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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 5 December 2001

Mercredi 5 décembre 2001

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 5 December 2001

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 5 décembre 2001

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RENTAL HOUSING

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Today Toronto tenants celebrate a small victory. For the first time since the proclamation of the so-called Tenant Protection Act, I am pleased to report that today the city of Toronto has won the right to control the demolition and replacement of its very precious rental stock with the passage of the private bill, Bill Pr22.

In this era of historically low vacancy rates, it is critical that we make this possible. I'm not the only one who agrees. I've received a letter from Alan Redway, the former mayor of East York and Conservative housing minister.

On this issue he says, "As the member of Parliament for the federal riding of York East, and as federal Minister of State for Housing, I received innumerable representations from never-married senior women concerning the possible conversion of their apartment residences on Don Mills Road at Lawrence Avenue. Worse yet, they were also threatened with the complete demolition of those apartments. Those women were frightened and panicky with no alternative accommodation, given their extremely low pension income. I am sure that your heart, like mine, would have gone out to them, and that you, like me, would have done everything in your power to allow them to retain their rental apartment homes."

Alan Redway, a high-profile Conservative, is right. Provincial leaders can't just stand back and do nothing. The city of Toronto is unanimous in its conviction to act, and I am proud that the Liberal caucus, led by the bill's sponsor, Michael Bryant, cared enough to bring this bill forward. It's now up to the government to see it through. Ensure that this bill receives third reading before the House rises this year. It is simply the right thing to do.

SCUGOG CHORAL SOCIETY

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I rise in the House today to recognize the Scugog Choral Society on the occasion of its 25th anniversary. This group came about because citizens in Port Perry wanted to preserve an important part of their heritage.

Back in 1976 there was consideration being given to tearing down the century-old town hall. The Scugog Choral Society held a benefit to rescue this building. The rest, as they say, is history. Twenty-five years later, the Town Hall 1873 is still standing. In fact it's a focal point of the community. And the Scugog Choral Society is still singing. Grace Hastings, a popular teacher, both in the schools and in private music instruction, was one of the people who rallied behind the town hall project. She was the founder of the group. Today the Scugog Choral Society numbers 42 voices, with a membership of 56. A new project this year has been the very successful children's choir.

I would like to pay tribute to all those who have shared their musical gifts with the community in Port Perry. I'd like to mention Alice Lee, past president; Rick Huntington, president; vice-president Janet Rowland; and second vice Judy Anderson.

The choral society's latest production, which concluded on Saturday night, was a celebration of all the shows since 1976. Musical direction was supplied by Alissa Smith, with Nina Foxall the artistic director. We're looking forward to further performances in the coming year.

I commend the Scugog Choral Society for its efforts in preserving the Town Hall 1873 and keeping alive the important tradition of community choirs. We wish them many harmonious years in the future.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I want to be very clear today that this government's efforts to bring about Bill 130 to change the structure with regard to community care access centres is nothing short of this government's effort and attempt to silence its critics.

Today my colleague the member for Windsor West held a press conference. The president of the Ontario Association of Community Care Access Centres called upon this government to withdraw its Bill 130. It is, as I said, an effort to silence its critics. It's a slap in the face to CCACs across this province. It's a slap in the face to all those volunteers who sit on those boards. They come from the community they represent. They have done a very noteworthy job against all odds, underfunded by this government to the tune of \$175 million. In North York alone they have been underfunded by \$10 million.

It's no wonder that people are saying we have a crisis on our hands when it comes to community care access centres. They are saying out there to the government,

"Listen to us. There is a serious crisis. What you've done with community care access centres is a disgrace." In Ontario today, we have 70-year-olds who are required to care for their 90-year-old elderly parents. It is nothing short of a disgrace, and this government must take it seriously. This is a crisis. Take it seriously.

EVENTS IN SAULT STE MARIE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This is my chance for my annual commercial on behalf of Sault Ste Marie. I want people to know that it's snowing in the Soo and that the Searchmount Ski Resort is looking forward to a very exciting season of fun and frolic for all. We are inviting everybody to come on up and take advantage of the wonderful facilities that Sault Ste Marie has, the wonderful opportunity to ski, snow machine, ice fish, or whatever your heart desires.

I'm here today to also say that tonight the media studio is holding their annual Christmas party and charity auction. In the spirit of that and my community, a number of businesses have come together to offer a package that will be auctioned off tonight of two nights of accommodation, free flights to Sault Ste Marie and free skiing.

I want to read a little poem that my assistant, Susan Walters, wrote for this occasion.

You could visit Rome
or see gay Paree,
But nothing is better
than Sault Ste Marie.

Especially in winter
where skiing is great
And with these two passes
you won't have to wait.

There's two for the airplane
with a two-night stay
And with added lift passes
you'll have a GREAT day.

So come on up to Sault Ste Marie and enjoy the skiing. Go to the auction tonight, bid on this package and have yourself a good time.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington): Today I want to recognize the courage of a firefighter from Waterloo-Wellington whose quick thinking and actions saved a man's life. Lieutenant Joseph Kelly of the Woolwich-Elmira Fire Department was returning from a business trip on Highway 86, east of Elmira, when he came upon a collision between a car and a truck that resulted in a fireball. Without hesitation, he and another citizen on the scene risked their lives and pulled the driver of the car to safety.

Using a packsack as a shield, Joseph Kelly then attempted to approach the truck, but the heat from the fire

was overwhelming and the packsack started to burn in his hands. Soon after they pulled the man to safety, the car exploded into a firestorm.

These actions earned Joseph Kelly the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery, which was presented to him at Queen's Park on November 13 by the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the Honourable Hilary Weston. Lieutenant Kelly was acknowledged for exceptional courage, and his actions remind us of the courage and sacrifice that firefighters bring to the job in Ontario. In Waterloo-Wellington, his actions also remind us of the importance of volunteer service, because Lieutenant Kelly is a volunteer firefighter.

I know this Legislature recognizes the great contributions that all of our volunteer firefighters make in our communities. I was honoured to work with my colleagues here to support their efforts when we passed my private member's bill in 1994 that enabled volunteer firefighters to identify their personal vehicles by using a flashing green light. In 1998, my private member's bill to allow for the maximum compensation for volunteer firefighters if they are injured in the line of duty was adopted into government legislation and passed into law as well.

Lieutenant Kelly went beyond his duty, and this brave act reminds us why firefighters, especially volunteer firefighters, are an inspiration to us all.

1340

JAKE LAMOUREUX

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): Yesterday I had the pleasure of joining my constituent Mr Jake Lamoureux as he was awarded the prestigious Order of Ontario for his many contributions to our community.

Mr Lamoureux's dedication is an inspiration to all those who know him. His commitment to helping others is even more amazing as he was diagnosed with bone cancer at the age of 19. Despite his disabilities, Jake has dedicated his life to helping others. Over the years he has been involved in over a dozen organizations, including the children's treatment centre, the United Way, the Agape Centre and the children's aid society. He has been an exceptional fundraiser and has raised in excess of \$2 million over the years.

Jake's exceptional volunteerism has not gone unnoticed. He has received numerous community awards, including Citizen of the Year in 1988 by the chamber of commerce. That same year he was awarded the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship and, just last year, the Order of Canada.

Now I am proud to say that he can add the Order of Ontario to his outstanding accomplishments. I know the community would not have been the same without Jake's kindness and generosity. He has made a difference in the lives of many in our area. I know the community as a whole joins me in congratulating Jake for his many contributions to my community over the years.

DIVERSICARE CANADA

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): With great pleasure I take this opportunity to recognize the Rockcliffe Centre long-term-care facility, which is in my riding of Scarborough Centre. Rockcliffe is managed by Diversicare Canada Management Services Co. This company operates 14 long-term-care facilities and 23 retirement residences across Canada.

On October 17 the National Quality Institute presented Diversicare Canada with a Quality Award, for excellence. Diversicare won this award by meeting a very stringent set of criteria. NQI measures all aspects of a corporation's performance, from leadership and customer service focus to continuous improvement.

Diversicare has an annual conference that promotes the exchange of best practices within their organization around the theme of "I Can Do It Better."

This is the first time a company in the long-term care and retirement industry has received this prestigious award in the NQI's 17-year history.

It is important to take the time to say congratulations. The excellent service that Rockcliffe provides to my community has made an example of how government and the private sector can work together to provide new solutions for our health care system.

Congratulations to all.

RENTAL HOUSING

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): I am pleased to report to this House that a non-partisan moment took place. Justice prevailed over partisan politics today in the private bills committee. Thanks to that effort, in the midst of a housing drought we're going to preserve that precious commodity of affordable housing stock.

Congratulations to MPP David Caplan for his bright idea for me to bring this private bill forward to city council in the first place. Congratulations to city council and their excellent staff who presented before the committee in a way that left the committee with no other choice but to support this private bill.

Congratulations to the councillors who unanimously supported this resolution, without which I don't think this would have happened. Thank you to councillors Mihevc and Walker in St Paul's for their great support and initiative in this regard. Above all, to the citizens of St Paul's and across Toronto, congratulations for participating in a remarkable democratic moment, packing the committee room and letting your voice be known. Again, after your voice was heard, there was no other result but victory for tenants in Toronto.

I say to those Tory leadership candidates: reaffirm your commitment to the city of Toronto. Reaffirm your political clout. Make sure no political games are played to stop this bill from eventually passing. Congratulations to everybody in this House. This is a great day for democracy.

RAMADAN

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): The Muslim community in my riding of Thornhill and throughout the world has been observing a month of fasting and prayer during Ramadan, which began on November 16 of this year. Muslims regard Ramadan as a time for inner reflection, devotion to Allah and self-control. Ramadan is also a time of intensive worship, reading of the Koran, giving to charity, doing good deeds and the purifying of one's behaviour.

Ramadan will end with the celebration of the feast of Eid-ul-Fitr, which will fall in mid-December. On the day of Eid, Muslims are encouraged to enjoy a sweet snack and to express thanks to Allah by means of distributing alms among the poor and by offering special prayers. On this day, gifts are also given to children and loved ones.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the children at As-Sadiq Islamic School in my riding of Thornhill for taking part in the competition for designing the Eid-ul-Fitr cards. They were very creative and well done. I will be sending the cards to members of the Muslim community in Thornhill.

I would like to wish members of the Muslim community in my riding of Thornhill and across the province of Ontario a very happy and joyous Eid.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

SERVICES D'URGENCE

M^{me} Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier) : En tant que députée dans la nouvelle ville d'Ottawa, je viens déplorer le fait que les services d'urgence à Ottawa soient compromis.

Ottawa's emergency services are being seriously compromised by the decision of the government of Ontario to operate the Ottawa-area ambulance service dispatch network independently of the rest of the emergency response operations. Efficiency and common sense dictate that the full coordination of the emergency services must mean full integration of those services. The mayor and city councillors of Ottawa are adamantly opposed to the current provincial proposal to separate dispatch services from the other components of emergency services.

The voices of the citizens of Ottawa are now also being heard. There is widespread opposition to the proposed changes, and confidence in the viability of emergency services throughout the nation's capital is rapidly diminishing. Moreover, every expert in the field of community safety advocates the integration of emergency services.

Why is this government refusing to listen to the experts? Why is this government ignoring the wishes of the citizens of Ottawa and their elected leaders? Why is this government placing the lives of residents of Ottawa at risk? Remember, the safety of the people of Ottawa must come first.

VISITORS

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Today I introduce Joanna Van Dorp, sitting right beside you there, one of our pages. Her school is here today to make sure she's working hard: Timothy Christian School in Owen Sound.

By the way, they'd like to thank the House for the tax credits they will be getting; they are a Christian school.

Mr Carl DeFaria (Mississauga East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent of the House to move third reading of Bill 120, An Act to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Portuguese heritage in Ontario, and to have the question put immediately, without further debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Mr DeFaria is seeking unanimous consent of the House to move third reading of Bill 120. Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

CELEBRATION OF PORTUGUESE
HERITAGE ACT, 2001

LOI DE 2001 SUR LA FÊTE
DU PATRIMOINE PORTUGAIS

Mr DeFaria moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to proclaim a day and a month to celebrate Portuguese heritage in Ontario / Projet de loi 120, Loi proclamant un jour et un mois de fête du patrimoine portugais en Ontario.

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

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

1350

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we begin, we have with us today in the Speaker's gallery Danielle Campo, one of last evening's recipients of the Order of Ontario. Sixteen-year-old Danielle represented Canada at the 2000 Paralympic Games in Sydney, Australia, where she captured three gold medals and one silver, setting a world record in the women's 100-metre freestyle. Danielle has raised over \$1 million for muscular dystrophy. Again, we welcome our honoured guest.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the 17th report of the standing committee on government agencies.

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

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
JUSTICE AND SOCIAL POLICY

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

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act to require the taking of blood samples to protect victims of crime, emergency service workers, good Samaritans and other persons / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé pour exiger le prélèvement d'échantillons de sang afin de protéger les victimes d'actes criminels, les travailleurs des services d'urgence, les bons samaritains et d'autres personnes.

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

Pursuant to an order of the House dated November 28, 2001, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON
REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on regulations and private bills and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr3, An Act to revive 1268519 Ontario Inc.

Bill Pr22, An Act respecting the demolition of rental housing units in the City of Toronto.

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

Mr Marchese: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm asking for unanimous consent from this House. Given that we just passed second reading and it was almost unanimously supported in committee, I ask that we proceed on third reading of Bill Pr3, An Act respecting the demolition of rental housing units in the City of Toronto.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On the same point of order, Mr Speaker: Mr Bryant's bill, Bill Pr22, was introduced by Mr Bryant, and Mr Bryant took it through the committee process. I believe, though, that the bill is Pr22 in the name of Mr Bryant, the member for St Paul's, a member of the official opposition Liberal caucus.

The Speaker: One little problem. It hasn't had second reading yet. You would need to ask for unanimous consent for second reading, if the member would like to do that. You asked for third. If you could make it for second reading.

Mr Marchese: I seek unanimous consent for this House to proceed to second reading of Bill Pr22 and hope we would have the support of this House to do that.

The Speaker: Just so everyone's clear, that bill is An Act respecting the demolition of rental housing units in the City of Toronto.

Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF OTTAWA ACT (TAXICABS), 2001

Mr Guzzo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr24, An Act respecting the City of Ottawa.

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

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

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

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

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

Hon Mrs Ecker: I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following change be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr McMeekin and Mr Colle exchange places in order of precedence such that Mr McMeekin assumes ballot item 37 and Mr Colle assumes ballot item 38.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VOLUNTEERS

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I am seeking unanimous consent of the House for each caucus to have some brief comments about the fact that today is International Volunteer Day.

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

Hon Mr Jackson: In 1985, the United Nations General Assembly designated December 5 as International Volunteer Day, a day dedicated to recognizing and celebrating volunteers. It is especially significant today, not only because it is also the International Year of Volunteers but because of recent tragedies in the United States. They remind us of just how valuable volunteers are and

what a difference they make to our communities, our province and our country.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, volunteers opened their homes to stranded passengers and organized fundraising activities for victims' families. A number of volunteers even went to New York to see for themselves the atrocities of September 11 and offer their volunteer services in whatever way they could.

Today we have in the House one of those volunteers who went to ground zero to offer his special skills as well as to offer comfort, solace and encouragement. He happens also to be from the riding of Burlington. I believe that he, like other volunteers throughout Ontario who went to ground zero, represents the spirit of volunteerism in this province and exemplifies the compassion and the commitment that make our communities strong.

Terry Clark, the director of family services for the Salvation Army in Burlington, was in Manhattan from October 5 to October 18, where he worked 12- to 18-hour shifts with colleagues dispensing food and refreshments to the emergency service personnel. He told us that the site, the ground, was so hot that people working at ground zero would come out with their boots literally melting off their feet. Terry and his crew would remove their boots, wash and powder their feet and give them new socks and boots. In referring to his time there in his own modest way, Terry said that it was a privilege for him to help and to be of service.

There were also four people from the Burlington Red Cross who went to New York to lend a hand to our neighbours: Ella Davidson, Sergio Bollito, Judy Barlett and Bill Ferris. They couldn't be here with us today because they are in different parts of the world, volunteering. In fact, Bill Ferris is still volunteering his time in New York.

Please join me in honouring and applauding Terry Clark and his many colleagues for their generosity and volunteer spirit.

Applause.

Hon Mr Jackson: Such committed volunteerism has a long-standing tradition in our province, with more than 2.3 million unsung heroes of all ages helping to keep our communities vibrant and healthy, making this province a much richer place to live.

There is an abundance of stories of dedicated volunteerism across our province, and as I have travelled this province I never cease to be amazed at the efforts these volunteers give. Just this year alone, 8,124 individuals from across our province received Ontario volunteer service awards to commemorate the International Year of Volunteers, and we added a new 50-plus-years-of-service pin for seniors who are recognized on our on-line Volunteer Hall of Fame.

1400

I cannot detail the work of all the outstanding volunteers in our province, but I would like to highlight just a few. Erin Beckett, from Amherstburg, was just 12 years old when she organized a successful elementary school Valentine's dance and raised \$757 to refurbish the

Nazrey African Methodist Episcopal Church, the first black heritage building to be protected as a national historical site in Canada.

Heather Menzies, 18, of Petrolia, a top academic student and an athlete with four part-time jobs, remains a tireless volunteer as a companion to seniors at nursing homes, an assistant with mentally handicapped children and a coach for a boys' soccer team.

Twenty very special Ontario citizens received outstanding achievement awards in volunteerism in our province this year, each of them selfless acts of devotion to the service of others. Wendy Cook, of Orangeville, is typical. Wendy was determined that children with disabilities should have a chance to play in a local park. Her daughter, Hailey, six, could use the swings, but Keaton, aged three, who had special needs, had to sit on the sidelines—a heartbreaking sight for any mother. Wendy determined that Orangeville should have a fully accessible playground, and after months of lobbying for support and funds, Every Kid's Park became a reality in September and all the children in that community can finally go out and play.

Against such a backdrop of dedication from so many volunteers, you can understand why our government has responded by committing more than \$22 million to support and strengthen volunteerism in our province since 1995, with an unprecedented \$15-million investment in the International Year of Volunteers. Among the initiatives, we supported the 47 community volunteer summits across the province—and I want to thank all members of the House for participating—bringing together local businesses, non-profit organizations and government to discuss ideas on working together to enhance the community and individual lives.

A new partnership, Ontario's Promise, was launched by Premier Mike Harris, a program that encourages more local businesses, government and volunteer organizations to work on behalf of children and youth.

This government is also working with high-tech companies to expand the reach and impact of technology to benefit the voluntary sector. In fact, this afternoon I will be unveiling Making IT Work for Volunteers, a \$600,000 partnership program with the Information Technology Association of Canada for Ontario.

We salute Ontario's dedicated army of volunteers. They deserve our utmost respect and our sincere gratitude.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On behalf of Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal caucus, I'm delighted to respond to the minister's statement on the International Year of Volunteers, 2001.

We're of course honoured by the presence of Terry Clark, who has come today, and the thousands of others, all those volunteers in Ontario. You've made us proud to be Canadians. We know there can be no higher calling than to help others, and there are a number of organizations in Ontario that should receive special mention because of their yeoman service in terms of providing volunteer services. The cancer society, the Heart and Stroke

Foundation, with 45,000 volunteers, and the March of Dimes all rely extensively on volunteers because they ensure that funds are raised and education on these issues that are their concern flows to the larger society.

