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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 23 May 2002

Jeudi 23 mai 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 23 May 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 23 mai 2002

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

FAIRNESS IS A TWO-WAY STREET ACT
(MINERS AND FORESTRY
WORKERS), 2002

LOI DE 2002 PORTANT QUE LA JUSTICE
N'EST PAS À SENS UNIQUE
(MINEURS ET TRAVAILLEURS
FORESTIERS)

Mr Ramsay moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 14, An Act to prohibit Quebec residents from working in certain mining and forestry occupations in Ontario / Projet de loi 14, Loi interdisant aux résidents du Québec d'exercer certaines professions minières et forestières en Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The Chair recognizes the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane. According to standing order 96, you have 10 minutes to debate.

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): It saddens me that I have to return to the Ontario Legislature with the very same bill I brought forward three years ago now to try to address a very chronic problem that not only affects the economy of my riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane but all of northeastern Ontario, and that also spills into some other parts of northern Ontario.

This government will be well aware that it recognized a similar problem that happened, and is still happening, in the construction industry affecting southeastern Ontario, particularly the Ottawa-Carleton area, and back in 1995 actually passed Bill 17, the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act, in regard to construction workers.

What my bill attempts to do today is basically parallel the thrust that the Harris government of that day took in regard to construction workers and to make sure the jurisdiction of this bill would include woodcutters, wood haulers and miners who work in this province from the province of Quebec. What this bill would do—it appears at first blush to be quite harsh in its approach—would be to restrict the ability of Quebec workers to come into Ontario in those three occupations until the Quebec government recognizes that it is a goal of all Canadians

to have free labour mobility right across this country and allows equal access for Ontario workers to work in the province of Quebec. I don't want to be, as a nation builder, establishing walls between our provinces, and that is not the intent of this bill.

This bill, like the government's previous bill, is basically a warning shot to the province of Quebec to say that we can no longer tolerate uneven treatment of labour mobility across this province and that all Canadians must have access to jobs right across this country, regardless of what province they live in. That's the intent of this bill. The bill spells out some penalties that would accrue to workers and companies if Quebec workers in these three occupations were hired. It also gives flexibility to the government through the Lieutenant Governor in Council to, by regulation, set aside different aspects of this bill once it becomes apparent that the Quebec government no longer restricts access to Ontarians working in the province of Quebec in these trades. It tries to complement what the government has previously done in regard to construction but applies it in three very important occupations that are a big part of the economy of northeastern Ontario.

It saddens me that I have to do this again because, since I last brought in this bill, our job opportunities continue to diminish in northeastern Ontario. Right across the north we continue to have tremendous out-migration of workers, particularly our youth. As I think members are aware, about two months ago Statistics Canada brought the stark reality home that I and others have felt anecdotally at home about how we have lost our population by publishing the population declines of northern Ontario over the last five years. They were quite shocking. One of the worst examples is in the community of Kirkland Lake, the largest municipality in my riding, which over the last five years has seen a population decline of 14%.

When I was first elected to the Ontario Legislature in 1985, Kirkland Lake had a population of 14,500. Today the population of Kirkland Lake is 8,600. Kirkland Lake in its glory days of gold mining in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s had a population of 26,000 at one time. As you know how towns are developed, the infrastructure that supports 26,000 people still remains in place, making it a very expensive challenge for the town council and the mayor there to maintain the infrastructure of that town. As the population continues to decline, we have to fight for every job that we can. We have to look at innovation—and I'm glad the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation is here to hear what is going to be

said about this bill in the House today—but we also have to protect the jobs that we have already and the jobs that naturally occur in our region. Whether we like it or not, northern Ontario traditionally has been dependent upon resource-extraction jobs. The prime employers in north-eastern Ontario are forestry, mining and agriculture. While we wish we had had the industrial revolution post-World War II that southern Ontario enjoyed with the development of the steel mills and the automobile industry, because of our penalty of geography, if you will, we never had that opportunity, and so we remain reliant upon these resource jobs as we try also to move into the new-economy jobs and look at developing call centres and other high-tech opportunities as they may arise.

