went out to watch it. The two coaches of the high school team now were the sons of my old coaches, Rice and Leyshon.

So I say to us that I think the fundamental problem that the government has is that they have decided that they are going to manage this school system from Queen's Park. They've decided that education is something like a factory, simply widgets going off the line. You have a funding formula for it and you have a bureaucratic format for evaluation. You essentially take the enthusiasm and creativity out.

I would say the problem's going to be that the really good young people that you want to go into teaching will look at it and say, "I'm not sure that's for me. I view myself not that way, but I view myself as a far more creative, innovative person. That looks like an environment that will stifle my creativity and my innovation." So while the rest of the world is heading to encouraging young people to get into education and to use their talents, we're simply, increasingly, more and more bureaucratic about it.

I might also add that rather than education over the past six years being seen as an enormously important part of Ontario that deserves to be celebrated and invested in and a source of investment that will pay off, we keep choking it, and at the colleges and universities even more so than at the elementary and secondary: \$500 million taken out of post-secondary. I think every single US state has substantially increased spending on post-secondary, every province has, and Ontario still is not back to where it was in 1995.

As I say, this bill is quite typical. If you read it, it's bureaucratic in nature. It's designed, I think, to try and deal with the 1% problem, but in doing so, you undermine the 99% that are doing a good job in our classrooms.

It's unfortunate that the government hasn't decided to deal with the important issues of: let's not fragment our public system by putting \$500 million into private schools; let's keep focusing on building our quality of education; let's also, rather than trying to stifle creativity, introduce some measures that enhance it so that our young people who are looking at a career will say, "I want to go into teaching," and our good teachers say, "I love being here."

1740

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Prue: I have just a couple of minutes. I listened with great interest to the previous speakers from the Liberal Party. Most of what they had to say, I cannot say that I disagree with it.

What the whole thing comes down to, and I think what they were trying to say—

Interjection.

Mr Prue: Couldn't hear you, George. I'm sure it was very intelligent.

The whole thing comes down to teacher testing, of course. What does that do but demoralize? I'm not going

to talk just about the demoralization of the teachers but the demoralization of the students. In all of this, we're not really talking a lot about the students.

In a family, if there is bickering between parents, usually the kids are among the first to know it, and they're the first to suffer from it. The same thing is happening in the schools. Where there is bickering between the teachers and the government or the union and the government, it is meted out and it ends up being the teachers' inability to teach the students or the students' difficulty in learning.

We see a lot of what's happening in the education system today, things that we should be more concerned about than whether or not there is teacher testing. Some 44% of our kids in school today have no music teachers. That has gone up this year to 50%. And 67% of them have no phys-ed teachers; 63% of them have no English-as-a-second-language teachers. That's the problem. The problem isn't that the ones we have haven't been tested; the problem is that there are not enough teachers out there doing the right thing. When they do try to do it, there seems to be confrontation. When there's confrontation, the students are the ones who suffer.

Go into the high schools today, any of them—I ask you to go into any of them—and ask the students of the last few years whether they think they're getting a good education. I'll tell you, they won't answer like I did 30 years ago. They're going to tell you they're not getting it and they're not happy, and that's the problem.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): I think it's important that we debate the bill and talk about the bill. I don't particularly care to get personal in this House, because I don't think there's a lot of place for personal charges and accusations, but I do sometimes take great offence to members opposite standing up and challenging, charging, convicting members on this side of the House that they don't spend any time in public school classrooms; they don't spend any time at public schools; that somehow we don't spend time at the schools or spend time at the schools because our children are at these schools in our riding or in the province of Ontario.

I speak very specifically. I don't want to be personal when it comes to these things, but when those kinds of charges are made, they're very personal by nature. They're suggesting that we don't care, we don't go, we won't show up. I've got to tell you, personally speaking, I've got two kids. They're both in the public school system. Every morning I drop them both off at their public school. I know their teachers, and I know them because I go to the parent-teacher night. I go see them play after school in their soccer teams and their basketball teams.

But what is truly personally offensive to me is to get the lecture from across the floor, and some of these members who lecture you about not going to these public schools that my children attend send their kids to private schools.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The reality is, it isn't funny. I don't mind having a debate on the issues, but challenge me to go into a public school, which I do every day of my life, and then you send your kid to a private school? How can you look at yourself and make this argument? It's not only insulting; it's that H word.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): One of the things I think most people notice now, since the Harris government has been in power, is the lack of morale that exists in the public school system. So many people who were working in the schools used to go to the school with a lot of enthusiasm, a lot of energy, a lot of interest, and with a desire to impart knowledge and provide some appropriate guidance to the students in the system. Today when you talk to people who entered the profession with so much enthusiasm and energy, looking forward to each day they were teaching, when you talk to those individuals, almost invariably they are turned off by the kind of policies the Harris government has imposed upon the school system and, even more so, the style in which this has been done.