The hospital sector alone relies heavily on volunteers to ensure that all parties and all patients are cared for—60,000 men, women and teenagers volunteer their time and compassion in Ontario hospitals. This provides an estimated four million hours of service to the patients. If they were paid \$15 an hour, this would add up to \$60 million worth of free time. Volunteers in hospitals also raise more than \$20 million a year for hospital equipment, community services, education and outreach. This is accomplished through sales in the gift shops, bazaars, antique fairs, lottery ticket sales etc.

In this blessed country, we have a number of volunteer services and a great tradition of selfless service through alliance clubs, Rotarians, Shriners, our churches, lodges, temples, synagogues. I myself was raised in the tradition of Kiwanis International, whose motto is "To serve with purpose." In the very act of giving, something happens to the giver. In giving, we ourselves are transformed as well.

While we should encourage any kind of volunteerism, there should exist a special category of volunteers: those who help the poor, the unemployed, the sick and indeed total strangers. I am reminded of the good Samaritan parable in the Bible. There was a person who picked up a total stranger, cared for him, took him into an inn, paid for him and left without expecting anything in return.

You say, "People don't care any more. People don't do that any more because it's too dangerous." Well, we're wrong. I used to have a corner office just underneath the Premier's office in the Whitney Block. Occasionally I would stay late. When I did I saw a number of volunteers who looked after the homeless in their miserable condition, providing them with coffee, blankets and food. The good Samaritan still lives.

While we celebrate today the achievements of the International Year of Volunteers and all those volunteers in Ontario, I am reminded of the record of this government. Did you know that presently we're debating a bill that will fire volunteers from our community care access centres? That's an imposition we should not and cannot adhere to. I'm reminded of a further record. In 1984 there was the International Year of Disabled Persons. As Liberals, we recognized that in 1986. Why did it take that long? Because in 1984 the PC government did not wish to acknowledge the establishment of the International Year of Disabled Persons.

Today we also have the Advisory Council on Disability Issues eliminated. Why? We don't know. But one thing is for certain: the government has seen the light and the government has decided, with great fanfare, to get back and say, "We will re-establish the disability office and re-establish disability service."

I am also reminded of the recognition award for volunteers the minister spoke to, the five-year, 10-year, 15-year, 25-year and indeed the 50-year anniversary pins.

What happened when it was established? Liberals and the city of Toronto had to write many letters in order to get this thing organized, in order to get the volunteer services established. We dragged this government, kicking and screaming, into the 20th century to recognize our volunteers. So there is another record that we can go to.

Let's remember why volunteerism is needed in Ontario today. It is important because the homeless situation in our province has been exacerbated by this government's contribution to the housing crisis. Volunteers are needed to help feed and shelter the homeless through church organizations such as St Francis Table; further, because our schools are short on teachers, because parent volunteers are helping now in the classroom to ensure the larger class sizes are manageable.

More volunteers are needed because an increasing number of seniors and working poor are visiting food banks for help. Volunteers are needed to donate and hand out appropriate food to the working poor. It is clear that this government has introduced some programs which will increase volunteers. We need you. We're proud of you.

One thing is clear. As volunteers are needed in the future, we know that this government must do its part. You too must encourage volunteerism, do more than simply give out pins. You must open your doors and then try to ensure that volunteers are being looked after and encouraged so that the future of Ontario can be proud of its tradition.

1410

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): New Democrats stand proud today to honour on this day, the International Volunteer Day, all those men and women, young and old, who put in a great deal of time in the service of creating a decent society. We know that volunteerism is the hallmark of democracy. Without them, this democracy would not be much better. It would not be so great without them.

More and more people are volunteering their time because they need to. They're being taxed because they're working double time and triple time at the job of volunteerism. Why? Because governments are abdicating responsibilities for Ontarians, for this society. You volunteers, you Ontarians are the real heroes. You contribute billions and billions of dollars of your time. This government knows that your time is valuable. It's worth money. They call upon you day in and day out to volunteer more and more of your free time so that governments spend less and less of their tax dollars and responsibilities to do the right thing. That's what I decry. We're not ashamed to recognize the work of volunteers. We recognize them day in and day out. But they ought not to replace the obligations of government.

More and more volunteers are replacing governments when they shirk their responsibilities. So I have no time for this government or this minister when they stand here today praising volunteers. I have no time for it because I see more and more of them taxed to death, providing the work that they should be doing. They are tired of filling

in the gaps for this government. Volunteers are tired of picking up your mess. I'm tired of it. If I'm tired, they too must be equally tired of it. They are saying, "What is the obligation of government, except and if not to do the things that volunteers are doing in so many cases?"

In our school boards, parents are collecting \$36 million for basic supplies, something the Minister of Education should provide. Our illustrious Minister of Finance should be forking out the money for those parents, for those students, yet parents are raising more and more of their money, out of their own pocket, for basic things in the schools. That's wrong. That is absolutely wrong.

How many out-of-the-cold programs do we have in this society, volunteers helping those who are homeless? We, you especially, can praise these folks for volunteering their time and their lives to help those people who are homeless. But what is your obligation to them? That responsibility falls more and more on volunteers. People are in shelters in record numbers. Some shelters simply cannot house those who come in seeking help. They are being kicked out because they have no room. What is the government's response to this? "More and more volunteers should open their doors to those who seek shelter," as opposed to this illustrious Minister of Finance finding the money to be able to provide for those seeking shelter. He's got \$2.3 billion worth of money to give to the corporate sector because they're so needy and so desperate and he has no money for those seeking shelter, no money for the homeless, no money for those parents who are raising money for basic supplies.

Minister of Finance, you ought to stand up and ask forgiveness from those Ontarians, as opposed to the hubris that you express here day in and day out about your tax policies and how great they are.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: The Minister of Finance says I don't understand. I'm glad he understands the plight of those who seek from you the support they desperately need. I say to the Minister of Finance, I am tired and volunteers are getting awfully tired of filling in the gaps for you and your government. While I recognize volunteers because they are truly the real heroes, I tell you they don't want to replace you. They want governments to have that obligation, and not have the volunteers bear the burden of filling in the holes for you.

VISITORS

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to introduce and welcome several members of the Ontario Principals' Council who are with us in the gallery today: the president, Martha Foster; the executive director, Mike Benson; president-elect Helen Spence; vice-president Doug Acton; and executive members-at-large Wendy Fairly and Ian McFarlane. I'd like to welcome them to this Legislature.

ERIC BROWN

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like the indulgence of the House for a moment to inform the House that we have a page here from Windsor West, named Eric Brown, who was called home two days ago, and last night, unfortunately, his mother passed away. On behalf of the whole House, we extend our deepest sympathies to the Brown family while they get through these very difficult and trying days. The funeral will be held on Friday, and we extend and wish our very best to Eric especially.

VISITORS

Mrs Tina R. Molinari (Thornhill): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: As today is International Volunteer Day, I think it's appropriate to recognize, in the government members' gallery, Michael LaFlamme, who is a volunteer on the board of directors of the East Metro Youth Services, and Clair Fainer, on the board.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On this very important day when we do recognize volunteers, I'd like to recognize the volunteer who is the chair of the community care access centre in our city, Bob Fera, and he'd like to continue volunteering.

DEFERRED VOTES

RESPONSIBLE CHOICES FOR GROWTH
AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2001LOI DE 2001 SUR DES CHOIX RÉFLÉCHIS
FAVORISANT LA CROISSANCE
ET LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 127, An Act to implement measures contained in the Budget and to implement other initiatives of the Government / Projet de loi 127, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures énoncées dans le budget de 2001 ainsi que d'autres initiatives du gouvernement.

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

The division bells rang from 1417 to 1422.

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

Ayes

| | | |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Hardeman, Ernie | O'Toole, John |
| Baird, John R. | Harris, Michael D. | Ouellette, Jerry J. |
| Barrett, Toby | Hodgson, Chris | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Hudak, Tim | Sampson, Rob |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Jackson, Cameron | Snobelen, John |
| Clark, Brad | Johns, Helen | Spina, Joseph |
| Clement, Tony | Kells, Morley | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Coburn, Brian | Klees, Frank | Stewart, R. Gary |

| | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Cunningham, Dianne | Marland, Margaret |
| DeFaria, Carl | Martiniuk, Gerry |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Maves, Bart |
| Ecker, Janet | Mazzilli, Frank |
| Elliott, Brenda | Miller, Norm |
| Flaherty, Jim | Molinari, Tina R. |
| Galt, Doug | Munro, Julia |
| Gilchrist, Steve | Murdoch, Bill |
| Gill, Raminder | Mushinski, Marilyn |
| Guzzo, Garry J. | Newman, Dan |

| |
|---------------------|
| Stockwell, Chris |
| Tascona, Joseph N. |
| Tilson, David |
| Tsubouchi, David H. |
| Turnbull, David |
| Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Wilson, Jim |
| Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Wood, Bob |
| Young, David |

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

Nays

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Crozier, Bruce | McGuinty, Dalton |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Curling, Alvin | McLeod, Lyn |
| Bisson, Gilles | Di Cocco, Caroline | McMeekin, Ted |
| Bountrogianni, Marie | Dombrowsky, Leona | Parsons, Ernie |
| Boyer, Claudette | Duncan, Dwight | Patten, Richard |
| Bradley, James J. | Gerretsen, John | Peters, Steve |
| Brown, Michael A. | Gravelle, Michael | Phillips, Gerry |
| Bryant, Michael | Hoy, Pat | Prue, Michael |
| Caplan, David | Kormos, Peter | Papatello, Sandra |
| Churley, Marilyn | Kwinter, Monte | Ramsay, David |
| Cleary, John C. | Marchese, Rosario | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Colle, Mike | Martel, Shelley | Smitherman, George |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Martin, Tony | |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 54; the nays are 38.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

FOOD SAFETY
AND QUALITY ACT, 2001
LOI DE 2001 SUR LA QUALITÉ
ET LA SALUBRITÉ DES ALIMENTS

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 87, An Act to regulate food quality and safety and to make complementary amendments and repeals to other Acts / Projet de loi 87, Loi visant à réglementer la qualité et la salubrité des aliments, à apporter des modifications complémentaires à d'autres lois et à en abroger d'autres.

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

The division bells rang from 1426 to 1431.

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

Ayes

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Harris, Michael D. | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Baird, John R. | Hodgson, Chris | Sampson, Rob |
| Barrett, Toby | Hudak, Tim | Snobelen, John |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Jackson, Cameron | Spina, Joseph |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Johns, Helen | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Clark, Brad | Kells, Morley | Stewart, R. Gary |
| Clement, Tony | Klees, Frank | Stockwell, Chris |
| Coburn, Brian | Marland, Margaret | Tascona, Joseph N. |
| Cunningham, Dianne | Martiniuk, Gerry | Tilson, David |
| DeFaria, Carl | Maves, Bart | Tsubouchi, David H. |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Mazzilli, Frank | Turnbull, David |
| Ecker, Janet | Miller, Norm | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Elliott, Brenda | Molinari, Tina R. | Wilson, Jim |

Galt, Doug
Gilchrist, Steve
Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hardeman, Ernie

Munro, Julia
Mushinski, Marilyn
Newman, Dan
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Witmer, Elizabeth
Wood, Bob
Young, David

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic
Bartolucci, Rick
Bisson, Gilles
Bountrigiani, Marie
Boyer, Claudette
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Bryant, Michael
Caplan, David
Churley, Marilyn
Cleary, John C.
Colle, Mike
Cordiano, Joseph

Crozier, Bruce
Curling, Alvin
Di Cocco, Caroline
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duncan, Dwight
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Hoy, Pat
Kormos, Peter
Kwinter, Monte
Marchese, Rosario
Martel, Shelley
Martin, Tony

McGuinty, Dalton
McLeod, Lyn
McMeekin, Ted
Parsons, Ernie
Patten, Richard
Peters, Steve
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Ramsay, David
Ruprecht, Tony
Smitherman, George
Sorbara, Greg

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 52; the nays are 39.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. On November 18, you said that as much as \$5 billion would be “immediately”—that is your word—“slashed from the budget.” Since that time, you’ve had three full cabinet meetings and you must have had a dozen meetings of the various cabinet subcommittees. Despite all of this, we have heard absolutely nothing further with respect to your intention regarding cuts. What worries me is that you are keeping the details of these cuts secret until this Legislature rises so that you might do those and avoid public scrutiny.

You may not believe this, Minister, but I believe that Ontario’s families have a right to know what you’re thinking of doing when it comes to cuts, and specifically when those cuts will take effect. I think that’s a matter that should be debated in this House. Why don’t we begin this debate right now? What exactly are you cutting, and when exactly will those cuts take effect?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): First of all, it would be nice if the Leader of the Opposition would put things in the proper context. The context I was talking about was the possible worst scenario of about \$5 billion. There are a number of projections currently on the economy, as he well knows. I must say that people tend to forget what bad shape this province was in in 1994, and certainly in

1995, when we came into government. At that time, just to put the context here, previous governments, the government of the NDP and the government of the Liberals, were spending about \$1 million an hour to service the amount of interest owing on the amount the government owed. It’s important for us right now to take a very prudent and cautious approach. We were determined to do this back in 1995, to make sure this government followed this type of prudent and cautious approach to government. We’re doing this type of planning currently.

Mr McGuinty: I wonder if the minister might be able, at some point in time, ideally, to take some responsibility for lending direction to a fiscal policy for this millennium. You said you were going to immediately cut \$5 billion from the budget. You’re not telling us what you’re looking at.

Let me tell you what we’ve heard is on the table. Listen to this, Minister: (1) a public sector wage freeze; (2) delisting of podiatry, chiropractic and more physiotherapy services; (3) a further delay of municipal infrastructure grants to upgrade the safety of our drinking water and highways; (4) \$200 million in cuts to child care; and (5) user fees for our parents and grandparents when it comes to their home care and medication.

Minister, next week this Legislature will rise and likely won’t sit again for some four months. That means there will be no questions during that time from the opposition. That may suit you, but it won’t suit our working families. I ask you, can you deny that any or all of those five items which I just listed for you are on the table as part of your cuts?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: The Leader of the Opposition has absolutely no idea what he’s talking about, absolutely none whatsoever. First of all, nowhere did I ever say we’re looking to cut \$5 billion from government. That is blatantly untrue, and he knows full well it is.

What I did indicate was that it is the responsibility of government to look at very responsible and prudent ways to make sure that as we enter next year—and I must correct him as well, that this year we’ll have a balanced budget; it’s very clear we will—we’re doing some planning for the year 2002-03. I think it’s very prudent for us to look forward to doing these things. I was very clear when I spoke about these things: yes, we’ll be looking at some expenditure controls; we’ll be looking for new revenue streams as well and the possible privatization of items. It’s important for government to examine all these things in order for us to ensure for the people of this province we have a balanced budget and we continue along with economic—

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

Mr McGuinty: Minister, you say that you have to make cuts. We say you could easily cut your \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut, you could cut your private school tax credit and you could finally, once and for all, cut out your partisan political advertising. When it comes to those other things that you feel you have to cut, why don’t you come clean with the people of Ontario? Why don’t you

tell us exactly what you're looking at? Why do you want to wait until this House recesses and then you have four months, under cover of the intersession period, to shrink from your responsibility to be accountable for the cuts you want to make? I put five specific things on the table that I've been hearing about. You haven't denied that a single one of those is in fact not on the table.

I'll give you another opportunity. If these are not on the table, Minister, and you tell us you're looking at upward to \$5 billion in cuts, tell me exactly, so that Ontario families will know, what cuts are you looking at?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: To the Leader of the Opposition, for the third time, nowhere have I ever said we're looking at \$5 billion in cuts. I hope you understand and appreciate that and listen for a change. We've never said that.

Secondly, this is proper budget planning, something you did not do when you were in government; clearly you did not, because you had a runaway deficit and in fact you had two sets of books which the NDP had to inherit. We are doing some proper planning. We want to make sure we continue the economic growth. We want to take a prudent and cautious approach to putting the books of this government in order. We have a commitment to do it, we have done that and we will continue to do that in the future.

1440

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition):

My question is for the associate minister of health. Minister, your hostile takeover of home care is wrong, and it's going to hurt our sick, more particularly our parents and our grandparents. I'm not sure how many friends you have when it comes to this legislation, but let me tell you what I've been hearing. The vice-chair of the Waterloo CCAC calls your legislation "a slap in the face." The board of the Thunder Bay CCAC wonders if you have "lost your mind." The Toronto board says that this is "nothing short of a gag order." Bob Fera, former PC candidate and founding president of the Ontario CCAC association, spent four hours getting here today to tell you that this is some of the worst health care planning that he has ever seen.

Minister, the response from around the province from those people who defend the interests of our parents and grandparents is unanimous: it is a resounding no to your legislation. Will you do the right thing? Withdraw this bill and start over.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): Let me say that on this side we have heard from the people of Ontario who are concerned about the community services they are getting. As a result of that, we have moved forward on a number of different fronts to ensure that we can provide the best quality service to the people of Ontario when it comes to community services. We've looked at the governance model in the legislation. We've looked at management issues and accountability, which we can do without legis-

lation. We're moving forward to ensure that community health care is the best that it can be in Ontario.

Mr McGuinty: I can see why you may choose to describe it as moving forward, but that's not how our parents and our grandparents and those volunteers who work for our CCACs see it. They see it as a step backward. They see it as an effort on your part to do nothing more than to take those people who are volunteers in our communities, who stand up to you and your government's policies and your cuts and your desire to introduce user fees and who defend our parents and our grandparents and their interests when it comes to getting care in their homes, because you're discharging them quicker and sicker than ever before from hospitals, and you want to take those people and replace them with government appointees. That's what this legislation is all about. It is nothing more complicated than that. Why don't you do the right thing? Admit that this is really what it's all about and withdraw this bill.

Hon Mrs Johns: Let me say that everyone knows that this government has made a commitment to take volunteers from the community and put them on the boards. We have made a commitment that there will be community people involved in this. All we're saying is that they're going to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Let me say that this government has made a commitment to community services. We've moved the budget from approximately \$600,000 in 1995 to \$1.17 billion without one red cent from the federal government, and shame on them.

Mr McGuinty: Why don't you just be honest with Ontarians? Tell them that you are discharging people from Ontario hospitals quicker and sicker than ever before. You have driven up, skyrocketed the demand for CCAC services. In the past, 30% of CCAC clients were coming from the hospital; today 70% of CCAC clients are coming from hospitals.

If you won't listen to me, listen to Mrs Pauline Ralph. She just sent me a letter to my constituency office. This is what she says about your funding: "My husband suffers from Alzheimer's disease. I wanted to care for him at home but with all the cutbacks I couldn't get the help I needed. He is now in a long-term-care facility. I still go every day to help feed him. It is costing me much more in time, health and financially. It is a hardship that at 77 years of age I could do without." You can give me all the gobbledygook and bureaucratise you want with respect to your additional funding. This is what is happening on the ground.

Your bill is all about shutting down and shutting up community volunteers who work in our CCACs. Do the right thing and withdraw this bill.

Hon Mrs Johns: Not one red cent from the federal government.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The member for Windsor West, come to order, please. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mrs Johns: The community recognizes across the province that this government has increased the funding in community care access centres by 72% without one red cent from the federal government. They promised a plan that would give us a national home care program, and where is it? Not one red cent.