1010

The jobs we do have we need to protect. More and more over the last five years we have been losing the jobs that should be ours in our industries, based on our resources, to workers from Quebec. As I've said previously, the province of Quebec has put up roadblocks for Ontarians working on their side of the border in similar jobs.

So it becomes necessary, as the government recognized in construction trades, to put a piece of legislation forward, not only to put that restriction there, but to send a signal to the province of Quebec that they have to be serious and sit down with our Ministry of Labour and negotiate a free mobility package between our two provinces.

I know northern New Brunswick, which shares a border with Quebec, also suffers much the same effects of this that we do in northeastern Ontario. They have a very similar problem there. To be fair to all Canadians, all Canadians must have free access into all provinces for job and labour mobility.

To give you a specific example, Noranda Mines owns mines, of course, in Rouyn-Noranda, Quebec, but they also have mines in Timmins and one just north of Kirkland Lake. The Kirkland Lake and Rouyn mines are about 100 kilometres apart. In Rouyn, it would be hard to find an Ontario miner working in that operation. In the Noranda mine in the Harker-Holloway area north of Kirkland Lake, over 50% of the workers are from Quebec. They commute on Highway 101 from Duparquette and Rouyn-Noranda and basically steal our jobs. That is a Quebec-based company that basically operates in Ontario and in Quebec, 100 kilometres apart. In the Quebec operation, there are no Ontario workers. In the Ontario operation, from time to time there are over 50% Quebec workers. Those jobs should be ours. If we can't have access to jobs in Quebec, then Quebecers shouldn't have access to our jobs here.

It is very similar in the forest industry. The two main jobs in forestry are woodcutters and wood haulers. Our wood is hauled out of the bush to our mills. So log hauling happens there. Once the logs are cut into lumber, that lumber is trucked into the United States. Domtar is an owner of a mill at Elk Lake—it's a part ownership; they're two-thirds owners. Domtar is a Quebec-based

company. Recently, they changed their trucking contract to a Quebec-based firm. Twenty-six truck drivers in the New Liskeard area, working for Grant Transport, lost their jobs to this Quebec company.

So part of this is not only restrictions being placed upon worker mobility by the government of Quebec; it's also part of the culture of Quebec-based companies that work in Ontario and insist on hiring subcontractors based in Quebec. This robs us of these job opportunities too. Part of this is also a cultural change that has to happen. This situation is getting worse as more and more Quebec-based companies are taking over Ontario resource jobs. So there are two issues here that need to be addressed.

I'm pleased to stand in my place today to bring this to the attention of the House. As the Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation, who is in the House today, would know, Ontario is a fast-growing province. But northern Ontario doesn't share in that economic growth. In fact, our economy is in decline, as reflected in our population statistics.

I think Ontario will not prosper unless all regions of the province share in that growth. That is my personal goal, that northern Ontario share somewhat in the total growth of this province. We need to make sure that all regions of Ontario share in the prosperity this province is developing, so that all Ontarians have an equal opportunity to raise a family, to be able to afford post-secondary education for their children and to have a good life in this province. This is not the case in northern Ontario. We are in rapid decline. I ask this House for support for this bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I rise today to state why the Legislature and the government have difficulty supporting the passage of Bill 14. I will be sharing my time with the member for Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and the member for Cambridge, esteemed colleagues all.

I want to begin by stating emphatically that the government is committed to the elimination of interprovincial trade and labour mobility barriers. As a result of some of the problems that have been encountered—and with due respect to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane, we fully understand the frustration, I think, that he and his local community have with their circumstances—in 1999 we introduced and passed the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act. This had to do with construction labour mobility, and the legislation had all-party support in this House.

This legislation came after decades of frustration with Quebec's restrictions and barriers in the construction industry, which prevented Ontario construction workers and contractors from working freely in that province. We consulted broadly with workers and contractors in the construction industry in eastern Ontario to determine what would work to level the playing field between the two provinces in that sector. The Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act came as a result of those consultations. Our government's legislation mirrored Quebec's restrictions

on Ontario residents. Now, Quebec workers and contractors who want to work on construction projects in Ontario face similar restrictions to those that Ontario residents face in Quebec.