Mr Speaker, I know you have people in your greater family—I heard you speak one day—who are members of the teaching profession. I think you said that one day. I certainly have had people within my greater family who are members of the teaching profession and enjoyed it very much.

Some of the people who are retiring today, it's interesting to note, retire the day they can. Instead of staying on in the profession, instead of wanting to continue on, because of the hassle they get these days, they tend to be turned off by this. The member for Scarborough-Agincourt painted that picture within the school system.

I think everyone agrees that there has to be an evaluation of those who are in the classroom. It takes place at the present time. I think the kind of evaluation that is being imposed upon them will pose some considerable problems. Particularly, one will have to look with care at how the government will implement having parents and students make the evaluation judgment that will determine whether or not a teacher will continue in the profession. I think professional evaluation is certainly necessary. I get concerned when I think that people with an axe to grind might be able to grind that axe.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): I listened with interest to the Minister of Labour attempting to suggest these challenges for people who might send their kids to private schools. But I noticed that in the two minutes he had, he didn't address a central concern, which is that we have seen from this government a new thrust. This is the government member who likes to say they're just doing what they said they would do, yet if we think back to their budget of this past spring, we see a government that has agreed to spend half a billion dollars a year on vouchers for private and religious schools—not something they went to the electorate on.

When we confront them on the fact that their bill, like the bill on trying to protect kids from sexual assault by teachers—when we try to suggest and highlight the ways

in which these bills fall short of providing equal protection and equal standards across both of these systems, one now publicly funded like the other, they fail to answer the questions.

The presentation made by my colleague was excellent. I think it highlighted the extent to which the Minister of Finance, through a tax credit proposal, was able to steal the responsibility for education from that minister, who sat silently while he did that. I want to ask that question: how can they in good conscience stand still while we see this two-tier system developed? One system, the public one, has all the measure of accountability. The private one is also the recipient of public dollars, yet the students and teachers in that system are not held to these high levels of accountability that they get all riled up about.

That's what I would have liked to hear from the Minister of Labour, but he chose instead to be silent on that rather important point.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt has two minutes to respond.

Mr Phillips: I'd like to thank the members from Beaches-East York, Etobicoke Centre, St Catharines and Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

I will focus a little bit on the Etobicoke Centre comments. I don't want to be personal either. I don't like that. I know you go every day with your two kids. One I know well because he played road hockey out in front of my door for a few days. But I would have thought you might have argued with Mr Flaherty when he brought in that \$500 million. I don't want to get angry about that, but I would have thought that because you are a supporter of the public system, you would have gone and told him, "Don't do this. You're going to destroy education." You're a good supporter of public education, but that didn't happen. I don't want to be personal, but I think you should have gone to Flaherty and said, "Listen, don't do this." I'm just saying to you that I know you're a big supporter of public education, and I'm not trying to be personal, but why did you allow Flaherty to bring in a \$500-million tax credit, a tax plan taking \$500 million of money that could have gone to help your children in those public schools, and now Flaherty's going to put it into private schools?

1750

I know that every day Mr Stockwell takes his two very fine young children to school, but I would have thought you might have said to Flaherty, "Don't do it. You're going to"—

Interjections.

Mr Smitherman: Silence, Stockwell.

Mr Phillips: Yes, silence by Mr Stockwell.

I would have thought you would have said to him, "This is a huge mistake, because I go every day. I'm in the schools. I know the quality there. You're taking \$500 million away from public schools." But I don't want to be personal. I think you should have told Flaherty that. That's what I feel.

Hon Mr Stockwell: That's not the issue, Gerry.

Mr Phillips: The minister says it's not the issue. It's exactly the issue: \$500 million out of public education

into private education. I would have thought you would have argued against that.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I am happy to have this opportunity to talk to the good citizens of Ontario once again, happy to speak to this bill called Bill 110, Quality in the Classroom Act, happy to say I'll have a full hour of which you, good citizens, will have the benefit of only about seven minutes today. But tune in on Monday. I suspect this will continue, and I'll have about 47 or 48 minutes, more or less.