This government has had a commitment to community services. We have increased this budget substantially. We're going to use volunteers to make sure this program continues to run. This government has such a commitment to community services that we're—

The Speaker: The minister's time is up.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have a question for the Minister of Energy. News reports suggest that the priorities, planning and communications board of your government will decide tomorrow to set a date for the electricity market opening. You've tried to flog this dirty deal by promising lower rates, but last week Stanley Hartt, chairman of Salomon Smith Barney, the very company that did the due diligence on your privatization of Bruce power station, said this: "We shouldn't be fixated on keeping prices low." He said that prices should rise in a free market economy when demand outstrips supply. The question is, do you agree with him, your own adviser on the Bruce deal, that higher electricity rates are desirable?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Energy, Science and Technology): I certainly would agree with Mr Hartt to the extent that, yes, if demand does outstrip supply we would find ourselves in a California-type situation. Thank God this government is planning ahead and we are not California.

The idea is that since the Liberals and NDP left us \$38 billion in debt with the old Ontario Hydro monopoly, we can't go to the banks any more to build the new plants to make sure we always have enough supply to keep our hospitals, our schools and our homes heated and the lights on. We can't go to the banks—they messed that up for us—so we have to go to the private sector. We have to have them take the risk with their money and build the new plants, as they're doing in every other jurisdiction in the western, industrialized world except Canada and France right now, build the new plants so we never get into the situation like California and have demand outstrip supply.

Ms Churley: So the minister agrees with higher rates. He just admitted that. Salomon Smith Barney also said that the Bruce deal was good for Ontario. What it appears he meant is that it's a good deal if you want higher rates. The minister should come clean with the public now and admit that privatization will mean much higher rates as much of our electricity gets sold to the US.

You should also come clean about the Bruce deal, which you said was available to the public. We took you up on your suggestion and we got all the documents available about that deal. But guess what? OPG refused

to release the so-called confidentiality agreement between themselves and Bruce Power. So, Minister, I'm asking you, why are you trying to hide the Bruce deal from the public?

1450

Hon Mr Wilson: Clearly, I've answered this question several times in this House and in committee. The Ontario auditor has the entire Bruce deal. I provided your leader with the Bruce deal I don't know how many times. The Bruce deal is available in the local library up near the Bruce community, in Kincardine. It also was the subject of several weeks of federal hearings with the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, public hearings, before they gave Bruce Nuclear a licence to operate the plant. The deal has been out there. The only party, it seems, that can't read in this Legislature and in this province is the NDP.

Secondly, they want to talk about higher rates. One of the reasons we need to change the system is that rates went up 60% during their five years in office. So higher hydro rates in homes and our businesses' rates went up even more, but the average is 60%.

And they left us \$38 billion in debt. We have no lessons to learn from the NDP about the future of the electricity system in this province.

Ms Churley: Minister, you don't have a clue what you're talking about. You should get your facts straight. The bottom line here is that your dirty deal will mean much higher rates. That is a fact now, and you should admit it. It is also going to mean more pollution, because those coal plants will be burning more of the time to sell power to the US.

You tried to sell this deal by saying that rates would come down, and so, may I add, did Donald Macdonald, the former Liberal cabinet minister you hired who said we should take a leap of faith and support deregulation and privatization.

Minister, you are the one who is responsible and accountable here, and I am asking you, will you resign if electricity privatization does not result in the lower rates you've been promising?

Hon Mr Wilson: What we'll have in this province, like so many other jurisdictions now in the world, will be competitive electricity rates for the first time in the 93-year history of our electricity system. Competitive rates have brought, in the telecom business, in the natural gas business, even with the bump we saw last year and earlier this year, overall lower rates than we would have had under the old monopoly system.

The honourable member talks about selling power to the US and she says that somehow deregulation or introducing competition will be bad for the environment. There's no environmental group in this province today, whether it's the Clean Air Alliance, Pollution Probe etc, that believes the environment will get worse. In fact, for the first time, green energy and the ability for consumers to buy green energy, like the windmill that's on the top of Blue Mountain—you'll be able to buy that power and it will no longer be illegal.

Under their system and, God love you, some Tories in the past under previous governments, it was illegal to buy green power. It won't be—

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

ACADEMIC TESTING

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Mon amie, it looks like the dog ate your homework again. Your fumbling Education Quality and Accountability Office lost 2,000 grade 6 tests, and parents and teachers are reeling. Your office doesn't know which schools are affected and when or if these tests might be found. You've blown it on this \$9-million test, and the total of what you have bungled on these tests is about 20 million bucks. Instead of investing in things that really matter, investing in students, you're throwing away money on an inefficient bureaucracy, something you would know much about. My question to you is, when is it going to stop?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): To the honourable member, I appreciate his concern for my dog, but I don't have one and there's nothing wrong there. But I would like to assure the honourable member that nothing has been lost. No money has been wasted. There have been some information technology issues, which EQAO is dealing with, and that is the extent of the problem.

Mr Marchese: Reports from the Hamilton Spectator—they could be wrong—and other reports from Ottawa say that 2,000 tests have been lost. I'm happy to hear the government obviously saying that they haven't been lost when so many reports from the quality and accountability office are saying, "We can't find them. We're working hard, but we can't find them," and the minister says, "No, they're not lost." It's interesting.

Hundreds of Ontario schools are scrambling to correct mistakes made by your office, after a nightmare of a testing season. Some 2,000 of them lost, data not recorded, inaccurate student test results, chaos for boards, more paperwork for overworked school staff, and she says nothing has been lost. I don't get it.

When are you going to listen to teachers and let them teach our kids and learn in peace, and finally admit that your testing scheme is a boondoggle? When are you going to admit that?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate that the Hamilton Spectator has a very entertaining writing style. I would like to caution the NDP. I thought we in this Legislature gave them resources for research. I would encourage you to use them, please.

There have been some computer glitches about reading the results. What the EQAO is doing is going back to the original test results and marking them, doing it manually to ensure all the data are there. It does not affect the province-wide standards. It does not affect the standings of schools. It does not affect the individual outcomes for

students. They are working to ensure the computer glitch is settled.

I appreciate the honourable member's concern. I also am very surprised, given that his government and his party brought in a Royal Commission on Learning that recommended testing. They supported it. Now he says they don't support it. Flip-flop from the NDP, yet again.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My question's for the Minister of Health. In his recent report, the Provincial Auditor found that, despite the fact that Health Canada and your own expert medical panel were approving medications, prescription drugs, the government was refusing, you were refusing, to pay for them. Of the 182 medications recommended by your own expert medical panel, 142 were not included in the provincial drug plan. I'm talking here about drugs that save lives, drugs that heal people, drugs that treat pain. Minister, isn't making sure that these drugs are available to our families more important than a corporate tax cut?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): As the honourable member is undoubtedly aware, one of the fastest-growing areas of provincial expenditure—incidentally, with 100% provincial dollars, no federal dollars whatsoever—is on the drug formulary and the Ontario drug benefit and Trillium drug plans. This fiscal year, for instance, the budget has increased by close to 17%. This is something that has happened year over year.

We are very interested in the auditor's findings. I can tell the honourable member that on any potential savings the auditor finds, of course we will follow up on that. We would like to reinvest those in priority health care areas. You may know that our Premier has taken a leadership role nationally in working with other Premiers to ensure we are looking at national solutions—with the federal government, incidentally—when it comes to the appropriate way to approve additional medications on our drug formularies.

Mr McGuinty: Minister, I'm looking for you to provide some leadership when it comes to championing the cause of health care for all Ontarians. I expected you to stand up just a minute ago and say, "I will not stand for this \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut, because it's coming at the expense of meeting my health care responsibilities." That's what I expected you to say.

Let's talk about Visudyne for a minute. Visudyne is an important medication that saves vision. Without it, Ontarians are literally going blind. Five provincial governments—Alberta, Quebec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan—already insure Visudyne. They cover this disease that affects our parents and our grandparents. We are one of the last provinces that hasn't added this sight-saving drug to our drug plan.

Tell me again, why is it we can't afford to fund Visudyne in Ontario, but on the other hand we've got \$2.2 billion for corporate tax cuts?

Hon Mr Clement: As the honourable member knows, our tax cuts have created jobs and opportunity and economic growth in our province. If the honourable member were really interested in better health care for Ontarians, he'd ask his federal kissing cousins why we're spending \$750 dollars a second on health care, while Ottawa contributes just \$107. He'd ask his federal counterparts, all Liberals, why they are not living up to their responsibilities under the Canada Health Act.

I would like to ask the honourable member, did he agree with Brian Tobin when he was Premier of Newfoundland? Brian Tobin said at the time, "I believe, as do my fellow Premiers, that an urgent and substantial allocation of federal funding is needed to meet the needs of our health care system. Canadians expect their federal government to be a full partner in the health care system. This cannot happen when the federal government contributes only 13 cents to every dollar spent on health." Does he agree with Brian Tobin, does he agree with Mike Harris, or is he sitting on the fence with Jean Chrétien?

1500

SERVICES FOR ABUSED WOMEN

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): My question today is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. One of the key announcements from the May 2001 budget was an increase in government support for violence against women services. I know that in eastern Ontario there has been a long-standing need to increase the services available to help women who need to flee an abusive situation. This need is especially pressing when children are caught in the middle of domestic violence. Minister, what I'd really like to know is how this announcement will benefit communities in eastern Ontario and how many long-needed spaces will be added to the violence against women system.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Community and Social Services, minister responsible for children, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Expanding supports to victims of crime is an important priority and an important responsibility, particularly providing supports to women who are seeking to flee violence in the home. We all look at our homes as a place of sanctuary and I think that, for far too many women, when they put the key in the door is when the fear begins.

We will be making some substantial expansions throughout eastern Ontario, including establishing two new shelters for violence against women in Ottawa, one in the east end and one in the west end, adding 40 beds to the system. We'll be adding another five beds in the city of Kingston and refurbishing an additional 20 there. In Lindsay and Brockville, we will be replacing two shelters that were in poor condition and refurbishing an additional 28 beds. This is in addition to the substantial amount of effort my colleague the Attorney General has made in expanding our domestic violence courts. It demonstrates the strong commitment we have to providing supports at the community level in this important responsibility that

we all share, not just those of us in government but as people in our society.

Mr Galt: Thank you very much, Minister. Those investments are certainly good news. In my own riding, after previous governments refused to open a shelter for women, we opened one in the winter of 1997, and I know how appreciated it was.

The investments in new and refurbished shelters are certainly a step in the right direction, but this investment is only one part of the approach the government needs to take to stop domestic violence. We also need a strong network of services and other resources to help women in an abusive relationship. There need to be increased counselling supports for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. We also need better supports in the justice system to deal with domestic abuse.

Beyond the bricks and mortar of new shelter spaces, what action has the government taken to make sure there are strong services, to make sure there's more than just a bed?

Hon Mr Baird: There had been some criticism that we've put so much emphasis as a government into expanding the domestic violence courts through a successive number of Attorneys General. That's why we've increased some support at the community level. In last year's budget we added \$10 million to help children who were the victims of violence and witnesses of violence, \$5 million for transitional programs. We've also increased operating supports for shelters by \$3 million this year, going to \$9 million. We've added a substantial amount of support.

One of the advantages people in the city of Toronto have compared to people in rural Ontario, like the member for Northumberland's constituency, is benefiting from the Assaulted Women's Helpline. A group came forward to the government requesting some financial assistance to expand the system right across the province, and we were pleased to provide more than \$4 million of financial support over the next number of years to make that a reality. That also included more than \$200,000 to ensure we can expand services and supports to francophone women who are seeking services and support in French, in their own language.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question is to the Premier. I'm sure you will agree with me that the integrity of this assembly and the proper and effective functioning of its officers and committees are of critical importance in our parliamentary democracy. One of those officers is our Provincial Auditor. His mission is to assist the assembly in holding the government and its administrators accountable for the quality of the administration's stewardship of public funds, something we're all interested in.

Premier, as you know, on page 2 of the auditor's report, the auditor felt obligated, for the first time in the nine years that he has been auditor, to actually indicate

that a ministry, the Ministry of Transportation, acted contrary to section 10 of the Audit Act in that the senior management of the ministry “hindered the audit process” by not giving the staff of the auditor “full access to pertinent files,” and not providing all the necessary information. Do you not agree with me, Premier, that under these circumstances the minister should step aside until such time as—

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

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Actually, nothing could be further from the truth. If you understand the purpose of the auditor, he is our friend—he is the politician’s friend, he is the public’s friend—in holding the bureaucracy accountable.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harris: To respond to all the interjections too, if you want me to answer all those, quite appropriately it is not something that at the level of that inquiry involves the minister, nor should it involve the minister, and in fact, it would be inappropriate to involve the minister.

What occurred was, the auditor requested information and the deputy at the time felt she was complying with both the confidentiality of cabinet and the Audit Act; the auditor disagreed. The deputy did the correct thing, took it to my deputy, and the matter was resolved to the satisfaction of the auditor. The auditor got the documentation that the auditor requested, and I believe he acknowledges that, yes, the protocol he worked out with my deputy was appropriate.

That’s where those requests at that stage—

The Speaker: I’m afraid the Premier’s time is up.

Mr Gerretsen: Premier, you know that the minister is ultimately responsible for the goings-on within a department. But it goes much further than that. I would ask you to look at page 243, where the subsequent minister, in a letter that he wrote to the auditor, states unequivocally, “I appreciate the gravity of the issues you raised and as I said at our meeting, I am deeply distressed at the matters brought to my attention.”

How can you expect us to accept your answer when, in effect, the successor to the then minister completely agrees that those were issues that should have been dealt with, were of grave importance and were contrary to the Audit Act? How can you allow a minister to function within your cabinet who has contravened section 10 of the Audit Act and in effect prevented an officer of this assembly from doing the proper work for all of us?

Interjections.

The Speaker: The Premier’s time will start now.

Hon Mr Harris: I know the member opposite doesn’t wish to read page 271, and I understand your selective reading. If you understand the way the process works at the early stage, it involves the bureaucrats. It was resolved by the bureaucrats. However, when you find the auditor is ready to make a report, at that point it would be brought to the attention of the minister. That would be the first opportunity the minister would have to look at it.

The minister made the appropriate response. All the procedures were followed. The protocol has been done there. It is actually quite a routine matter.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Speaker: Page 271—

The Speaker: Don’t waste time in question period going back like that. I’ve said it before: don’t waste time in question period doing that.

1510

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): My question is to the associate minister of health and long-term care. I know I could just step forward and speak to her directly as I often do, but the importance of asking this question on the public record is to allow the minister to respond and I can send it to my constituents.

Minister, as you might know, the Durham MPPs, Team Durham, recently had the opportunity to meet with Durham Access to Care people, as we do quarterly, just to keep in touch with their concerns and these volunteer boards.

Laughter.

Mr O’Toole: There’s quite a bit of humour going on here just now.

By way of background, this CCAC in Durham has an excellent reputation for assisting residents of Durham riding, and indeed the entire Durham region, in care in people’s homes. Some of their achievements include a five-star rating for hospital-community care access relations on the OHA hospital report card, only one of two—

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

Mr O’Toole: I seek unanimous consent to finish my question.

The Speaker: No. It was your own members laughing.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The minister’s time is to respond.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister without Portfolio [Health and Long-Term Care]): I’d like to thank the member for Durham for his question. I also want to say that it’s always a pleasure to hear that a community care access centre is running efficiently, running effectively and is serving the people of its area. From that standpoint I’d like to applaud the CCAC and Durham.

I would like to say, though, that the member raises a very interesting question when he talks about the community advisory council. If the legislation is approved and it has royal assent, it is our intention to set up a council within each community so that the long-term-care facilities, the community services, the hospitals and the CCACs can come together to make sure that we keep the continuum of care going within the community, so that we best serve the people of that community.

What will happen in this particular case is that community services such as were talked about by the member

would be integrated into the system as they haven't been before, so that information and referral could be passed on to the people of the community. We believe this will make a better—

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

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that very detailed response, Minister. I know in responding to my constituents, the attendant care and hospice care are very important ongoing services that should be coordinated, and I believe that you have the courage to move forward with that coordination.

I also want to be assured that the Durham MPPs are very supportive of the current board and CEO of Durham Access to Care. They are working to budgets. They are also serving people. I support them, and I support you as minister to do the right thing and to move this legislation forward to provide coordinated services, not just in Durham, but for all the people of Ontario who need services in their home, closest to where they need them.

Hon Mrs Johns: I missed the question there. Let me just say that when it comes to community care access centres, what we want to do is to ensure that we have a consistent program across the province; we want to make sure that we have consistent governance models. Hence we're bringing forward Bill 130. We also want to ensure that there's more accountability within the system, and so we're bringing through a number of initiatives—in the legislation and outside the legislation—to ensure that there's a strategic plan, that it meets the government's vision, and the government's vision is very clear: to ensure that the people of the province get the services where they need them and when they need them.

We also want to develop an evidence-based performance measurement so that we can ensure that people are getting the services they need. We want to also look at common benchmarks. All of these things will be happening with the Ministry of Health over the ensuing months.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. We're on day four of public hearings on the ODA and the message is loud and clear: your ODA bill just doesn't cut it.

Yesterday Anna Germain asked, "Is this all that the government can come up with, a planning exercise that may give an illusion of doing good? What a shame. This bill is a slap in the face of all who waited for real help with dignity and equity."

The Canadian Hearing Society states, "Without amendments this bill is, at best, a missed opportunity. At worst, it will create new barriers and will be costly in time, money and human dignity."

We will be putting forward significant amendments to this legislation. Minister, will you commit right here and

now to making all the changes necessary to make this a bill worth saving?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I have been reading each and every one of the briefs that have been presented. I have been encouraged by the manner in which so many organizations across Ontario have embraced this legislation and felt that it was a good first step. They want to work with the government in developing it.

I find it passing strange that the member opposite has yet to indicate to the disabled community of this province what he and his party are prepared to do for disabled persons. You've made no commitment whatsoever. You made no commitment to Gary Malkowski when he was a member of your caucus. You made no commitment when you ran up a \$50-billion deficit in this province and had no legacy to show for the disabled persons in this province.

Yes, this government is proceeding with this historic legislation because they waited for five or six years of your government, and this government's going to deliver on its promise for an Ontarians with Disabilities Act.

Mr Martin: Well, Minister, I've been to all the hearings. Even the people you've brought in to speak favourably on the bill can only say, "Better than nothing." More people say that your legislation will make things worse for people with disabilities. The Multiple Sclerosis Society says, "We regret we must voice our opposition to this bill unless you are prepared to make major amendments." Will you listen, Minister? Will you make the amendments and fix this bill?

Hon Mr Jackson: The government has indicated clearly that through the process of public consultation we will have opportunities to strengthen this bill. We will have an opportunity to clarify that there are mandatory provisions in this legislation, unprecedented; that in this legislation, for the first time in Ontario's history, we will make a legislated, mandated directorate for disabled persons, that they will have a voice. They will be consulted in the construction of the regulations that will govern this bill and the conduct of municipalities and all government agencies.

The member must be sitting in on the wrong hearings. I have the brief from the Canadian Paraplegic Association Ontario. It clearly says in their brief, "The CPA Ontario is pleased to lend its support to this historic legislation." They support it. They want to work with the government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member for Prince Edward-Hastings, please come to order.