We did not do this as a quick reaction to Quebec's system. For decades, Ontario negotiated, and we did our level best to try to level the playing field. Only when this did not work did the House pass the legislation, and in May 1999 we designated Quebec under the act. For a while it seemed to work. Quebec came back to the negotiating table, in fact with serious proposals. By November 1999, special negotiators from both provinces came to an agreement to implement new measures of access. We agreed to monitor this access for one year, which was subsequently extended to an additional year, ending November 2001.

Last December we returned again to negotiations with two outstanding issues: first, Ontario contractors were still unable to bid on any construction contracts tendered by Quebec crown corporations, and secondly, Quebec continued to refuse to recognize experienced but uncertified workers who are part of an Ontario contractor's workforce. These workers were able to work in the Hull sub-region only. We ran into a brick wall, simply speaking. Quebec would not move. We had no choice but to redesignate Quebec under the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act. This designation is now in place and will continue as long as Quebec has in place restrictive barriers against Ontario workers and contractors.

I want to point out that we are merely mirroring Quebec's restrictions. There is no outright ban on Quebec workers. But Bill 14, the bill we are debating today, in fact does the opposite. This bill bluntly proposes to restrict residents of Quebec from working in the mining and forestry industries in Ontario. To that extent, I would be very interested to see how the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell votes, because I know he is a strong proponent of fairness and certainly a strong proponent of the people of Quebec.

This bill does not attempt to mirror any restrictions that Ontario workers find in Quebec. It simply prohibits Quebec residents from working in Ontario, period, end of story. It does not try to level the playing field between Ontario and Quebec. Instead, it puts a blanket restriction on workers in that industry from working in Ontario at all.

Our government is committed to the elimination of interprovincial trade and labour mobility barriers. We remain committed to the protection of Ontario workers and the preservation of jobs. We support open and fair labour mobility in all sectors. However, we have strong concerns about Bill 14.

Unlike the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act, Bill 14 does not attempt to eliminate barriers between the two provinces. It actually enhances those barriers and makes them greater. It does not mirror the restrictions that Quebec puts on Ontario workers in forestry and mining; it creates new barriers by banning Quebec workers entirely from working in Ontario, and will not achieve

fairness in labour mobility and will not level the playing field.

Therefore, while we understand the frustration the member for Timiskaming has with his local economic situation, it is difficult for us to support his bill in this way.

1020

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): C'est avec plaisir que je me joins à mon collègue le député de Timiskaming-Cochrane et que je l'appuie dans les démarches qu'il a entreprises en déposant le projet de loi.

Le Canada est composé de 10 provinces et de trois territoires. Nous savons que le Québec se distingue beaucoup du reste du Canada dans plusieurs domaines, par exemple, l'entente canadienne sur la santé, dont le Québec fait province à part des autres. Jamais n'ont-ils voulu signer l'entente canadienne, entente signée par tous les autres provinces et territoires.

Today it is again a very important issue. I am sad to say that once again we will be talking about this issue in this House. Whether it be in the mining and forestry industry in northern Ontario or about the construction industry all along the Quebec-Ontario border, from Cornwall to Hawkesbury, from Rockland to Arnprior, from Arnprior to Pembroke, from Pembroke to Mattawa, from Mattawa to New Liskeard to Cochrane, the list goes on and on.

Not too long ago, I had a meeting with a group of people from Kapuskasing and Hearst. They were telling me how unfair it is up there in the forestry industry. Loggers from Ontario could not have access to the Quebec side, but Quebec transportation people were able to come in and pick up logs and deliver them to Quebec paper mills. They were telling me that Ontario truckers had to take the logs and dump them at the border so that Quebec truckers could pick them up, but the opposite doesn't work. They come here and pick up our wood with no limitation, with no restriction.