You see, Speaker, I need all the time I can get. I was always in disagreement with our party and with the Conservative Party. They reduced the amount of time we have in this place. We have so much to say, but they have restricted our ability to speak in this place, and it's been, I believe, a sad, pitiful mistake that they made and, quite frankly, that we made.

I want to give you a little context before I get into this bill. I want to say for those of you who were watching the debate just a couple of minutes ago that New Democrats were unequivocal about their opposition to funding for private schools, which includes funding for religious schools and the private schools that are non-denominational. You might recall that some other party had an ambiguous position in that regard.

Interjection: Who would that be?

Mr Marchese: They're to the right of me. I don't want to name them by name. They of course had a different position, which they corrected in time, because even their own leader said he opposed private schools, even though during the last election they said they would consider funding for religious schools. But they corrected that.

Interjection: Are you talking about the Liberals?

Mr Marchese: And they, to the right of me, said, "We oppose funding for private schools, and we support them now as well." But New Democrats were unequivocal from the very beginning. We supported the Minister of Education when she said years ago that to fund private schools would take \$300 million out of our public system, and that would of course be part of the ruination of our public system. I supported the Minister of Education when she said that. I also supported the Premier when he said that to support—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: John, please. My goodness, John. I know you're talking to somebody else, but you're distracting me a little bit. If you're talking to me, I don't mind, but you're distracting me.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Talk to me.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Oh, you are?

The Acting Speaker: Order. Talk to me.

Mr Marchese: I'm talking through you, Speaker, to them.

When the Premier said that to fund private schools would take \$500 million—

The Acting Speaker: Order. I just want to say that, yes, you should address your comments through the Chair, and those others who want to address comments, either do it outside voluntarily or—the Chair recognizes the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Marchese: Speaker, I already said that I was speaking through you to them. I did.

So when the Premier said that to fund private schools would be a tragedy because \$500 million would come out of the public system—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: No, he said \$500 million, Chris—through you, Speaker. That's a whole lot of money.

Then both he and the Minister of Education said, "Ah, that would have been a loss to the public system had we done it the old way." In my query to her in committee I asked, "What would that old way have been?" She rambled on about something having nothing to do with the question, so I insisted; I asked the Minister of Education, "What would that old way have been that would have taken money from the public system, whereas your new system, the tax credit, doesn't take money out of the educational system; it comes from some other source?" The poor minister, of course, was caught in a difficult intellectual game because, you see, she knew that money would come out of the system.

Money comes into the pot and then, based on that pot, you divvy it up: some for education; some for health; some for community and social services; some for labour—not much there; some for environment—not much there either; and natural resources—not much there. But it's divvied up, right? So when you take 500 million bucks to give away to the private schools, where do you find that tree? Where do you pick it up from? It's got to come from somewhere. You can't take it out of health, because you've been taking a beating on that one. You can't take it out of there. You've decimated the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Culture—whatever you've got that's under your control that you don't want to govern. Where is the money going to come from except education? So when M^{me} Ecker said a couple of years ago that it would take \$300 million out of the public system, she was right.

I understand that now she has to play a game and say, "No, no, no. It will come from somewhere else." She says, "We support the public system and we support it strongly." So I say to the minister, how could you do that and take \$2.3 billion out of the system? It makes no sense. Through you, Speaker, if you take \$2.3 billion out of the system, you're not helping the educational system; you're helping to destroy it.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): Rubbish.

Mr Marchese: I know you don't agree, former Minister of Culture. I know you don't agree with that. I understand that. But I'm talking to the public. I'm talking to the good taxpayers who follow the proceedings of this place and love the political debate. I'm talking to them directly. I say to you, Speaker, "Alas, poor teachers, I

knew them well.” I no longer recognize the educational system. I no longer recognize the teachers, I no longer recognize the students, because since these Tories have come into power they have inalterably changed things beyond recognition. And they are right. When they came, they said, “We will change this place unlike you’ve ever

seen. You won’t be able to recognize what came before.” And they did.

The Acting Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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**Regulations and private bills /
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Rosario Marchese, Ted McMeekin, Bill Murdoch,
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Sources de carburants de remplacement**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Marie Bountrogianni
Marie Bountrogianni, James J. Bradley, Marilyn Churley, Doug
Galt, Steve Gilchrist, John Hastings,
John R. O'Toole, Jerry J. Ouellette, Ernie Parsons
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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