Sorry for the interruption, Minister. His time was almost done, but I apologize for cutting him off at the end.

LONDON HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My question is for the Minister of Health. I want to refer you

to a November 29 article in the Chatham Daily News in which your spokesperson Gordon Haugh makes it quite clear that you do not intend to reinstate the pediatric cardiac surgery program at the London Health Sciences Centre. Mr Haugh specifically relates that decision to the coroner's investigation into deaths that resulted from two procedures undertaken in the pediatric cardiac surgery department of the London Health Sciences Centre.

This is consistent with the attempts of government members to defend the cutting of 18 programs at the London Health Sciences Centre. Your colleagues from the London area have repeatedly referred to questions of clinical standards, as if concerns about patient safety were the reason for the shutdown of these programs. I suggest to you that this is clearly an organized line of defence and, whoever has orchestrated it, the result is the same. You have publicly called into question the competence not only of an individual surgeon but of the entire pediatric cardiac surgical unit of the London Health Sciences Centre. You've exploited personal tragedies and heightened the anxieties of families who have sought treatment for desperately ill children at that centre. Minister, how can you permit such an inexcusable attack as a defence for a cost-cutting decision?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'm a human being and I will do my best not to lower myself to the level of that question. I'm really quite shocked and disappointed with the allegation that the honourable member has made. I will merely put on to the record one more time that, from our perspective as a government in Ontario, we wish to ensure that there is clinical efficacy in all of our hospitals, that they meet the standards that we expect for every single patient—children included, and especially.

We have evidence that when it comes to these kinds of medical procedures to which the honourable member refers, it is absolutely clear that there has to be a certain level of frequency and a certain level of volume. This is something the Ontario Hospital Association has agreed to, as well as the deputy chief coroner. We want the best results in our hospitals, regardless of location. That includes the London hospital and it certainly includes—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Mrs McLeod: Lower yourself, Minister. That's why I asked the question, because I think it is important finally to put the facts of the coroner's investigation on the table.

Let's make it clear: there are four categories of risk in pediatric cardiac surgery. In the two higher risk categories, there are 13 specific types of procedures performed. The coroner investigated concerns related to two specific types of procedures. The concerns of both the coroner and the independent reviewer were with low volumes in those two procedures and certainly not with the competencies of the surgical team, nor was there any recommendation from the independent reviewer that the pediatric cardiac surgery program should be shut down.

I suggest to you that concerns with two procedures are not a justification for shutting down the entire pediatric cardiac surgery program. I suggest to you further that

concerns with two procedures in the pediatric cardiac surgical program are not a justification for shutting down 17 other totally unrelated programs.

Minister, these were cuts made to the London Health Sciences Centre because you demanded that the London Health Sciences Centre balance its budgets. Will you stop perpetuating and stop your members from perpetuating this completely false and inexcusable defence—

The Speaker: The time is up.

1520

Hon Mr Clement: The honourable member knows full well that base funding for this hospital has increased by 25% in the last three years. So it is not a question of money; it's a question of performance in every single case. We judge performance of every hospital in this province.

The honourable member knows, because I know she was briefed by the deputy chief coroner, that it is not about two procedures; it's about 56 procedures.

Mrs McLeod: No, it's not.

Hon Mr Clement: It is.

The honourable member knows that the two procedures to which she refers have been characterized by the deputy chief coroner as harbingers, as indications that there are other difficulties in the program. The honourable member knows that because she was briefed by the deputy chief coroner. I encourage her to do what is best for Ontarians and their health when asking questions the way she asks them.

SCHOOL BUSES

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Education. As she already knows, and a lot of people know, we've had difficulty in our riding with the Bluewater board of education and funding for our busing. The formula just doesn't seem to work that well in rural and northern Ontario. My board has been forced into a deficit position.

I would like to ask the minister what she can do this year to help out my board and many other boards in rural Ontario with the busing situation, as there are many boards facing this problem.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Education, Government House Leader): I certainly appreciate the question from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound on this issue. I agree that bus transportation is an area where additional support is required for our bus operators. The government has done this on a one-time basis before. We will be doing it again this year. Details of that announcement will be coming out within several days.

Mr Murdoch: OK, that sounds like you've solved my problem for this year. It sounds like that, and I'll take your word. That's OK for this year, Madam Minister. What are we going to do from now on, though? The formula does not work in rural and northern Ontario, so we need to work on this formula. Will you give this House today your promise that you will sit down—

Interjections.

Mr Murdoch: Are you heckling me? It's bad enough to get heckled from the other side, but when you get your own guys heckling, especially Mr Stockwell—

Minister, will you commit today to help us work out this formula so we don't have to come begging for money every year to help us out with our busing?

Applause.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I appreciate the question from the honourable member, and I think perhaps I'm getting overshadowed here by the applause for the honourable member's supplementary. When it comes to fighting for his constituents, he is rarely satisfied. I appreciate that.

There are two issues: remote and rural boards have required additional supports. We have indeed done that in many ways in the last year or two with funding, given them additional supports. We quite recognize that with declining enrolment, some of these remote rural boards have an additional challenge in transportation. We have pilot projects which are looking at how best to work out these funding arrangements, and we will indeed be making decisions around how we should move forward. I agree it is not an equitable funding mechanism right now. We need to change it. We're working to do that.

Mr Murdoch: Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Stop the clock.

Mr Murdoch: Mr Speaker, do we still have late shows? Is that still on? OK. I was just wondering.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Throughout the highways and byways and in every barn in Ancaster and Flamborough, farmers are raising questions about the long-awaited made-in-Ontario safety net farm program. We know that talks and consultations have been held for months and that you have been making grandiose statements about the program—yet still nothing.

Minister, the time for talk is long past and the time for action is now. You've had a proposal on your desk since the spring, but only now have you commenced negotiation with the federal government. While little has been happening, Agricorp tells us that this year we'll see the highest crop insurance payout ever. Our farmers are worried, and with good reason. With no market revenue in place for crops to be harvested and low yields, this is a grim scenario, as you know, for our farmers. I ask, will you announce your made-in-Ontario safety net program? When will you make that announcement for our farmers?

Hon Brian Coburn (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs): Our concerns for the agricultural community and the contribution they make to the economic vitality of this province is well understood by this side of the House. We contributed \$90 million in the spring when they had some difficulties. After that, we sat down with them and I'm very pleased to say they did work with us to develop a made-in-Ontario safety net solution which I have now forwarded on and we're

negotiating with the federal government. As you know, this is a tripartite agreement, and as we go through negotiations, I'm hopeful that the federal government understands the severity of this, as we do, and comes forward and signs this agreement very shortly.

Mr McMeekin: Grain and oilseeds, edible horticulture and others are all having very serious problems, as you know. They've got to be addressed, and they've got to be addressed now. It's not enough to repeatedly raise expectations and talk about these ongoing negotiations about the made-in-Ontario program. In fact, it's well beyond time that we put some real substance to what I would concede are some well-meaning promises.

Minister, I'd like to know what you're waiting for. You've had this report since the spring. Will you today, right now in the House, assume the leadership role we all expect on this side and that side of the House from a Minister of Agriculture? Will you tell Ontario farmers finally and specifically how much money will be allocated and exactly when you intend to announce our made-in-Ontario program? Will you provide them with the answers they're seeking and deserve?

Hon Mr Coburn: I'm not prepared to announce the funding portion of it today. We're negotiating with the federal government, and you can appreciate how hard it is to pin them down on anything. I have got the assurance and confidence and support of our caucus here on the made-in-Ontario solution.

Some of the points, in case you missed the press release, Mr Speaker: crop insurance is available for 53 commodities in which premiums are cost-shared by producers, the federal government and the provincial governments; an income support program for producers of grains and oilseeds, commodities that governments elsewhere subsidize highly and unfairly; self-directed risk management for our fruit and vegetable growers and maple syrup producers as an alternative to crop insurance; working to enhance the net income stabilization account, NISA, a national program that allows farmers to better balance income fluctuations; and a disaster assistance program to be used as required by producers faced with circumstances well beyond their control.

1530

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. We know that Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology have played a vital role in preparing Ontarians for leading-edge careers in our province. Colleges such as Centennial College of Applied Arts and Technology in my riding of Scarborough Centre are focused on career-oriented and applied education, support a substantial part of our apprenticeship system and are responsive to the needs of their local communities. Minister, yesterday you introduced legislation that would create a new charter for Ontario colleges and recognize the increasingly important role that they play in our

communities and economy. Could you please tell this House how this new legislation will strengthen Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I appreciate the question from my colleague from Scarborough Centre, who represents her riding, but especially Centennial College.

If passed, the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2001, will fulfill a commitment made by our government to provide a new charter for Ontario's colleges, and it will reform the colleges, allowing them to become more flexible, more entrepreneurial, responsive and market-driven, which of course is not only good for students; it's good for all of Ontario, because we do want to provide trained students to take the jobs, especially within their own local community. So accommodating a greater degree of diversity among the colleges to address the aspirations of students and the needs of employers and the communities served by colleges is something that I know Centennial will very much appreciate.

I did notice today that the president of the student organization at Centennial College was very pleased with this legislation. Thyagi DeLanerolle, the president—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the minister's time is up; she went over the time. Supplementary?

Ms Mushinski: Minister, I met with Thyagi last week, and I know she's particularly pleased with this piece of legislation, which is clearly an important step in our government's plan to ensure future growth and prosperity in Ontario. If passed, this legislation will recognize the excellent and important work that Ontario's colleges are doing and give them the tools to play an even more important role. It's clear that as the demands of students and employers change, our post-secondary education system must change too. As in all developed economies, education and training is becoming an increasingly important factor in economic development in Ontario.

While I'm pleased that our government is increasing autonomy and flexibility for our colleges to respond to these changes, I'd like to ask the minister how the Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act fits into our government's overall agenda for post-secondary education and training.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: As I was saying, Thyagi DeLanerolle is delighted to see Ontario recognize and bestow legislative rights to student governments, and that's extremely important, because students do have a say in the operation of their colleges and the programs that will be offered.

The increased capacity in the next few years for our colleges and universities will be there to address the anticipated growth of our students over the next 10 years. With the partners' contributions, we're spending over \$1 billion in new buildings: 25 new college buildings, 25 new university buildings and nine for collaborative programs. This is an exciting time. It's the largest growth period in 30 years in our post-secondary system.

The operating grants will be up by \$293 million above 2001 levels. These are more resources so the colleges and universities can plan for this new double cohort of students.

COLLÈGE DES GRANDS LACS

M. Gilles Bisson (Timmins-Baie James): Ma question s'adresse à la ministre des Collèges et Universités. Comme vous le savez, madame la ministre, aujourd'hui la Cour supérieure de l'Ontario a donné sa décision envers le Collège des Grands Lacs. La cour a ordonné que le collège ferme ses portes aux élèves de première année.

Il y a deux questions qui sont très importantes et vous avez besoin d'y répondre pour les étudiants.

La première question, c'est qu'il y a à peine sept jours avant la fin du semestre d'automne, et les élèves aimeraient savoir s'il est possible, dans le moindre des moindres, s'ils seraient capables de finir leur semestre d'automne pour avoir leurs crédits pour continuer leur prochain semestre à une autre institution.

La deuxième est la question des frais de scolarité. Beaucoup de ces élèves ont payé leurs frais de scolarité au collège, mais le collège va fermer. Les élèves veulent être rassurés que les frais de scolarité leur seront remboursés et qu'ils peuvent utiliser cet argent pour continuer leur éducation dans une autre institution. Êtes-vous préparée à répondre à ces deux questions ?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): I'll make every effort to do so in answering my colleague.

I think it needs to be made very clear that when these things happen across the system, the government remains committed to ensuring that our students get the high-quality education they expect, and especially our franco-phone students in southwest and central Ontario.

So in answer to the first question, I'm personally pleased that the court has concluded this uncertainty for the students. The first-year students, in fact, will be expected to finish their education. Arrangements were made, even before we got into this situation, that they work with Collège Boréal and others. There will be classes right here in Toronto.

With regard to the fees, I don't have a direct answer, but I will speak to my colleague, upon getting the information. Normally, these kinds of things are worked out fairly with students. That would be our expectation this time as well.

M. Bisson: Point d'ordre.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Members, the time is up.

Mr Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker: Oh, point of order. Sorry.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): "Point d'ordre" means "point of order" in English. I'm just notifying you that I'm requesting a late show on that answer.

The Speaker: I didn't know what he was after. You can file the appropriate paper with the table.

PETITIONS

PODIATRIC SERVICES

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): I have a petition. It is titled "Foot Care Is Not a Luxury."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas services delisted by the Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total;

"Whereas Ontarians depend on podiatrists for relief from painful foot conditions;

"Whereas new Harris government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded podiatry across vast regions of Ontario;

"Whereas this new Harris government policy is virtually impossible to implement in underserved areas across Ontario;

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients, and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to cancel the delisting of podiatric services."

It's an excellent petition. I agree wholeheartedly and I have affixed my signature.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial Durham riding, including Clarington, Scugog township and portions of north and east Oshawa, comprise one of the fastest-growing communities in Canada; and

"Whereas the residents of Durham riding are experiencing difficulty locating family physicians who are willing to accept new patients; and

"Whereas the good health of Durham riding residents depends on a long-term relationship with a family physician who can provide ongoing care; and

"Whereas the lack of family physicians puts unnecessary demands on walk-in clinics and" hospital "emergency departments;

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

"That the government of Ontario will:

"Do everything within its power to immediately assess the needs of Durham riding and the Durham region, and work with the Ontario Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, local health care providers and elected officials to ensure there are enough family physicians available to serve this community;

"Make every effort to recruit doctors to set up practices in underserved areas, and provide suitable incentives that will encourage them to stay in these communities;

"Continue its efforts to increase the number of physicians being trained in Ontario medical schools, and also continue its program to enable foreign-trained doctors to qualify" to practise medicine "in Ontario."

I'm completely in support of this petition. On behalf of my constituents, I'll add my name to the list as well.

LONDON HEALTH SCIENCES CENTRE

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

"Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre is a world-class academic health sciences centre serving people throughout southwestern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health has forced the London Health Sciences Centre to find \$17 million in annual savings by 2005; and

"Whereas the London Health Sciences Centre has agreed to cut 18 programs in order to satisfy directions from the provincial Ministry of Health; and

"Whereas these cuts will put the health of the people in southwestern Ontario, and particularly children, at risk; and

"Whereas these cuts will diminish the London Health Sciences Centre's standing as a regional health care resource; and

"Whereas these cuts will worsen the continuing physician shortage in the region;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand that the Mike Harris government take immediate action to ensure these important health services are maintained, so that the health and safety of people throughout southwestern Ontario are not put at risk."

I too have signed this petition.

1540

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition sent to me by SEIU local 204. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government abandoned the minimum requirement for 2.25 hours per day of nursing care for seniors in nursing homes; and

"Whereas the Ontario government's own study in January 2001 showed Ontario's long-term-care residents receive less nursing, bathing and general care than elderly people in comparable jurisdictions in Canada, the United States and Europe; and

"Whereas poor management of residents leads to excessive acute care hospital stays and added strain on staffing levels in long-term-care facilities; and

"Whereas Ontario's long-term-care residents now receive an average of only 2.04 hours of care per day, well below the level of care of 4.2 hours that even the state of Mississippi provides; and

"Whereas US studies have indicated that total nursing care hours for long-term-care residents should be in the range of 4.55 total hours of care per resident per day;

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

"We call on the government of Ontario to regulate a minimum requirement of at least 3.5 hours of care per resident per day."

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to this petition.

HOME CARE

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition signed by close to 500 good citizens of Cambridge, which reads:

"We, the undersigned, wish to express our concerns over the effects of ongoing home care cuts of our most vulnerable citizens."

I affix my name thereto.

EDUCATION FUNDING

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

"Whereas the funding for school boards is now based on student-focused funding legislative grants for the 2001-02 school board fiscal year;

"Whereas the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board is in a period of declining enrolment, a trend that is projected to continue over the next five years;

"Whereas applications of the student-focused funding model for 2001-02 does not allow sufficient funding to the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board for secretarial support in schools, principals and vice-principals, transportation, or school operations;

"Whereas costs in these areas cannot be reduced at the same rate as the enrolment declines,

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

"To reassess the student-focused funding legislative grants for the 2002-03 school board fiscal year to provide additional funding for those areas where funding is insufficient and to adjust future student-focused funding legislative grants to address the situation of declining enrolments faced by the Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board and other boards in Ontario."

I sign my signature to this petition.

CHILD CARE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition sent to me by my friends at Seneca College. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas an internal government document indicates the Conservative government is considering cutting the regulated child care budget by at least 40%;

"Whereas the same internal document indicates the government is also considering completely cutting all

funding for regulated child care and family resource programs in Ontario;

"Whereas the Conservative government has already cut funding for regulated child care by 15% between 1995 and 1998 and downloaded 20% of the child care and family resource program budget on to municipalities;

"Whereas further cuts would run counter to the support identified for regulated child care and family resource centres by Fraser Mustard and Margaret McCain;

"Whereas the Conservative government received \$114 million this year for early childhood development and will receive \$844 million from the federal government over the next five years for the same;

"Whereas Ontario is the only province which didn't spend a cent of this year's federal money on regulated child care;

"Whereas other provinces are implementing innovative, affordable and accessible child care programs such as Quebec's \$5-a-day child care program; and

"Whereas the need for affordable, accessible, regulated child care and family resources continues to grow in Ontario,

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We demand the Conservative government guarantee the current child care and family resource budget is secure and will not be cut under this government's mandate; we demand future federal Early Years funding be invested in an expansion of affordable regulated child care."

I agree with these petitioners. I have affixed my signature to this petition.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): 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'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Ted McMeekin (Ancaster-Dundas-Flamborough-Aldershot): This is the last cluster of a thousand names that I intend to present on the audiology petition. I pre-

sent them today on behalf of the following communities: Nepean, Orléans, Ottawa, Gloucester, Waterdown, Burlington, Windsor, Leamington, Kingsville, Belle River, Essex, Staples, Stoney Point, Osgoode, Grand Valley, Bolton, Coldwater, Bowmanville—

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Order. It's not necessary to read all the petitioners or places.

Mr McMeekin: They're all listed here.

The Acting Speaker: Well, you don't need to do that. Just the wording of the petition, please.

Mr McMeekin: I was told by the other Speaker that I should do that, but I'll take your word for it, Mr Speaker.

The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas services delisted by the Harris government now exceed \$100 million in total;

"Whereas Ontarians depend on audiologists for the provision of qualified hearing assessments and hearing aid prescriptions;

"Whereas the new Harris government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments across vast regions of Ontario;

"Whereas this new Harris government policy makes it virtually impossible to implement services in under-serviced areas of Ontario;

"Whereas this policy will lengthen waiting lists for patients and therefore have a detrimental effect on the health of these Ontarians;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature to demand the Mike Harris government move immediately to permanently fund audiologists directly for the provision of audiology services."