I was talking to a logger just last night, Gilles Mainville, from the Vankleek Hill-Alfred area. He was telling me how unfair it is at the present time in forestry with the Quebec government. Our MNR people had the Larose forest for many years. We were opening contracts, we were asking for submissions for tendering, and all that time Quebec contractors were getting the contracts. Why? It's because, having only a 30-minute drive to go to any of the paper mills in Masson or Thurso, we're getting \$2.80 less per tonne than Quebec contractors were able to get to take the wood to the mill. So we were overbid all the time, because it's the highest bidder who gets the contract from the MNR. Our people could not compete with those Quebec people because it was already unfair when we were delivering the wood to the mills in Thurso or Masson. This is one example.

Again, to go back to the North Bay area, the former Premier's riding, Miller Paving was telling me that there was no way they could compete with the Quebec contractors because they were not adding on the taxes. We

know when it is a contract that the provincial tax is not to be added to the bottom line but has to be incorporated in the tendering. But at no time was the tax added to a contract. We were losing millions and millions of dollars; I said at one time that we were losing as much as \$300 million a year.

I'm going to give you a good example of this unfairness that is going on. On March 9 the former Minister of Labour said, "No Quebec contractors will be allowed to bid on any publicly funded contract." Monsieur Rochon, the Minister of Labour of Quebec, made a statement at a press conference in Hull during that period of time that was on the radio and in the newspapers. He said, "At no time will we ever accept that Ontario contractors bid on a contract in Montreal"—at no time. This is to show you the unfairness that is going on with the Quebec government at the present time.

Black Electric, from Ottawa, was the lowest bidder on the Place du Portage contract in Hull. DPW had an estimate of \$302,000 for a contract. Black Electric has a master licence to work as a contractor in Quebec, but their home office is in Ottawa. Beaudoin Electrical from Quebec had a submission of \$469,000, I believe. Black Electric's was \$292,000. Black Electric did not get the contract because they had an Ontario address. It just shows you how unfair it is at the present time.

I was looking at another issue. Quebec Hydro had to do some work on the Ontario side to stabilize the shore of the river. They opened up the tenders but only Quebec companies were allowed to bid on the contract, even though we had Bertrand Construction from Ontario which specializes in this. They have a gravel pit, they have everything, but their address was in Ontario. It was to work in Ontario, but the contract was given by Hydro-Québec. We could not even do the job on the Ontario side because it was a Hydro-Québec contract. It just shows you again the unfairness we Ontarians are facing with the Quebec government every time. It's too bad that at the present time those Quebec construction workers who work in Ontario are not even allowed to work in Quebec. They have to come and work in Ontario.

At this time of year last year, I did stop a contract in eastern Ontario by a paving company called Bon Asphalte from Saint-Léonard. I told everyone who signed the contract at the time, "Are there any taxes added to it?" They said no. "Who have you made your cheque to?" They made it to cash. I said further, "Are you aware that when you give a contract to a Quebec contractor that is not registered with WSIB, the owner of the property becomes fully responsible if there is an accident on the property?"

My time is up, but I wish I was able to speak for another 20 or 30 minutes on that issue, because I'm fully aware and I think the members of the government across the aisle are fully aware of what this government has done to Ontario construction workers.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to Bill 14, An Act to prohibit Quebec residents from working in certain mining and forestry occupations in Ontario.

The member is really playing local politics here, because that's all it is about: local politics. That's what politics is about. I'll say that since he wants to play local politics, I'll look at the big picture.

When you look at Bill 14 in contrast to what we're trying to accomplish in this country, which is mobility rights for anyone who is a resident of this country to move across any province to work, I think that's the admirable objective we're trying to accomplish. Quite frankly, I don't know how this bill is not in conflict with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms with respect to economic mobility across the country.