These petitions in total represent 257 communities and in excess of 12,000 names.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have yet more thousands of signatures from people across Ontario supporting adoption disclosure reform. This petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas in Ontario, adopted adults are denied a right available to all non-adoptees, that is, the unrestricted right to identifying information concerning their family of origin;

"Whereas Canada has ratified standards of civil and human rights in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the UN Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;

"Whereas these rights are denied to persons affected by the secrecy provisions in the adoption sections of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts of the province of Ontario;

"Whereas research in other jurisdictions has demonstrated that disclosure does not cause harm, that access to such information is beneficial to adult adoptees, adoptive

parents and birth parents, and that birth parents rarely requested or were promised anonymity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to enact revision of the Child and Family Services Act and other acts to permit adult adoptees unrestricted access to full personal identifying birth information; permit birth parents, grandparents and siblings access to the adopted person's amended birth certificate when the adopted person reaches age 18; permit adoptive parents unrestricted access to identifying birth information of their minor children; allow adopted persons and birth relatives to file a no-contact veto restricting contact by the searching party; and replace mandatory reunion counselling with optional counselling."

I will affix my signature to this petition because I fully support it.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"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 affix my name thereto.

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EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government's rigid education funding formula is forcing the potential closure of neighbourhood schools such as Consolidated, Dalewood, Lakebreeze, Maplewood and Victoria in the city of St Catharines, and has centralized control for education spending and decision-making at Queen's Park, and will not allow communities the flexibility to respond to local needs;

"Whereas chronic underfunding and an inflexible funding formula are strangling the system and students are suffering the consequences;

"Whereas there is evidence that larger schools do not automatically translate into cost-effectiveness;

"Whereas smaller, neighbourhood schools have lower incidences of negative social behaviour, much greater and more varied student participation in extracurricular

activities, higher attendance rates and lower dropout rates, and foster strong interpersonal relationships; and

“Whereas small neighbourhood schools in local communities, both rural and urban, serve as important meeting areas for neighbourhood organizations which help bring individuals together and strengthen neighbourhood ties and the current funding formula does not recognize community use of these schools,

“Be it resolved that the Harris government immediately reconfigure their unyielding funding formula to restore flexibility to local school boards and their communities which will allow neighbourhood schools in our province to remain open.”

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have agreement among all three parties to move a unanimous consent motion to move the late show for Mrs Cunningham from Thursday night to this evening. I ask for unanimous consent.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Bisson has asked to move the late show scheduled for tomorrow evening with the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to this evening. Is that agreed? Agreed.

ACCESS TO LEGISLATIVE BUILDING

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In accordance with standing orders 132, 138 and 139, I believe there may be an issue of concern whereby the west stairway appears to be blocked and there could be a safety concern. I think the Clerk, under 132, should look into it, as well as 138 with the Sergeant at Arms. Not only is it possibly a fire hazard, but I don't believe the hallways of the Legislature should be used as storage facilities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Thank you. We will see that the Clerk and the Sergeant at Arms take note of that.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Hon R. Gary Stewart (Minister without Portfolio): Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to call orders 6 to 17 inclusive, so that they may be moved and debated simultaneously.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Stewart has asked for unanimous consent to move government orders 6 through 17.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: We do not have consent.

Hon Mr Stewart: I call the sixth order.

Clerk Assistant (Ms Deborah Deller): The sixth order, concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education.

Hon Mr Stewart: I move concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education.

Hon Mr Stewart: Excuse me. Sorry, Mr Speaker, I'm learning slowly.

I move concurrence in supply for the following ministries and offices—

The Acting Speaker: No. The order we have before us for debate is concurrence for the Ministry of Education. It is now time to debate that.

Hon Mr Stewart: For the Ministry of Education.

The Acting Speaker: That's correct. The member for Northumberland.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: You had me slightly confused. I'm sorry. The member for Northumberland.

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Can you check whether or not there's a quorum present, please?

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Mr Caplan: Wrong member.

The Acting Speaker: No, it should go to the opposition first, I'm told. I'm sorry. I apologize to the member for Northumberland.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Ordinarily the procedure is different, but this does allow us in the opposition to begin.

I wish to raise a number of issues of significance. You will know that I have on a number of occasions raised the issue of school closings, and with the Ministry of Education concurrences and estimates being dealt with in this assembly and its committees, it's important that we canvass these issues.

A major problem that we have in St Catharines and indeed throughout Niagara at this time revolves around school closings. This is not exclusive to our area, but it is very important. Our board of education, the District School Board of Niagara, which is the public school board in the area, is faced with the dilemma of a provincial funding formula which is inflexible and provincial rules which militate in favour of school boards closing schools as opposed to keeping neighbourhood schools open even when the neighbourhood does not have a large number of children but a sufficient number to have a school in existence.

In the city of St Catharines there has been a review going on—if I can be parochial in saying St Catharines—dealing with a number of these schools. In our particular case, in the central part of St Catharines, schools that

have been talked about and now are facing the axe are Consolidated school, which has been a long-standing and existing school, and Victoria school. Both have quite a history in this city. They are older schools. They serve neighbourhoods which have been in existence for a long period of time and which are at present in transition.

In the north end of the city, the controversy has revolved around the potential closing of one, two or three of these schools. At the present time, the board is discussing the closing of three of these schools, those schools being Dalewood school, Lakebreeze school and Maplewood school. You can be assured that the parents of the children going to these schools are very concerned about the potential closing. They recognize the great advantages of smaller neighbourhood schools.

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First of all, the children who are going to those schools, and indeed the parents of those children, feel safer in an atmosphere where they don't have to travel a long distance going to the schools. It's not a matter of lack of exercise or somebody being too lazy to go too far. It's a matter of personal safety for these children and it is a great advantage to have them going to a school within easy walking distance of their homes. They have then, at these schools, children in their own neighbourhoods, children they know, families they know.

Because of the size of these schools—that is, the enrolment in these schools—you can be assured that the teachers, the non-teaching staff and the administrative staff get to know the students much better because there are fewer students. They know their problems, they know their challenges, they know their strengths, and they can relate well to the neighbourhood and to the parents. It certainly is, in each of these instances, the desire of the parents in that area to see their children going to a neighbourhood school.

For the community at large, there is an advantage as well, and that advantage is well known; that is, the school buildings are used invariably for community activities. I often think of the Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, those kinds of activities, sports organizations using the building, other community organizations using classrooms or the library or the gymnasium or an auditorium. That's a great advantage to that neighbourhood and to the community at large.

There is the property itself in each of these cases: the green space, the recreational space, the opportunity for children and indeed others to use the property for sports and recreational purposes and simply as a green space within a neighbourhood.

Once the school is sold and the property is disposed of, it is gone. It's not as though they are going to mothball the schools, keep them in existence and then somehow reopen them. The schools will be gone, the property will be redeveloped, and the neighbourhood itself will lose a genuine asset. If you look at the value of the homes and the resale of homes in the neighbourhood as well, they go down as a result of schools being lost. That's one of the assets when people, particularly those with chil-

dren, are deciding where they are going to locate. One of the important factors for people with school-age children is the availability of a close school. This is particularly true at the elementary level, much more so probably than at the secondary school level, and particularly again for the younger grades, where you have junior kindergarten and kindergarten and grades 1, 2, 3, 4 and so on.

The schools also can be used for daycare purposes. They're a wonderful facility for the purposes of pre-school children receiving daycare, which is now an essential service in our communities. As Dr Fraser Mustard has said on many occasions, the earlier these children have access to a learning environment, the better off they are. He's made this presentation both to the government and to opposition people—

The Acting Speaker: Order. Chief government whip. Stop the clock.

Hon Mr Stewart: Mr Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to call orders 6 through 17 inclusive so that they may be moved and debated simultaneously.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Stewart has asked for unanimous consent to deal with concurrences 6 through 17 inclusive. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Mr Stewart: I move concurrence in supply for the following ministries and offices:

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- Ministry of the Environment
- Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology
- Ministry of Economic Development and Trade
- Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation
- Ministry of Community and Social Services
- Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities
- Ministry of Transportation
- Ministry of Northern Development and Mines
- Ministry of Natural Resources
- Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs

The Acting Speaker: Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for—

Mr Caplan: Dispense.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed.

The member for St Catharines has the floor.

Mr Bradley: To continue my expression of concern on behalf of parents in my community—and I suspect right across Ontario, because I was out at a rally in front of the Parliament Building a couple of days ago where students from Metropolitan Toronto were gathering and asking that their schools be kept open.

In addition to a very inflexible funding formula which confines boards of education, there are incentives for the boards to sell schools. Then they can utilize the money, I suppose, to build other schools. The problem is that you are going to have areas of communities where there are virtually no schools left, and if we follow the pattern, what happens is that in older neighbourhoods families do become older; they become, instead of parents, grandparents. Then they move to different accommodation, often to apartments or townhouses, or they downsize in some way. So what we need, of course, is schools in

those neighbourhoods once again, but the neighbourhoods are built up and the schools are no longer available. The boards of education are, in essence, placed under the gun.

The province smiles because they don't have to worry. The Liberal education critic, Gerard Kennedy, asked the Minister of Education a question the other day; she simply fobbed it off by saying it's the local school board's decision. If the local school board had the flexibility to deal with these matters, it would be much easier. This is not to suggest that never in the history of any community will there be a school that closes, but it will allow the kind of flexibility that allows a school board to look long-term at its needs and obligations and allow them to keep open some neighbourhood schools, which are genuine assets.

I remember a presentation made at the University of Toronto not long ago by James Kunstler where he said we would in fact—he's a futurist as well as being a person familiar with urban architecture and municipal planning issues, and his prediction was that we would be going back to neighbourhood schools, that the large factory-type schools would start disappearing. I don't have this specifically within my own jurisdiction.

I'll tell you who else I feel bad for, and that's the people who are in smaller towns where, for instance, their high school might be the only high school for many miles. When they close that down, that's lost to the community and the students are on buses for a long period of time. In a petition that I've read in the House on a number of occasions I've pointed out some of the assets to the smaller schools that people have brought to my attention. There was a suggestion that the dropout rates for the smaller neighbourhood schools tend to be less, a lower dropout rate than in the large schools that students have to travel a long way to get to; that the participation rate in extracurricular activities tends to be much greater in a neighbourhood school—and it makes sense because they're there and there's not as much time lost in travel, there's not as much concern about movement after dark, that is, students travelling to and from the school after dark.

The students tend to know one another in the smaller school setting. The principal, vice-principal—if there is a vice-principal left in the school these days—the teachers and the custodial staff, the secretarial staff, tend to know students on a much more intimate basis, in other words a better basis, and know who should be in the school and who shouldn't be in the school, where those schools are smaller. So I can understand why the parents from Maplewood school and the parents from Lakebreeze school and from Dalewood and from Victoria and from Consolidated are very concerned when they see the potential of those schools being closed and why they would rally against that and why I'm supportive of the smaller neighbourhood school concept.

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I hope our board of education will take that into consideration, even though I know how confined they are in

their decision-making process by an outdated, outmoded, unfortunate and inflexible funding formula and set of rules and regulations from the Ontario Ministry of Education, all designed, of course, to simply save money, as opposed to investing, necessarily, in education. All this while the province is embarking upon tax cuts which will cost provincial revenues some \$3.7 billion, \$2.2 billion of that being in the corporate tax cut that is forthcoming, about \$950 million in personal income tax cuts and of course the new vouchers, essentially, that will be provided to those who want to put their children in the private school system—private schools which will not be under the same rules and regulations as the public school system. So I make that plea to this government, that they change that system immediately so that boards of education can make decisions which are more favourable to neighbourhood schools.

I notice we are also dealing with the concurrences for the Ministry of Health. Members have noted that I've been on my feet a number of times talking about the problem of macular degeneration. Usually it's age-related. When people get a little older, they have a problem with macular degeneration. There is a treatment for some people—not all of the people, but some of the people—called Visudyne. Visudyne has been approved by Health Canada, because that's what you need. You can't simply allow a drug to be used that hasn't been approved appropriately. I know my leader said five other provincial governments—I think it's now up to about seven other provincial governments—now fund that treatment. A full series of treatments can cost \$15,000, because the treatments are about \$2,500 or \$2,600 apiece. They're about \$1,800 for the Visudyne itself, and then the doctor applying the treatment charges another sum of money on top of that. So it's about \$2,500, to put it in round terms.

There are people who have actually said, "I'm not going to proceed with it. I can't afford it."

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): What's the success rate?

Mr Bradley: The success rate is about 73%. The member asks a good question.

I know it costs money; I'm mindful of that. But it seems like a good idea. The province said it was going to have a decision in February of this year on the use of Visudyne, and we've still not had that decision. I look at all the other provinces and they all face pressures financially. The federal government, the provincial governments and the local governments all face those pressures. I would hope that we would have an ecumenical and non-partisan effort in this House to try to get Visudyne approved under conditions that are acceptable to the Ministry of Health. It is not to be experimental; it is a proven drug that works, that in some cases can reverse the problem with certain kinds of macular degeneration, and in other cases has had pretty remarkable results. If we can have that covered by the Ontario drug benefit plan, that would be a great advantage.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think this is a most riveting presentation by the member for St Catharines, but there is no quorum. We need a quorum.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Mr Bradley: So I hope, because ophthalmologists across this province, particularly those who use this treatment, are convinced that it makes a major difference. The people who have had the treatment who have benefited from it are immensely thankful for that treatment, but unfortunately we have a circumstance where there are people who are forgoing that treatment because they cannot afford it. That is most unfortunate because it is, as I say, a full treatment. If you were to have a full treatment, it could cost \$15,000. This is saving someone's sight. This is not cosmetic surgery or something of that nature. This is saving someone's sight.

Mr Ouellette: Does it bring it back or stop further degeneration?

Mr Bradley: The member asked, "Does it bring the full sight back?" I've heard of cases where the sight was being lost and it has come back, but mostly it arrests what's happening as the sight is leaving. It arrests the leaving of the sight.

The company that produces it is in Mississauga. I forget the name of the company, but it produces Visudyne. It's produced right here in the province of Ontario.

I have raised this, as you know, on a number of occasions in this House and I have to share with some of my colleagues an annoyance about this. You would know what this is like, each one of us. Lyn McLeod has raised this several times. A number of members of the Liberal caucus have raised this issue in this House a number of times, including myself—asked questions, made statements and so on, included it in speeches.

I picked up last Friday's St Catharines Standard and the headline was, "Peter Kormos Raises Issue of Macular Degeneration." The next day, the editorial in the St Catharines Standard says, "We Agree with Peter Kormos," and included two sentences in his speech. I commended Peter the other day. I said, "That's wonderful, to be able to get that." I get the people who phone me and say, "Why aren't you raising it as well?" That's the frustration of this particular place, that having raised it dozens of times, my colleague from Niagara Centre raises it once and he has a good story in the local newspaper, and then an editorial saying they agree with him.

So good for him. I commend him for that. I just did want to indicate to the people who think that it hadn't been raised before that it had been raised dozens of times in this Legislature before. I say that particularly to the editorial page editor of the St Catharines Standard, who perhaps missed the fact that it had been raised many times before in this Legislature.

I'm told that I'm sharing the time with my friend from Kingston and the Islands, so I'm going to allow the time to move to my friend in the New Democratic Party now.

Mr Bisson: Maybe if I raise an issue it will make the editorial in your community as well. It feels so good for the Liberals to cry that one, because that's how we feel sometimes.

I want to raise a number of issues in this particular concurrent supply motion because as members here we know, but those people watching on television—there is always a couple of hundred thousand people watching these debates. It allows us under concurrent supply to basically deal with all of the issues of the ministry because we're voting on the monies to be spent in all of the ministries across the provincial government. That allows me to do a number of things, and I want to highlight a really interesting book that I read. It just came out last Thursday. The author is Erik Peters, the auditor of the province of Ontario. I've got to get myself an autographed copy, because it seems that the copy I've got is autographed, but it's a lithographed autograph. I want the auditor to sign my report, because it is just a magnificent piece of work.

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Basically, I read this story over the weekend. It's a great book. I recommend all my friends and all those people who may not be my friends to read it, because it's an interesting book; it tells a very good story. It tells a story about the bad old Conservative government that was elected in 1995, that came to this Legislature and said, "We are going to be the common sense government. We're going to show you how to manage government like a business." The contention that the Tories were putting forward was that governments in the past—New Democrats, Liberals and Tories—didn't know how to manage, because certainly they had done everything wrong. This new style of management that the Tories were now bringing forward in a regenerated mould as a bunch of Alliance MPPs here in Ontario was that they were going to change things. They were going to change the way we did business, they were going to make government run like a business, they were going to get rid of all those pesky civil servants and they were going to privatize things, where need be, or just not replace workers at all. The contention, again, was that civil servants and legislation just get in the way. "It's just a terrible thing how business and the province can't properly operate," said the Tories, "because of the role of government."

I read the auditor's report on the weekend. As I say, I recommend the book to all my friends. I imagine it's going to be republished, a second and third edition after people have looked at this particular book, because it's so interesting. Do you know what the moral of the story is at the end, when you've read the book? It says the government does not know how to manage. When you read the auditor's entire report, the thing that comes in over and over again as you go through the various sections, where the auditor looks at the practices of the

Tory government when it comes to managing the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and the list goes on, is that these guys don't know how to manage and the revolution has broken down. What he basically says is simply this: we have laid off so many workers across the various ministries of the province of Ontario that in many cases the ministries themselves are not able to fulfill the mandate that they have been charged to do by way of legislation and by way of the people through this Parliament. I'll just give you a couple of examples.

The ministry, for example, decided that it wanted to do a whole road safety program, something that is laudable, something that all members in the House can support, no question; we all want to make the roads safer. They made this great fanfare that this whole road safety initiative was going to be a great thing. We all thought that was a great thing. The problem is, the Ministry of Transportation staffing got decimated by reductions in that ministry, and because the ministry was decimated as far as staffing, they were not able to implement the road safety agenda. As a result of that, we've got all kinds of problems within the Ministry of Transportation that, quite frankly, could put public safety at risk.

One of the things the auditor pointed out, for example, is that we have 30,000 people today who are driving on the highways of Ontario whose doctors have said these people shouldn't have drivers' licences because of medical conditions. Imagine that, Mr Speaker. You're driving down Highway 17 on the way to Elliot Lake someday in your constituency, or I on Highway 11 on my way to Hearst, or my good friend Mr Caplan down the 401, going to visit somebody around the 905 area. There are people, 30,000 of them out there, who are driving today on the roads of Ontario who potentially should not have a driver's licence.

Mr Caplan: How did that happen?

Mr Bisson: I'm going to get to that.

Now, I want to say for the purpose of debate, not all 30,000 of them should be revoked, because I'm sure some of them are OK by now, but they've allowed a cumulative 30,000 people not to be processed. That means a doctor saw somebody in his or her clinic, said, "This person is a stroke victim, this person has epilepsy, this person has a condition that prevents him from driving," signs the paperwork, sends it off to the ministry and says, "This person's licence should be revoked." Because the ministry didn't have the staff to process this information, the licence never got withdrawn. As a result, the auditor is saying public road safety is at risk because we do not have the ministry staff to be able to organize and process this information.

It comes back to the main point of the book, and that's why I recommend this book. It's great reading. Again, the author is Erik Peters. He's the auditor of Ontario and he writes this wonderful book that's called the 2001 Annual Report of the Provincial Auditor of Ontario. I ask you to get it. It's great reading, and not bedtime reading

either, because we don't want to put you to sleep when you read this thing. It basically says that when government refuses to be the government—and like Mike Harris says, "We're the anti-government government"—things break down.

In this case, in the Ministry of Transportation, it certainly broke down, because what we have now is 30,000 people in the system who were supposed to have their driver's licence revoked and never did. The auditor says this is bad for public safety.