Aside from that, when you look at what is trying to be accomplished here, you have to look at it from the point of view of, what would Quebec do in retaliation with respect to this bill in terms of workers from Ontario who may already be working in the province of Quebec? Did the member think that through when he put this piece of legislation together? Certainly there are people who come from other provinces, not just from Ontario, who would work in Quebec. I can't believe it's just that one-sided. I know there are issues with respect to the mining and forestry industries, but when you look at the types of occupations we're dealing with here, mining and forestry are highly skilled occupations. When you say, "We can't bring in these people who are already working here, in terms of these particular professions in the mining and the forestry industry," where are you going to find these highly skilled workers to work in our province? Quite frankly, that's what this country is about in terms of bringing in workers to do the work that's necessary for this country where we have openings. That's part of what makes this country great. But to target one province—certainly we have to work with them if there is a problem in terms of restrictions. I think that's what this government was trying to do when it introduced the Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act (Construction Labour Mobility), 1999. It was in response to barriers that Ontario construction workers and contractors find while trying to work in Quebec.

1030

Obviously, there is a problem that is identified by the member. We have to recognize that in terms of what he feels in the forestry and mining industries. That's something that obviously should be dealt with as we move from one province to the next. We also are neighboured by the province of Manitoba, so is the province of Manitoba to be the next on the list with respect to this particular type of legislation? I don't know why they would be.

What we have to accomplish here is having governments work together. We have to accomplish economic mobility. Certainly there are issues that every province faces, not only with respect to commerce but with respect to other issues that have to work. But to come out and basically say—and when you look at the preamble of the bill, I think it says it all. It says, "The province of Quebec continues to restrict the right of Ontario residents to work in certain occupations in the mining and forestry in-

dustries in Quebec. It is necessary for Ontario to impose similar restrictions until the province of Quebec removes its restrictions." The restrictions are that if you're a Quebec resident, you can't work in Ontario. I don't know what the problems are; the member hasn't really fleshed those out in terms of what Ontario workers are having problems with in the province of Quebec. He's not fleshing that out. He's basically saying, "Let's unilaterally impose a ban on people who are from Quebec." I don't know how blatant you can be with respect to trying to deal with an issue in terms of a person's residency. I think we're above that in this country; but obviously we're not when you want to play local politics, because that's what this is about.

Those are my comments with respect to this legislation. I won't support it. I don't know who's on his hit list next; maybe the province of Manitoba. But frankly, this is not what this country is about or what this government is about.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I want to commend the member for Timiskaming, Mr Ramsay, for bringing this issue forward, obviously to protect the interests of his constituents. Look, what all of us would like to see happen in any provincial trade circumstance is that there's free trade. What is ironic is that there has been signed a free trade agreement with the United States, and subsequent to that a North American free trade agreement involving the United States, Mexico and Canada. Yet some of the greatest restrictions that we face in terms of trade are interprovincial restrictions.

It seems to me that certainly the member for Prescott-Russell, the member for Timiskaming and other members of the House have made the case that what is fair for one province is fair for the other. I don't think we would see this bill—I know we wouldn't see this bill—before the House if indeed the Quebec government were dealing on a level playing field. If it were being fair to Canadian workers and Canadian businesses, then there would not be a problem. I don't think the member wants to get into yet another aspect of an interprovincial trade war, but he recognizes that the only way you're going to get action from the adjacent government, the present government of Quebec, is to bring forward a bill of this kind in the Legislature that invokes some penalties until such time as the restrictions are removed by the Quebec government on Ontario workers and Ontario businesses.

It's very frustrating if you listen to the members who represent ridings adjacent to the Quebec border, but I've even had calls from people who have called my constituency office who want to do some business in Quebec and said, "I thought the provincial government passed a bill some time ago which would allow me access into the Quebec market, yet I find this is not the case. They are allowed to operate in Ontario; we're not allowed to operate in Quebec."

So I commend the member for bringing forward this bill. I am totally surprised by the reaction of some of the government members to this. Back when it was fashionable to bash Quebec, they were large as life doing so.

Before they brought in their legislation, there were all kinds of questions, trumped-up questions, on the government side about this. Now, when they're asked to follow the leadership of the member for Timiskaming—and there's another part to the riding as well—

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Cochrane.