Here's a scarier one, again within the Ministry of Transportation. I'm using that because I'm the critic for transportation. There are over 300 drivers who have had their licences reinstated after they were charged, convicted and had their license revoked—guess for what?—for being impaired on our highways. This is a government that tried to make a big fanfare in the first session, when they first got elected in 1995, that they were going to do all kinds of stuff in order to make our highways safer when it comes to drunk drivers, something every government in the past has worked on: the Tory government under Davis and Frank Miller; Mr Peterson and Mr Rae; and Mr Harris. We've all worked on this issue. We don't want to politicize drunk driving because we all understand that as parties we've all worked on that issue to remove drunk drivers from our roads and make the rules a lot harsher.

But because the Ministry of Transportation does not have the staff to administer the cancellation of drivers' licences and their reissuance, we've got 300 people who got their licence back by error. That's shocking. Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, the MADD organization, must be over the deep end on this. They obviously understand, as most of us do, that that means we have 300 dangerous drivers back on the road who potentially will drink again, get behind the wheel and drive their car while impaired. That is sending a really strong message.

I just want to say that we know the biggest way to stop people from doing something like drunk driving is the fear of getting caught. Deterrence is the biggest way to stop people from doing something that's illegal. People in Ontario may think, "Oh, geez, I can get my licence back when I'm drinking and driving. Maybe I don't have to take it too seriously when it comes to the issue of drunk driving." I hope that doesn't happen.

Again, all members of the Legislature—the Tories, the New Democrats and the Liberals—agree more has to be done to make our highways safer and not allow drunk drivers on the highways. But the thing that really blows my mind is that the auditor in his book says, "My God, you guys have bungled it again." If you want to be the anti-government, if you want to be the government that dismantles government, that's the kind of stuff that happens: the system breaks down.

The auditor gets into the issue of food safety. Staffing of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment has been decimated. Since the government took power in 1995, the Ministry of the Environment has lost over 50% of the staff they had in 1995.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Food lost a number of staff as well. The number of inspectors who inspect abattoirs and various food processing facilities has been reduced significantly under this government. Why did the government do that? Because the government said, "Oh, them pesky people just get in the way. We can't allow those inspectors to go bother those honest individuals operating abattoirs and food processing facilities." Most of them are honest, but the minister and the government don't like the idea of having those pesky inspectors out there, getting in the way of business.

The auditor goes out and inspects abattoirs and food-handling facilities in Ontario and says, "There's a serious public safety issue here," because where ministry inspectors have gone and inspected, they've found deficiencies. When they reported to the ministry, it wasn't followed up. Why? It wasn't followed up in a timely way because they did not have the ministry staff to do the follow-up. So potentially there's an abattoir somewhere in Ontario that processes, let's say, beef or chicken or whatever it might be and E coli contamination could be found in the meat. The meat would be reported as having a problem and a follow-up inspection should be done, but because there were no ministry staff to do the follow-up, nothing happened for six to eight to 10 months after. So potentially people would be eating tainted food because we didn't have the capacity to follow up on inspection.

On top of that, the auditor says—the auditor doesn't say this part; we say it. The government says, "Don't worry, we laid off"—what was it, about 120 food inspectors when this government took office? We're down significantly. I heard in the debate last night that it's eight. Is it eight?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's down to eight.

1630

Mr Bisson: Down to eight from 120. The government says, "Oh, don't worry about it. Everything is under control. We're going to privatize the inspectors, because we know, by God, that the private sector does it better." So they have gone out and tried to privatize. And the auditor says that where you have privatized—and he lists the examples in here—there is no case where it can be verified that the government (a) saved any money and (b) in the end gave better services to the citizens of the province.

So the book is interesting to read. The author, Mr Erik Peters, the auditor of Ontario, says, basically—I'm paraphrasing—where the government has privatized, the system has not worked: we haven't saved money; there's no better services. And where we've downsized, the system has failed.

It's clear to me that the Common Sense Revolution is in deep trouble. Why? For the reasons we've outlined. So I say as a New Democrat that we have to rethink how we do things. That's why our caucus, over the next winter, is going to be talking about the ideas that we think need to be brought to Ontarians so that there are some new ideas for a new time here in the province of Ontario.

Ms Martel: MTO?

Mr Bisson: Yes, I was about to go to that one. I was going to talk to MTO in about a second. Oh, you've got the page for me. Even better. I like you; thank you very much. My, I've got some really helpful colleagues over here: my good friend and colleague from Nickel Belt.

Anyway, to just finish that particular point, the Common Sense Revolution, it's clear, is in trouble and what we need to start doing on this point is proposing ideas for this new millennium to make sure that there are clear alternatives to what the Tories are offering the public of Ontario. We, the New Democrats, will be talking to Ontarians directly over the next months to talk about what kinds of things we need to be doing in order to ensure public safety on a number of these issues, and proposing other ideas.

I want to return to the auditor's report, because I was particularly interested in the section that deals with the outsourcing. Now, what's outsourcing? Well, you remember Ernie Eves, that guy who's running for leadership of the Tory party? He stood in the House here when he was the finance minister back in about 1996 when I asked him a question. I said, "Mr Minister, can you prove to us that you're going to save any money when it comes to privatizing winter road maintenance? Demonstrate to us that there's going to be savings and demonstrate to us there will be better service, and then it's put up or shut up, right?" The minister stood up in the House and said, "No problem. I'm telling you that if we don't save 5% when it comes to privatizing highway maintenance on our highways across the province, it will not be worth doing this outsourcing initiative."

The auditor has gone back. The auditor has done the original audit, back in—1998 or 1999, Shelley?

Ms Martel: It was 1999.

Mr Bisson: And now the auditor has gone back, re-examined it again and his conclusion is very simple: "We reviewed the report prepared by the consultants and obtained information from the report's authors in answer to a number of questions. The consultants informed us that they had been engaged as consultants, not as an 'independent auditor'...."

What he's saying here is that the ministry, to try to prove their numbers, that they saved money, hired some consultants. The consultants went out, basically were given their marching orders by the Tories and then wrote up a report and said, "Ta-dah! We saved some money." And the auditor is saying, "Prove your numbers. The numbers don't add up." So the consultants say, "We were engaged as consultants, not as independent auditors." So the ministry has not been able to demonstrate that it saved any money, and the consultants that they hired, quite frankly, were bought off to say whatever it is that the ministry wanted to have said when it comes to highway privatization.

The other thing he goes on to say is, "The consultants' report does not provide the necessary audit assurance to demonstrate the savings actually achieved from outsourcing because sufficient analysis was not done to verify the savings." He lists an example: "Almost half of

the reported \$11 million in savings to the maintenance program was due to an adjustment for inflationary pressures that was uniformly applied to expenditures for the 1998-99 fiscal year without regard to which of the expenditures may have been subject to lower inflationary pressures."

So what they did was say, "Oh, let's apply an inflationary number on all this money. Ah, we'll play around with the numbers a bit to suit the numbers we want and we'll be able to show that we saved money." The auditor says, "Jig's up. Caught you. Uh-uh, you can't do that." It goes on to say, "We therefore concluded that the consultants' work cited by the ministry does not sufficiently support the ministry's claims of actual savings achieved from outsourcing. It is also unlikely that the consultants' report can be used to support the achievement of the 5% savings target set by the Management Board of Cabinet. In addition, we noted that the consultants observed that several cost estimates for the pilot contract were based on historical information...." and even that information was wrong.

So we haven't saved the money. It's in fact costing us more money. If you look at the 1999 report—I think it's about five or six examples of where we've outsourced—five are costing us more money. There's only one that we saved any money on. The other thing he says is, "You've allowed the contractors to get so big that there is now no competition within the contractors' community to drive the price down." You know supply and demand: if there's lots of competition, supposedly the price will go down. Well, what you've done is you've made the contractor so big, giving all the contracts to one contractor, that nobody else is big enough to compete with that particular contractor and now there is no competition. So we've gone from a publicly controlled, publicly funded system to a publicly funded private system that has no competition. It's the worst possible situation of both worlds.

I only have about 20 minutes left and I know my friend and colleague from Nickel Belt would like to speak on a number of issues. With that, I will leave the rest of the time for my colleague.

The Acting Speaker: I'll use this time to make this announcement. Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Timmins-James Bay has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities concerning Collège des Grands Lacs.

Mr Galt: I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words on this motion, the concurrence motion, a most important motion as it relates to funding and to approve the estimates that are before the government, probably the most important motion that might come before the House in any given year.

As we talk about estimates and funding, I think it's important that we spend a few minutes just looking at the economic statement, the Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, that was delivered by the Honourable Jim Flaherty on November 6. In spite of the downturn of the

economy that we're currently experiencing in Ontario and, for that matter, in North America, there's a lot of good news in there.

We talk about a few lost jobs and some plants that have shut down, when in fact since we took office some 824,000 net new jobs have been created in Ontario. But the one that I hadn't heard before that came out in this statement was the fact that the average income, the average take-home pay, has gone up by some 20%, and that's been over roughly a five-year period, when inflation has been at about 2% to 2.5%. So in five years that would be roughly 10% or 12%, and the take-home pay has increased by 20%. Maybe that's why at this time of year just before Christmas, if you go shopping in one of the shopping malls you'll find that there are not too many parking spaces left; you'll find that the shops are quite crowded. That's related to that 20% increase in take-home pay—more dollars to spend on various things for the family.

It's also interesting to note that over 600,000 people have now broken welfare dependency. What a vicious circle so many people have been caught in, and many are now off.

The other piece of good news that came out then is that we're on track for balancing a third budget three years in a row. That's indeed pretty good news, and I'll speak a little more about how that budget is going to be balanced in a few minutes. There's just no question in my mind that that's going to happen.

Also, we've heard a lot of talk from the other side of the House about our credit rating. Through the late 1990s in our first term there was a lot of hooting and hollering going on, "Your credit rating hasn't improved." It certainly plummeted in the first half of the 1990s and, lo and behold, the credit rating now is improving and it's based on the track record of our government.

A little bad news that was in that particular statement related to the growth. The growth expected is not as great as we had hoped for and has been adjusted to the economy growing at about 1.1% this year and 1.3% next year, versus 2.3% for this year and 3.6% next year as previously predicted. Certainly there's a lot of anticipation of what's coming down the road, looking at something like 2003 when growth will be back to about 4.3%. These are private sector forecasts.

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I said I was going to comment about the balanced budget. Starting with the Honourable Ernie Eves, they were setting aside some funds in case of a rainy day, and the rainy day came on September 11, with the disastrous occurrences in New York City and Washington. That \$1 billion was set aside for those occasions, and to keep the books balanced, out of that we'll be lifting approximately \$300 million to ensure the books will be balanced. But that still means \$700 million will be left over, over and above what's being paid off on the debt, that will be there for debt retirement purposes.

There's no question the government is on track for another balanced budget. We look forward to next spring,

when we hope and expect there will be a fourth consecutive balanced budget.

In spite of all that, we've been able to increase health care spending by 6.9%. That's up a percentage point from the budget predicted last spring, and working toward 5.9%, that indicates that of the \$6.9 billion we've increased in spending since we took office, \$6 billion has gone to health care and most of the rest of the other billion has gone to education.

When you look at something like \$6 billion more per year going to health care than when we took office, that works out to a little over \$500 for every man, woman and child. It's just unfortunate that I can't stand here and say the same for the federal government, because they have not come through. They certainly have not come through with any funding. Since Brian Mulroney was in office, the Mulroney government, they've gone from 18% funding down to a low of as much as 11%. It's back up now to 14%, but some of that is one-time funding. If they were going to go to that 18% level when they took office, that would mean another \$2 billion per year. But, really, if they got back to the original agreement of 50-50 funding that was there back in the early 1970s—they're cheating people in Ontario out of some \$7 billion in health care every year. That's a tremendous amount of money that the people of Ontario are being beat on, to be quite honest.

I hear the opposition saying, "Well, if you didn't have these tax cuts, then you'd have these funds to help with this program or that program," when in fact the kind of stimulus of the economy that has occurred since back in 1995, mostly through tax cuts giving confidence to consumers, giving confidence to investors in Ontario—we have stimulated the economy. People have been investing. Jobs have been created. The end result has been about a \$15-billion increase in tax revenues. That's up from \$30 billion. That's a 50% increase in some five, six years here in Ontario. If we hadn't been doing that, there's absolutely no question that that \$6 billion that we've increased would not be there for health care. You would see some very serious problems in the system, and certainly the federal government is not going to come through to assist, even though it's the Canada Health Act. You would think, with the Canada Health Act, that they would be committed to health care in Canada when in fact they obviously are not.

The other area of extreme disappointment with the federal government following the September 11 disaster was that the Prime Minister was very slow off the mark to say very much, to do anything, to give some consolation to the Americans, to help people, especially in Ontario, feel safer. Thank heaven for the Premier of Ontario coming out with some very definitive statements. He talked about a safer Ontario. He talked about the security perimeter. He immediately had I think roughly a million and a half dollars to assist those folks who lived in Ontario who had someone in their family who was killed in those accidents so that they could go to New York or Washington to tidy up some of those loose ends.

I think it was within 36 hours of that attack that it was out there. This \$30 million that has been set aside will enable Emergency Measures Ontario to offer municipalities more help with community emergency planning. Secondly, it will build on anti-terrorism training facilities for local police and, third, it will build an emergency management training centre for firefighters and ambulance personnel.

There's been some recent criticism about the accelerated tax cuts here in Ontario, both through income tax as well as for business. It was moved from January 1 up to October 1, and that's being confirmed in the budget bill that's presently before the House. That reinvested back into the province some \$176 million to help encourage the economy.

As we talk about tax cuts, I get just a little bit excited, because I see what they're now doing in Ottawa. Even though they laughed back in 1995, they laughed in 1996, they laughed in 1997, they quit laughing, and now they're starting to bring forth the tax cuts to stimulate the economy for the very same reasons as the province of Ontario. It's just good to see that, in spite of their laughing earlier, they now realize the importance. I heard Chrétien saying, in downturns, in recessionary times, it's important to cut taxes to stimulate the economy. This is the time to do it. They're in a good position to protect the economy here in Canada, in particular the province of Ontario. It's just good to see that this is happening.

Even the Liberal government in BC has taken several pages out of the book of the government here in Ontario. Look at what's happening out there. They're Liberal in name only; they are certainly acting more as a Conservative government. Regardless of the name, they understand how it works.

As I look back at some of the things that came out in that economic statement—the \$100 to low- and middle-income working families, a one-time payment for some 367,000 children. I hope that by using some of the lists from the federal government, we don't fall into the same category they did with their rebate for heating when they paid 1,600 people in jail; some 4,000 people who were probably mostly in the tropics, working in Third World countries, received a \$400 rebate for heating. Thank heavens for the Auditor General, who identified this kind of thing. I just hope that by using the federal mailing list, we don't find the same kind of mess with this one. I know that our Minister of Finance will double-check and ensure that will not be happening.

The last point that was in this particular economic statement talks about accountability to the taxpayer. We have had many bills on accountability. As a matter of fact, I would suggest accountability is a hallmark of our government. Certainly, the taxpayers appreciate it.

Interjections.

Mr Galt: I see them waving the auditor's report. They're not waving the Liberal auditor's report from Ottawa: just \$16.3 billion in grants that they can't keep track of. Even half of that, even a quarter of it, would roll to the provinces to help with health care. But they'd rather give it out in a slush fund to help with the election

campaigns. As a matter of fact, that's when the \$400 rebate went out, just before the last election. It looked like it was buying votes. Whether it was or not, the timing was ideal for that.

The Minister of Finance promoting the idea of a value-for-money audit, and also reflecting on the Taxpayer Protection Act and the Balanced Budget Act—so there's no question; I just wanted to review that financial statement. There's no question that Ontario is indeed on the right track. We'll get these estimates and the future funding approved.

I'm sure the opposition would like to support some of these, because they like to be there for announcements, whether it's for a new bridge, a new sewage treatment system or a Trillium grant. They love to be there to cut the ribbon, but they really enjoy voting against all of the budget bills that make it possible. I would think there's a conflict of interest. I would think they'd be very embarrassed to go out and cut these ribbons, when there are investments being made and they have voted against them here in this Legislature.

I'll leave it at that. I know there are two more to speak in our caucus. I look forward to their comments and I look forward to the support from the opposition benches as we move this concurrence bill through the House.

1650

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Let me start off by saying that I always enjoy the member from Northumberland because he is very clear in his opinion. He is part of the good guys and the government in Ottawa are the bad guys and everything that goes along with it. Of course, everybody knows that there is good and bad in everything, whether you're talking about one government or another government. I am not going to justify any misexpenditure of funds federally, in the same way that he shouldn't try to justify any misexpenditure of funds provincially. When money is spent inappropriately by government, whether it's a provincial or a federal government, then the taxpayers should get upset because it is our money that's being expended. We expect every government that we're involved with in one way or another—provincial, federal or municipal—to expend properly the hard-earned dollars that you and I and all the people out there have worked for, that we pay in our taxes. That goes without saying.

That's why we have individuals like the auditors—the Provincial Auditor here and the Auditor General federally—to hold government accountable. I am totally in agreement with that. If they find programs that have been mismanaged and money that hasn't been properly expended, they should bring it to the public's attention. They should make sure that the government is accountable, that those kinds of misexpenditures will not reoccur in the future. It's as simple as that. But for the member to say that the Harris government has got it all right and somebody else has got it all wrong is absolute nonsense.

The unfortunate part of course is that government is all about choices. If you go on the basis that all of our money should be expended properly in all the various

programs, in whatever programs are out there that help people to live their lives to the fullest potential and to get the kind of care they need to the fullest potential, then you ask, "What is the role of government in all this?" It's about choices. The choice this government has made in the province of Ontario is that it's more important to have a large corporate tax cut of \$2.2 billion than to properly fund health care, education, community care, social programs and everything else that government is involved in. That's the choice. They've made that choice.

When the member gets all excited about tax cuts, let's make one thing perfectly clear: as far as I know, everybody out there would like to pay as little as possible in taxes. We are no different than they are or the NDP members or what have you. The problem is that if we don't fund the programs that give people an equal chance in life in one way or another, then we get a dysfunctional society, and not the kind of society that you and I want our society in Canada and in Ontario to be. That's where the fundamental difference comes in.

What they are basically saying is that as a result of what happened on September 11, we should go ahead with the corporate tax cuts and the personal income tax cuts, when there are people out there saying, "It is totally the wrong way to go." Security of the person has become a much greater issue. The economy is slowing down and therefore the revenues aren't coming in as quickly as possible. You don't have to take my figures on that. I always like using the government's own figures.

Take a look at the financial statement that was filed by Mr Flaherty, our Minister of Finance, earlier this month, or was it late last month? It clearly shows that the taxation revenue the Ontario government is getting in—from personal income tax, from corporate tax, from a whole bunch of categories—is less than last year. Whether the deficit at the end of the year is going to be \$1 billion or \$5 billion, as the Chair of Management Board has said, or whatever the amount is, the point is that the way it looks right now, the government has two choices. If there is going to be less revenue than they anticipated, they can either cut back on their income tax cuts or cut back on the various programs that are out there, mainly in health care and education because that's about two thirds of all the money that's being expended provincially, or run deficits. I think we've all agreed that we don't want the province, that we don't want the government to run a deficit, because if they run a deficit, it means that whatever the amount of the deficit is, whether it's \$1 billion, \$2 billion or \$3 billion, it would simply be added on to the already large debt we have in this province of some \$115 billion.