Mr Bradley: —Timiskaming-Cochrane, they don't seem to want to follow it. I support his bill, and I hope other members in the House will as well.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): First, let me make it quite clear that I will not be supporting this legislation. Let me explain why, because I want to make it quite clear that I doubt very much if I stand with Conservative members in their opposition to the legislation.

Look, I understand the bill's author's interests in presenting this bill to the Legislature. I wish it had been in the form of, let's say, a resolution, which would have perhaps permitted more members to be more sympathetic to it. I wish as well that it had distinguished between individuals as workers and operators, businesses, individuals operating as businesses or as contractors, because you'll note that quite specifically in section 2 it speaks to "no person," and of course it incorporates that broad definition of "person," including corporate body. "No person"—which includes any working woman or man—"shall work in Ontario as a miner" or a woodcutter. Similarly, it says, "No person"—which means an employer, corporate employer or otherwise—"shall employ ... a person resident in Quebec to work in Ontario as a miner" or as a woodcutter.

Now, the problem is that it imposes penalties for either the worker pursuing work—again, understanding the concerns that the member and some of his residents may have about Quebecers taking their jobs, I find that a regrettable perspective. What this tells people, tells working people—when we're talking about individuals working as miners or as woodcutters, we're not talking about big multinational corporate entities; we're talking about working women and men, just like our working women and men, who are doing their best to support themselves and their families in the situations that best enable them to do it.

Now, the problem is that, were this bill to pass, and were a prosecution to be initiated, the most inept first-year law student would have this turfed out of a court within five minutes. This province's Attorney General, notwithstanding his lacklustre reputation in our courts, would have no trouble defending the prosecution under this legislation, because, you see, the Supreme Court of Canada has already decided the issue. I regret to advise the author of the bill that the issue is moot now.

You see, back in 1989, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled specifically on the application of section 6 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It's not new law; it's old law. It has been around for a significant period of time. The court couldn't have been more clear. The court couldn't have been more specific about what section 6 of the charter means, because there were some

who would have argued, as was undoubtedly argued prior to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in 1989, that paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection 6(2) of the charter are to be interpreted conjunctively; I think that's the word lawyers use.

1040

Look, understand what section 6 of the charter says with respect to mobility rights, and in particular subsection (2), which is what's relevant here:

"Every citizen of Canada and every person who has the status of a permanent resident has the right

"(a) to move and take up residence in any province; and

"(b) to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in any province."

The words are pretty unequivocal. I suppose at the end of the day you either believe in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms or you don't. There are learned arguments that continue against the adoption of a Charter of Rights. Among others is the fact that the Charter of Rights constrains or restricts the ability of a Legislature, be it a provincial Legislature or the federal Parliament, to enact laws. That's exactly the point. It's supposed to. That's why most Canadians—I among them—endorse and embrace and applaud the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It quite clearly says to legislators that there are certain things you simply cannot legislate.

Regrettably there's a non obstante clause, and I'm not suspecting that the author of the bill proposes utilization of that in the act, although I'm concerned about how the enactment of a non obstante clause when you're dealing with interprovincial rights, specifically with section 6, would be responded to as compared to rights within the jurisdiction alone. Do you understand what I'm saying?

Let me tell you what happened in 1989 in the Supreme Court of Canada. It's the decision of *Black v. the Law Society of Alberta*. The Supreme Court effectively said that section 6, the mobility rights provision of the charter, "extends to citizens and permanent residents alike"—we understand that from reading the first part of subsection (2)—"the right to reside wherever one wishes in the country and to pursue the gaining of a livelihood without regard for provincial boundaries. Like other individual rights guaranteed by the charter, it must be interpreted generously...." The Supreme Court of Canada made very clear that the interpretation has to be a generous one, because undoubtedly the argument had been made—it was that restrictive argument, the conjunctive consideration of paragraphs (a) and (b). It must be interpreted generously "to achieve its purpose: to provide the right of citizens or permanent residents to move about the country, to reside where they wish and to pursue their livelihood," to work as miners, woodcutters, lawyers, waitresses, steelworkers, farm workers, what have you.