One of the financial aspects I always find very interesting is that in the case of the province of Ontario, we spend more money on servicing the provincial debt than we do on all the social programs the province is involved in. We spend \$9.7 billion on servicing our provincial debt, and that's at a time when interest rates are at an all-time low, and we only spend \$7.9 billion on all the social

programs that are being carried out by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Yes, government is about choices, and the choice on this side of the House quite clearly is this: rather than having a corporate income tax cut of \$2.2 billion, rather than having further personal income tax cuts, let's spend the money on rebuilding our health care infrastructure. Let's put some of that money into the community care access centres.

I see that the associate minister of health is in the House. I brought in a file of headlines from across the province, all dealing with the same thing. That is the fact that our community care access centres, the organizations that provide home care and nursing care to people who need it, to the vulnerable who come out of hospitals quicker and sicker, to the people who are aged and want to stay in their own homes for a longer period of time rather than being in a nursing home or a rest home—it's something we all want—but who need help, who need people there to give them a hand—perhaps it's a nurse or a homemaker for two or three hours a day.

I say to the minister, rather than going through—what would you call it?—this fiasco of getting rid of the existing boards that have served a very useful function in our community, rather than getting involved in that and setting up another board that you will completely appoint and that you will control by your appointment of the chief administrative officers, why don't you deal with the real issue and put more money into home care than you budgeted for last year? Put in the same money you actually expended in that area.

I know the minister will say, "We're spending 70% more than four or five years ago." But four or five years ago, we had many more hospitals open in this province. We had people staying in hospitals longer. We had many more beds in hospitals that people stayed in for a much longer period of time.

The government of the day and the health care restructuring commissioner, Mr Duncan Sinclair, a man I greatly admire and know very well, made it absolutely clear, and the government said they were going to live up to that commitment, that they were going to take the savings they received in the health care budget as a result of the closing of the hospitals and the closing of the various beds etc and put that money into health care. So when she says, "The budget's gone up 70%," it doesn't mean a thing.

The real question is, how much money did you save as a result of the beds you closed five or six years ago, and as a result of the hospitals you closed? I realize the health care budget is a lot bigger than it was then, because we've got 600,000 more people in Ontario and we're older now. But the real issue is that you gave a commitment that the money you were going to save, as a result of closing beds and closing hospitals, was going to be put into community care so there would be nursing and home care available for those people who would not be in hospitals as a result of the closure of the beds.

Now, come up with that number, and I would love to have the Provincial Auditor actually do a study in that area, as to how much money you've actually saved. I realize the entire budget has grown because of the aging of the population, the increase in the population and a whole variety of other factors. But how much money did you actually save? I bet you anything that the amount of money you saved from all these closures doesn't even come close to the so-called 70% increase in the home care budgets of the entire province, and they know that's true.

1700

One of the unfortunate aspects of question period on a day-to-day basis in this House is that, as more senior parliamentarians than I have said on so many different occasions, you can ask the questions but it doesn't necessarily mean you're going to get an answer. You ask a question specifically the way I'm asking it now and you get some other answer that's got nothing to do with the question you're really asking.

"Woman Denied Home Care": in a letter to the editor she says, "I shudder to think of the patients who return home from the hospital and do not have family members and friends to provide post-surgical care."

That is a real issue. I can tell you, from my own involvement in the home care and hospital scene over the last four months, that I've come to the conclusion that if you don't have someone in your family to actually advocate or speak up for that elderly person—that elderly mother or aunt or father or grandparent who may be in hospital—then the likelihood of their being treated or dealt with appropriately is a lot less. It's got nothing to do with the people who actually work in the hospitals. They are grossly overworked.

From having been in hospitals from 11 o'clock at night to 2 o'clock in the morning, I personally was amazed at how the nurses and other health care workers ran around the Kingston General Hospital, which I'm thinking of, trying to deal with patients' needs. The conclusion I came to was quite clearly that our hospitals do not, as a whole, have enough qualified people to work and give the care to the patients that is required. That's why nowadays they want families to be involved on a much greater basis than they ever used to.

I can remember the day when at the hospital, when I worked there many years ago, visitors were only allowed for an hour in the afternoon and an hour in the evening. Other than that, you got in the way of all the health care professionals. Now, if somebody is in a dire situation, they almost beg you to stay there, because they simply do not have the personnel available to look after the people who are really sick. I know what I'm talking about; I'm talking from personal experience here.

I want to leave some time for my friend from Scarborough. The choice is clear: you have made your choice in that you think it's more important to have a \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut. You think it's more important to even accelerate that tax cut by three months. But you can't even get the benefit of that down to the people as

quickly as you want to. You said you wanted to accelerate it because it was needed, because of the economic crisis we're in or the economic situation that has arisen as a result of the September 11 tragedy. You can't even deliver on that as quickly as you said. You've made the wrong choice.

I think what the people of Ontario want is good-quality health care and good-quality education. The program you've outlined in your budget document simply isn't good enough.

Let me say, as a final comment, because we're dealing with concurrence in supply here, that my hat's off to the vast majority of the people who work for the province of Ontario in the various ministries. Most of those people, the vast majority, do an absolutely outstanding job. They've been demoralized by this government's attitude and approach over the last five to six years. I say to those people, keep it up, because a better day will come when you will be respected and the services you provide for the people of Ontario will be appreciated again by a caring and compassionate government.

The Acting Speaker: I would like to bring members' attention to a visitor in the west members' gallery. We have with us Monique Jérôme-Forget, who is a member of the National Assembly of Quebec and the finance critic in the assembly. Welcome.

Further debate?

Ms Martel: It's a pleasure for me to participate in this debate this afternoon on concurrences in supply. It gives members an opportunity to make some comments about what the government is spending its money on and whether we think it's a wise investment, and frankly to make some comments about what the government should be spending some money on and isn't. In this case, the government should be spending money on a whole host of programs that I consider to be particularly important, but because this government chooses to throw \$2.3 billion out the door at its friends in the corporate sector, it cannot. I regret that the government chooses to hang on to that very philosophical decision to give money to its wealthy corporate friends rather than investing in some areas that I'm going to point out today, investments that are particularly important to me.

I'm going to be focusing almost exclusively on the Ministry of Community and Social Services and the minister responsible for children in my remarks, in three areas that I want to deal with. The first has to deal with regulated child care. Speaker, you will know that over the course of the November break there was a document leaked by the Toronto Star, a document that came from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, a proposal to cut \$200 million from the regulated child care budget and family resource program budget in this province. When the House resumed, my colleague Marilyn Churley and I and my leader, Howard Hampton, raised questions with the minister about this particular document, to get at what his intent was with respect to this proposal to cut \$200 million from these budgets.

You will recall that the minister said that the document was so unimportant that it didn't even reach his desk, which leads to the question of who authorized the work on it in the first place, because I find it hard to believe that some minion working in the Ministry of Community and Social Services would off the top of their head just have come forward out of the clear blue with a proposal to cut \$200 million from regulated child care. Look, I was a minister; it doesn't work like that. Someone in the minister's office gives direction to the bureaucracy to look at cuts, and there is no doubt in my mind that the minister's office was fully aware of this proposal and fully aware of the implications.

If it was so unimportant, and if the minister has no intention of cutting \$200 million from regulated child care and from family resource programs, then the minister should stand in his place and say unequivocally, clearly, categorically that he will not proceed with that \$200-million cut to this important budget. It's interesting that although he was asked on several occasions to do just that, he did not. It's also interesting that he was asked then, if this document was so unimportant and so frivolous, to stand in his place and say that the budget for regulated child care and for family resource programs in the province would be protected. Indeed, given that this minister is getting money from the federal government—over \$844 million over the next five years—he should stand in his place and say he would invest in these two important areas of children's services. Did the minister do that? No, he did not.

I am left, regrettably, with the impression that the minister's office was fully aware of this document; indeed, that someone in the minister's office—I won't say it was the minister himself, but someone in his office—clearly authorized the work to be done to look at \$200 million of cuts to child care and family resource programs and what the implication would be. If he doesn't want to dismiss that outright, I assume that he's still considering that. I assume, based on the rumours which have been rampant in this Legislature for the last couple of weeks, that the government is now facing a \$5-billion deficit and the way the government is going to deal with that is to make major cuts to important programs, because we all know the government has itself in a corner, doesn't it?

The government has, on the one hand, passed legislation which says cabinet ministers can't run a deficit or they'll be personally liable and, on the other, has made a very clear commitment that what's most important to it is its \$2.3 billion worth of tax cuts to its friends in the corporate sector. So if there is a deficit, and I believe that cabinet is surely looking at one, it's going to be dealt with in terms of cuts to important programs.

I think people who care about regulated child care and people who care about family resource programs should be very worried. They should be worried because the current government's track record, especially with respect to regulated child care, is dismal indeed. Let's look at what the Conservative government has done with respect to

regulated child care since being elected. This is a government that, between 1995 and 1998, cut 15% from the regulated child care budget in the province. The government is spending \$43.41 less per child, per regulated space, in the province right now.

1710

This is a government that has cancelled all capital funding for child care centres: for the creation of new centres, for the renovation of existing centres and for playground equipment. Even though this same government has brought forward standards on playground equipment that essentially have forced many child care centres to have to remove their equipment—many schools as well—yet the government has no money to allow these centres now to put up new, safer equipment.

This is a government that has capped pay equity for child care workers at December 1998 levels. It's important to note that not only child care workers are affected; many workers who are in long-term-care facilities, who work in libraries, who deal in homes for the aged have all been capped as well. This is a sector where people are dealing with what should be our most important resource, our children, and their proxy pay equity has been capped by this government. That really shows the lack of commitment by this government to paying these people—predominantly women—who do incredible work with our kids what they are entitled to. We know that five of the unions that deal with most of these workers are back in court for the second time, trying to get the court to force the government to do what this government refuses to do, which is, pay proxy pay equity to these workers.

This is a government that has also put a cap on wage enhancement for child care workers, again demonstrating the lack of commitment it has to these workers, who do incredible work with our children, day in, day out, six, seven, eight hours a day. This government put a cap on the wage enhancements that could go to these workers. So you have the horrible scenario in many child care centres where former employees still get a wage enhancement and those employees who were hired after the cap are getting a different rate of pay for doing the same job. That is unfair. This government should lift the freeze on wage enhancement.

This is a government that has also downloaded 20% of the child care and family resource budget onto municipalities, and we know that, given everything else the government has downloaded onto municipalities, many are having great difficulty funding all the services they're supposed to provide. That has put many child care centres, whether they be in schools or independent centres, at risk. A \$20-million cut to the child care budget in this province would effectively destroy regulated child care. Maybe that's what the minister wants.

As someone who has been a consumer of regulated child care for our children, I would find it ridiculous and insane if the government did that. As a parent, my choice was to have our children in safe, regulated care that used principles of early childhood development, so I could be sure that my children were safe when I went to work

every day. Other parents want that choice too, but if \$200 million is cut from the budget, there will be no choice for those families who now use regulated care because too many centres will be forced to close if that is the magnitude of the cuts.

I just want to read into the record some of the letters we've been getting from people as a result of this leaked document. This comes from Dorothy Spracklin, who is from Hamilton. She says the following:

“Dear Minister Baird,

“I am a taxpayer, voter, and parent of Alora Hunnighan, age 17 months. My daughter attends Heritage Green Daycare, which is a licensed, full-fee facility. Your proposed \$200-million cuts will decimate regulated and affordable child care in our community and make no economic or common sense.

“Please take a moment to understand how these changes will affect our family. I am a single parent. I work full time as an injury claims adjuster and earn a modest living to try to independently support my daughter.

“However, my current daycare costs are approximately \$600 per month. Because I work full time, I do not qualify for any kind of subsidy. I am the ‘working poor.’

“As a ... single parent family, any type of cost increase for daycare would give me no option but to forgo my career and go on social assistance, as there is no one at home to care for my daughter. How many mothers would be forced to take this action? What kind of impact would that ... have on your budget? Will this not sabotage any efforts the government has been making to get people off of welfare, such as Ontario Works?”

Here is another one from Ottawa, Rachele Thibodeau, who says the following:

“Dear Minister Baird,

“I am writing to you on a matter of great concern—child care. Do I use child care? No. Am I a parent? No. Will I become a parent in the future? No. Am I perhaps a business person, worried about loss of staff? No. Do I work in child care? No. In fact, most people would assume that child care would not matter to me at all, but it does. I believe that the care of children is a shared responsibility, just like education or health care. Of course, parents bear the ultimate responsibility for their children, but a healthy society should make it possible for people with children to have the choice to work or not. Many people would not be able to work if they didn't have an affordable, safe, regulated and reliable source of child care.”

This was an interesting one because it comes from a member of the Early Years Steering Committee. This woman would have been appointed by this minister to sit on the Early Years Steering Committee for Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph. It's Dr Angela Hofstra. She says the following:

“As a committee member, having read the Mustard-McCain report, a parent of a preschooler, a pharmacist and a PhD-level researcher, I am well aware of how

critical development is in the preschool years. As minister responsible for the early years, I trust that you are familiar with the Mustard-McCain report and are cognizant of the importance of our children's early years. It seems incredible to me that as a member of the Early Years Steering Committee I am mandated to increase awareness of the importance of our children's early years on behalf of a government that would slash funding for preschoolers. It is horribly two-faced to act one way with federal dollars, the Early Years project, and quite another with provincial dollars. Furthermore, the federal dollars could have been put toward regulated child care."

I agree. This government will get \$844 million over the next five years from the federal government for early childhood development. This year, they didn't spend one red cent of the \$114 million on regulated child care, when every other province in this country did. I call on this government to condemn the proposal to cut \$200 million and for the minister to stand in his place and say not only will he protect the current budget for regulated child care and family resources, indeed he will use federal dollars to enhance regulated child care and family resources in Ontario.

The next topic I want to deal with are family resource programs. Not only are they at risk in terms of this \$200-million-cut proposal, but they are also at risk because of this government's Early Years centres proposal. In May of this year, the government announced it would spend \$30 million of the \$114 million it's receiving from the federal government to establish Early Years centres in Ontario, one per riding. On September 20, the minister announced that 41 ridings would go through stage one to get their Early Years centres. This document outlining planning the Ontario Early Years Centres was released. What's interesting in the document is that the government makes it very clear that existing family resource centres, which have existed in this province for over 30 years, which provide important services to families and caregivers, which were the model used by Mustard and McCain in the Early Years report—this government is now directing community planning agencies to make concrete decisions about the survival or not of family resource programs in the province.

The Ministry of Consumer and Social Services currently funds about 185 family resource programs in the province. They spend about \$19 million a year. The government is now directing local committees to make a decision about whether or not they're going to exist after this Early Years process is over. I think the government should have simply used the existing system of family resource programs to develop Early Years centres. They have been in existence for 30 years. They provide important services to families like drop-in centres, toy-lending libraries, child care, referral for child care, parenting courses, courses with respect to speech and language development, nutritional programming, after-school programs. Many provide summer school programs for people who would otherwise need child care. They provide a broad range of services, the same services that the

government outlines as core or essential for Early Years centres in this document.

Since the document already says we're going to use existing agencies to become Early Years centres, the existing family resource network should have been the group the minister looked to. But no, in this document you see that clearly local programs have to decide whether or not a local family resource program will become the Early Years centre, will become a satellite of the Early Years centre or indeed won't be able to participate at all and will lose all of their provincial funding, which they now use to provide important services to families.

We had a press conference here on Monday with Strawberry Patch. It's a family resource program in the riding of Ms Munro. Strawberry Patch found out last week that because they were not chosen to be the Early Years centre for that North York riding and because they were not chosen to be the satellite, they were left out of the process altogether and they're going to lose the funding they currently have from the province to deliver services. They provide services to 600 families. They had 10,000 visits from families for drop-in last year alone: a summer school program, a toy lending library, nutritional support, parenting support, the whole nine yards, all of the services the government talks about being necessary in an Early Years centre. They found out last week that they were iced out, that they were cut out, that they weren't going to become a part of this. So they went very public and lobbied very hard, went to see the mayors in the surrounding areas whose constituents use the services, and now the committee is looking at this issue again, with no guarantee they're still going to get their funding.

1720

What worries me is that the minister is using this process, the creation of Early Years centres, to get rid of many family resource programs in this province. There is no need for it. There's no need, because the fact of the matter is that the \$30 million the minister is using to create these allegedly new Early Years centres is \$30 million of federal money. The government is going to take that \$30 million and subsidize \$30 million worth of provincial children's programs. They have a net saving of \$30 million through this scheme. They certainly have \$19 million to continue to fund all existing family resource programs in the province. In fact, because they have savings, they've got money to enhance, improve on, fund more of the family resource programs in the province that don't receive provincial funding. You see, there are about 453 in the province now, and only 185 actually receive provincial funding. This was a model endorsed by McCain and Mustard. The government should stop this process of looking for other agencies to become Early Years centres.

The government should do two things immediately. It should commit that no family resource program now receiving provincial dollars will lose its dollars as a result of this Early Years process, and the government should

sit down with the Ontario Association of Family Resource Programs to determine how those programs can become Early Years centres in the next round of funding that will occur. That's what this minister should do, and the minister should do it immediately. We know that family resource programs like Strawberry Patch are being told, as we speak, that they are out of this process and they are going to lose their dollars to provide important services for families.

The final issue I want to deal with has to do with the Family Responsibility Office, which now comes under the Ministry of Community and Social Services. It's interesting that in the auditor's most recent report he did a follow-up to his extensive report in 1999. He made the observation that many of the recommendations indeed still had to be implemented by the minister. This is with respect to recommendations made in 1999. There are two very important ones with respect to case management and the computer system. It's very clear under the two reviews in this area that the auditor has just reviewed that this government absolutely has to have a new computer system at the Family Responsibility Office if they are to continue with their obligation, and it is an important obligation, to ensure that support payments go to women and children who need them.

It was recommended again by the auditor on page 272 that the ministry take steps to improve the computer system. It has been recommended in the last three annual reports by the Ombudsman of this province that this ministry, this government, also take steps to have a new computer system installed at the Family Responsibility Office so that the government's obligation to women and children can be met. We continue in a situation where this has not been done, where the computer system crashes, guaranteed, once a week if not three times a week, where people have no idea what's happening with their payments and where the staff themselves have serious frustrations about trying to do the best job they can with an inadequate computer system.

One final note with respect to case management, because the auditor also said the government has to improve its case management—it needs a new computer system to do that. We received an e-mail a couple of weeks ago stating that as the government moves to a case management system where each case manager will have their own set of files, each case manager is now going to have 2,000 files that they're supposed to deal with. I can tell you that if this government does not increase its staffing at the Family Responsibility Office to deal with that scenario, the whole system will completely fall apart, and it will be women and children who won't receive the support payments they are entitled to.

Mr Frank Klees (Oak Ridges): I'm pleased to participate in the debate this afternoon on concurrences and estimates. You know, Speaker, the day was when Oak Ridges meant very little to people in this province. Certainly now Oak Ridges is known across the province as the epicentre of a very important provincial policy. That's a great segue to some comments I would like to

make. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to members of this House because a very rare occasion happened, and that is where members of both sides of the House voted in favour of a bill unanimously. That was of course the Oak Ridges moraine bill, which has done what other governments have failed to do over the last number of years. In fact, our government has done more in the last six months to protect the environment—natural features, the Oak Ridges moraine—than any other previous government in this province.

I want to take this opportunity to give some credit to some of the individuals who have led the charge on this issue. Of course the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Honourable Chris Hodgson, brought together people who, quite frankly, prior to his initiative in bringing together a panel of people to deliberate over the course of months on how we could effectively balance this issue of growth with the demands of preserving the environment, would not speak to each other.

On the one hand we had environmentalists, who were very focused on one thing only, and that was to preserve the environment. Much of their lobbying was that there should be no further growth whatsoever on the Oak Ridges moraine. On the other hand we had landowners, builders and developers who make a living out of turning sod into pavement and putting up homes and commercial buildings. Of course, in a civilized society we would expect that we could balance all of that off, although it seemed very difficult. It looked as though these two parties would never meet in terms of actually finding a resolution.

But here we are. We are in the House today. We voted unanimously for second reading. That bill is now going to committee, this evening as a matter of fact, under the chairmanship of Steve Gilchrist, who also deserves credit along the way here in terms of bringing a resolution to this issue. At that public hearing people will have an opportunity, as they have had over the last number of weeks since this bill was originally introduced, to come forward with their recommendations in terms of how certain changes should take place and certain amendments that should be considered by the government before third reading and before this bill is actually put into law.

I want to clarify that while there are those who are suggesting that there has not been sufficient time to consult on this issue, no other piece of legislation, no other issue that has had the attention of this House has had more attention than the Oak Ridges moraine, than the Oak Ridges moraine legislation. There has not been an issue before this House where the first piece of legislation that was implemented in this House was to put an absolute freeze on any activity relative to that particular issue. That took place here, six months ago now, in this House. Within a matter of five minutes—and this was historic, I believe—first, second and third reading took place to put in place an absolute freeze on development on the Oak Ridges moraine, to give a period of pause so that we could consult with people in this province, con-

sult with all stakeholders, to determine how we could best bring a long-term resolution to this issue.

1730

Other governments have tried. Other governments have gone so far as to study the issue. The Liberal government under the Kanter report, to the credit of that government, at least initiated a process. However, they did not go beyond the Kanter report, which provided some guidelines, but that was it. There was no comprehensive legislation, there were no firm guidelines and there was no specific framework for development on the Oak Ridges moraine.

Subsequently the NDP government of that day, 1990 through 1995, also commissioned reports. They came up with some more guidelines, but again stopped short of actually implementing firm legislation that would give, once and for all, long-term protection to the environmentally sensitive areas of the Oak Ridges moraine.

I'm pleased to be part of a government that had the courage and, I might say, had the wisdom to bring all parties together, all stakeholders together, so that we can very shortly have a piece of legislation that will protect forever the sensitive areas of the moraine.

I want to take a minute and explain to those who are observing that there will be some development activity on that remaining 8% of the moraine lands that are designated as settlement areas. Ninety-two per cent of the Oak Ridges moraine is protected forever. There is 8% of settlement area where, in consultation with the municipalities that will have the responsibility to oversee any applications for development, there will be an opportunity to develop in a reasonable way and in a very specific way under new rules and guidelines much stricter than before in those settlement areas.

Mr Caplan: How about the Bayview Avenue extension?

Mr Klees: The member opposite indicated he has a concern with the Bayview extension. I've been getting calls from some constituents as to why they would see activity continuing on the Bayview extension. I'm glad he opened the discussion for that. I'd like to speak to that and perhaps clarify for him why that road extension is continuing.

First of all, as I mentioned before, we have a problem in government. The problem is balancing the needs of many conflicting interests and stakeholders. In my constituency, which is located in Richmond Hill and Whitchurch-Stouffville in the northern part of Markham—a high growth area—many times I receive delegations in my office from people who complain about the gridlock, about the traffic problems we have in that area. So local municipalities, the region, have been doing extensive work in terms of studying how we can deal with this issue of transit and transportation and solve that traffic gridlock for our constituents.

One of the solutions is to put another thoroughfare through York region north to south—an extension of Bayview Avenue—because of the feed that takes place of traffic into that area. This was not done without a great

deal of planning. In fact, planning has taken place over the last number of years. The Bayview extension has had extensive hearings. There have been environmental assessments done on that property. It was determined by local studies that this was the best location for an extension of a thoroughfare, and there are also guarantees, as a result of the legislation, that as that road is constructed every opportunity will be taken to preserve the environmentally sensitive areas. There will be as little damage done as possible to the environment.

On the one hand, you cannot argue that local governments and the provincial government must support appropriate transit and do what they can to address the gridlock issues, and then when a road is planned after many years and a great deal of study has gone into it show up at the job site and say, "No, you cannot cut down any trees for this road," as the member opposite, Mr Colle, has done on a number of occasions.

Quite frankly, he's becoming a laughingstock in York region. The question people in York region are asking is, "Why is Mr Colle not spending a little more time in his own constituency?" Obviously all his problems are solved there. I get calls from people in his constituency who are saying, "Why don't we ever see him at home? Why don't we ever see him in our constituency?" It's because he's in York region, walking the moraine in his hiking boots. Our advice to him is to concentrate on his own problems, dealing with some of the issues that are relevant to his constituency, and allow the people of York region to deal with theirs.

I want to just simply—

Mr Gerretsen: Why are you being so parochial?

Mr Klees: If the member for Kingston and the Islands would like to participate in this debate, I'm sure he can arrange it with his House leader. I'll be pleased, when he speaks, to listen to him. He has a habit of carping while others are speaking in this House. I look forward to anything intelligent he might have to say on this issue.

In summary, relative to the Oak Ridges moraine, let me just say that it will be a historic piece of legislation that will be passed in this House. After there have been some amendments to that bill, I trust that on third reading there will be the same kind of unanimous support for that bill as we had on second reading. It will be in the public interest. It will be in the interest of Ontarians for generations to come. It will be a credit to this government. It will be a credit to the leadership of Mike Harris. It will be a credit to the leadership of Chris Hodgson, the minister responsible.

It has not been easy. It has been a long road. I have been pleased to be part of that debate, to have represented my constituents on this issue over the last number of years, and to have had the opportunity as well to see legislation come to the floor of this House that is going to deal with the Oak Ridges moraine, having advocated for that at a time when it was not government policy, and at, I might say, some risk in terms of the process as we all know it. I was pleased to do so. I want to give credit to the many constituents who spent hours and hours in

public meetings advocating for this cause. This is to their credit.

I want to turn my attention to another issue. That issue relates to the health care field. We're dealing today in debate with concurrences and estimates. Much has been said about health care spending in this province. There are those who still would suggest that our government has somehow cut back on health care spending over the last number of years. Surely there are few, other than members opposite, who for their own partisan purposes—I don't understand how, in light of the evidence of estimates, of concurrences that are put on the floor of this House, they still have the audacity to go into the public realm and suggest this government has cut back on health care spending. It simply is not true.

1740

Mr Gerretsen: Talk to the people who need help.

Mr Klees: To the member for Kingston, who continues to carp, I know that the Speaker is probably attempting to ignore him. It's difficult to do so, particularly when his carping is irrelevant to the debate. Would that at least it would be on topic.

Our government has increased spending on health care substantially. What has happened over that same period of time is that the federal Liberal government has lost its way in health care. The federal Liberal government has not kept pace with health care spending, with the demands on health care, in this province. They should be ashamed of themselves.

I encourage our constituents across this province to call their federal member and simply ask the question, "Why have you moved from participating in health care funding 50% down to less than 17%?" Only then will people in this province begin to get a sense of the lack of responsibility on the part of the federal government.

I want to take this opportunity to give credit to another colleague, the Honourable Helen Johns, the associate minister of health, who has taken a very, very difficult issue and has begun to make some significant changes to improve community care access centres in this province. We know how important community care is. The elderly, the disadvantaged in our community, need support at home so that they can continue to live out their elder years at home. We in this government have made more strides to provide community care than any other single government in the history of this country. We are providing health care today where it is not being provided in any other province on the same level. However, we have had a problem, and the problem we have had is not necessarily a funding problem in that area but a problem in terms of how that service is being delivered.

In York region alone, over the last number of weeks I have had significant improvement in this area of service delivery. The waiting list has been reduced by some 45%, but what is interesting is that there has not been one nickel of additional funding over the last number of months. Why? Because what we are starting to address is the efficiency factor of delivering health care. What we're saying is that we are committed to health care, we

are committed to home care, but we want to ensure that we're doing it in an efficient way, we're doing it in such a way that we are honouring the client, the patient, but also honouring the taxpayer to whom we have a responsibility to deliver that health care in the most efficient and most practical way.

The Honourable Helen Johns has introduced legislation in this House that will take us a great giant step toward ensuring that we have greater responsibility in terms of how we deliver that care. What is going to happen over the next number of weeks is that we will have the responsibility of assessing the boards of directors of these community care access centres, the administrations of these agencies, and we will have the responsibility to ensure that people are placed in responsible positions in these boards who have the experience, who have the capability, who have the knowledge to manage these multimillion-dollar corporations, because effectively that's what they are.

The commitment that we have made to the people in this province, as we did to the people in York region, is that every need will be met, and will be met efficiently and effectively. That is the commitment to the people of this province. Anyone who is not experiencing that kind of responsiveness, we want to hear from them, because we will look into that and ensure that the appropriate measures are taken to do that. I know I can count on my colleague the Honourable Helen Johns to follow through on that.

I want to take this opportunity, because the time is running short this evening—I am on my way to my constituency and I'm conducting a public meeting tonight on a very important consumer protection issue. It has to do with the new home warranty program. I have had, unfortunately, a growing number of calls to my constituency office from individuals who are not getting satisfaction from the Ontario New Home Warranty Program. I will be conducting a public hearing on that. I invite people to come out to share their concerns. I've advised the Minister of Consumer and Business Services that we are looking into this. He will have representatives there. I will also have representatives there from the homebuilding industry, because I believe that the homebuilding industry wants to do the right thing. The Ontario New Home Warranty Program is there to meet the needs of consumers. If there are problems, we want to address them. I invite people to either call my office, if they want further information, or simply come to the Richmond Hill town offices where those meetings will take place this evening from 7:30 to 9. I look forward to hearing from them.

I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate. I am proud to be part of a government that is both fiscally and socially responsible. It is as we balance those issues that we are bringing good government and responsible government to the people of Ontario.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): In the few minutes I have, let me just address a couple of concerns that I'd like to raise, especially in regard to my constituency, Scarborough-Rouge River. Let me first put

things in perspective. As you know, this government, when they came into power, talked about how fiscally responsible they were going to be. The first thing they did: they said they were going to declare war on the poor. That's how they decided to have fiscal responsibility.

My understanding—and they can correct me if they can, and I'm sure they will—is that when they got into power the debt at the time was about \$88 billion. This government was really appalled at that because the NDP, who had governed before, had run the debt up. They thought that, as a fiscally responsible government, here's what they were going to do: they were going to put the house in order. Six years now they've been in power. Mr Speaker, you would maybe have read this and seen this. The debt today is \$115 billion. Tell me that is fiscally responsible. The member who just spoke earlier on said, "This is good, fiscally responsible government."

One would think, then, running in that direction, running in debt, paying a high cost to service this debt, that they would then make sure that they can account for all the money they collect in taxes; and that when they collect that money, they would spend it in a proper manner. The next move they made recently was they talked about not collecting \$2.2 billion in taxes; as a matter of fact, relieving their friends of that responsibility to share in this great province. Therefore, that amount of money would not be coming into the coffers in order to spend it on those who need it most.

As my colleague from Kingston and the Islands pointed out very explicitly, the fact is that if you do that, you're going to compromise on other projects. Who did they attack? They attacked the poor. Remember, they talked about a revolution and they declared it on the poor. The first action they took was to attack the poor and reduce their income by over 20%.

1750

As you look at this, you can see where they're going. I want in a few seconds to talk about housing. This government has done nothing about social or affordable housing. They blame it on the feds and download it on to municipalities. Recently the federal government came through by putting \$25,000 toward every affordable unit that can be built. What has this government come up with? I've heard it's a meagre \$2,000 per unit or something like that. I haven't heard a word out of them about how they came through very strongly on this.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Labour): You're running out of time.

Mr Curling: I'm not running out of time. Your government is running out of time.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. The time for debating these items has now expired. I will now place the questions.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will stack this vote.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will stack this vote.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Environment. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will stack this vote.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will stack this vote.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be stacked.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This vote will be stacked.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote will be stacked.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote will be stacked.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote will be stacked.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote will be stacked.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Natural Resources. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote will be stacked.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs. Shall the motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The vote will be stacked.

This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1755 to 1805.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education.

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

Ayes

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Harris, Michael D. | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Baird, John R. | Hodgson, Chris | Sampson, Rob |
| Barrett, Toby | Hudak, Tim | Snobelen, John |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Jackson, Cameron | Spina, Joseph |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Johns, Helen | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Clark, Brad | Kells, Morley | Stewart, R. Gary |
| Coburn, Brian | Klees, Frank | Stockwell, Chris |
| Cunningham, Dianne | Marland, Margaret | Tasca, Joseph N. |
| DeFaria, Carl | Martiniuk, Gerry | Tilson, David |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Maves, Bart | Tsubouchi, David H. |
| Elliott, Brenda | Mazzilli, Frank | Turnbull, David |
| Galt, Doug | Miller, Norm | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Gilchrist, Steve | Molinari, Tina R. | Wilson, Jim |
| Gill, Raminder | Mushinski, Marilyn | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Guzzo, Garry J. | O'Toole, John | Wood, Bob |
| Hardeman, Ernie | Ouellette, Jerry J. | |

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

Nays

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Bisson, Gilles | Curling, Alvin | McMeekin, Ted |
| Bountrogianni, Marie | Di Cocco, Caroline | Parsons, Ernie |
| Boyer, Claudette | Duncan, Dwight | Patten, Richard |
| Bradley, James J. | Gerretsen, John | Peters, Steve |
| Caplan, David | Levac, David | Phillips, Gerry |
| Conway, Sean G. | Marchese, Rosario | Prue, Michael |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Martel, Shelley | Ramsay, David |
| Crozier, Bruce | Martin, Tony | Ruprecht, Tony |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. All those in—

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Same vote.

The Acting Speaker: Same vote? Same vote.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of the Environment. Same vote? Same vote.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Energy, Science and Technology. Same vote? Same vote.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. Same vote? Same vote.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Recreation. Same vote? Same vote.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Same vote? Same vote.

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. Same vote? Same vote?

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Transportation. Same vote?

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. Same vote?

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Natural Resources. Same vote?

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Stewart has moved concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs. Same vote?

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 47; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

1810

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Pursuant to standing order 37(a), the member for Timmins-James Bay has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. This matter will be debated now. The member for Timmins-James Bay has up to five minutes for his presentation.

COLLÈGE DES GRANDS LACS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Where are you all going?

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Put five minutes back on the clock. We'll just wait for the room to clear.

The member for Timmins-James Bay.

M. Bisson : Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

Comme vous le savez, plus tôt cet après-midi, j'ai dirigé une question à la ministre des Collèges et Universités. La question que j'avais demandée était très simple, mais je pense qu'elle a mal compris, parce qu'elle m'a donné une réponse un peu différente de ce que j'avais demandé.

Je vais répéter. C'est bien simple. On sait qu'aujourd'hui, la Cour supérieure de l'Ontario a fait la décision que le conseil d'administration du Collège des Grands Lacs peut fermer ce collège. Comme vous le savez, je suis très déçu comme député, comme francophone et comme néo-démocrate que la cour et le collège ont fait cette décision. Mais on a besoin d'aller en avant avec le dossier.

Là, on se trouve dans la situation qu'il y a moins de 10 jours dans l'année scolaire pour le semestre d'automne. J'avais demandé à la ministre plus tôt cet après-midi si la ministre était préparée à accepter de donner des directions au conseil d'administration du Collège des Grands Lacs pour s'assurer que les élèves peuvent finir, au Collège des Grands Lacs, au moins le semestre d'automne. Pourquoi ? Comme vous le savez, les élèves, si on ferme le collège aujourd'hui, vont perdre non seulement l'année mais justement leur session d'automne, et ils n'auront pas l'habilité de s'inscrire à un autre collège francophone, comme Boréal ou Cité collégiale, pour le deuxième semestre.

Je vais demander à la ministre : je veux avoir l'assurance que la ministre elle-même va diriger—pas faire une suggestion mais diriger—le conseil d'administration du Collège des Grands Lacs de garder le collège ouvert pour les environ sept à 10 jours que ça va prendre pour finir le semestre qui va finir, je crois, au début du mois de décembre. On est déjà rendu au 5 décembre.

C'était la première partie de la question.

La deuxième partie de la question est très simple aussi. Comme vous le savez, les étudiants ont payé de leur argent de leur poche et ont travaillé très fort pour payer leurs frais de scolarité. Le Collège des Grands Lacs n'a pas gardé le contrat avec eux. Le Collège des Grands Lacs a dit, « On accepte vos frais de scolarité au commencement de l'année. Venez à notre collège. On est ouvert pour vous. » Mais à peine un mois après, ils ont fermé leurs portes.

J'ai demandé à la ministre, « Allez-vous assurer que les élèves qui sont présentement au collège qui n'ont pas été transférés à d'autres institutions—est-ce que la ministre va ordonner au collège et à l'administration qu'ils s'assurent que l'argent, les frais de scolarité, que ces élèves ont payé soit redonné directement aux élèves ? »

Deux parties de la question : remboursement des frais de scolarité aux élèves qui sont là présentement, et deuxièmement, pour les élèves qui sont encore là, est-ce qu'ils peuvent y finir leur semestre d'automne ?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): The member's questions were very direct and I'll try to be direct in my response. I'm unable to comment on the main motion—the member understands that—in this case because it is still before the courts. It needs to be made perfectly clear that the government remains committed to ensuring a high-quality college education for francophones in southwestern and central Ontario. That's our goal. As a government, our first priority has been, and will continue to be, to do everything we can in these situations to make sure that the institution helps the students complete their academic programs. The ministry will support the college through a managed process to ensure that students get the high-quality education they deserve.

Now directly to the member, the college will provide the opportunity for current first-year students to complete their semester. On the second one, first-year students who are still enrolled at the college, who in fact have prepaid their tuition for the second semester, will have their second semester tuition fees fully refunded. That may not be the exact question that you wanted to have answered. There have been four students who have already made other arrangements. They have not only made arrangements to move on for programming in other places, but they have, as individuals, made individual arrangements around finances, sometimes beyond tuition. Individual arrangements are being made. The ministry officials have been assured by the college that it is willing to help any remaining first-year students who wish to enrol in another educational institution in January. We would expect that, but we want to reassure them. Some of these arrangements are individual arrangements between the college and the students.

I'm pleased that the court has concluded this uncertainty for the students regarding the status of first-year classes, because I consider this to be resolved. It is now up to the college to make appropriate arrangements with every single student. That has been our practice in the past in these situations. The college may now proceed to implement its academic decision to close first-year classes this semester.

I know that the member is most interested. We've been trying to work together all along. If he has further questions, I of course prefer not to do late shows, but I will immediately respond to him as quickly as I can.

Mr Bisson: On a very quick point of order, Mr Speaker—

The Acting Speaker: No point of order. The motion to adjourn is deemed to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 6:45.

The House adjourned at 1818.

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