"While the provinces may regulate these rights"—which is the case, for instance, of lawyers; in other words, you can't practise law in another province unless you comply with the standards of that province—"they may not do so, subject to the exceptions in this section

and sections 1, in terms of provincial boundaries." I don't believe the author of the bill is suggesting that section 1 provides an opening or an opportunity.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): You can ask him right now.

Mr Kormos: Maybe Mr Sampson will have the presence of mind to rise in this debate and participate, and he can put the question to the author of the bill.

Mr Sampson: You're standing already. Why don't you ask him?

Mr Kormos: See the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada, Mr Sampson. I want to share this with you. I want you to understand it as well as you're capable of understanding it.

Mr Sampson: I'll do my best.

Mr Kormos: Mr Sampson is doing his best.

Mr Sampson: I'll try to exceed your level, Peter, and it won't be that much of a challenge.

Mr Kormos: "Section 6(2)(b) guarantees not simply the right to pursue a livelihood, but the right to pursue the livelihood of choice to the extent and subject to the same conditions as residents," to wit, residents of that province.

"The right to pursue the livelihood of choice must remain a viable right and cannot be rendered practically ineffective and illusory by provincial regulation. The right to pursue the gaining of a livelihood in the province does not"—this is critical—"depend on physical movement of the individual to the province. A person can pursue a living in a province without being there personally." And the single most important observation about that judgment by the Supreme Court of Canada is that, "This section"—section 6 of the charter on mobility rights—"guarantees the right to offer one's services anywhere in Canada regardless of one's place of residence."

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): Including Quebec? Why doesn't it apply to Quebec?

Mr Kormos: The end of the story.

Mr Colle: How do they get away with it?

Mr Kormos: Mr Colle asks why it doesn't apply to Quebec. Look, I'm talking about our responsibilities as a Legislature, and I'm talking about the distinction between provincial regulations governing certain standards and the need to harmonize those regulations. I have no quarrel with that. Again, that issue was addressed around the area of construction trades and building trades. But unfortunately, you can't tell individuals that they have to live in the province in which they're working. You can tell them that they have to comply with the standards of that province if they're doing something that's regulated, but you can't tell them that they have to live here.

I don't quarrel with the author of the bill's observation that more Quebecers work in Ontario up in the northeast than Ontarians work in Quebec, although I am advised that there are Ontarians who work in Quebec. There's no suggestion that there are no Ontarians working in Quebec. So I put to him, with this bill, is he not contrary to the charter? I hope he's not inviting some sort of

retaliation on the part of Quebec to, for instance, similarly forbid those Ontarians who work in Quebec. I am told when I talk to people from the Ottawa-Hull area that there are a whole lot of people who live in Hull, Quebec, who work in Ottawa, but I'm also told that there are a whole lot of people in Ottawa who work in Hull.

Interjections: They work for the feds.

Mr Kormos: I'm told there are a whole lot of people who live in Ottawa who work in Hull. We've got to live with that. So I'm not going to be supporting the bill.

The other observation that has to be made is that we shouldn't be in the business of pitting worker against worker. Workers' enemies aren't workers from other provinces. Workers' enemies are this government that has created an anti-union agenda. Workers' enemies are this government that has refused to raise the minimum wage. Workers' enemies are multinational corporations that participate in the drive toward lower and lower wages. Workers' enemies are those who would undermine the role of trade unions and undermine the right of workers to organize themselves into trade unions and freely, collectively bargain. Workers' enemies are governments that permit scabs to take their jobs, not other workers. Workers' enemies are pro-scab governments like the Harris and Eves government here at Queen's Park. I'm not interested in participating in an exercise that pits worker against worker.

Workers have achieved every right that they've struggled for by standing together in solidarity, whether it be multi-provincially or whether it be internationally. I quite frankly want to encourage this Legislature to support the need for workers to be in solidarity with each other. I want to encourage this Legislature to join in the fight against the corporate exploitation of workers, against a government that would undermine occupational health and safety legislation. Workers are being killed, maimed, diseased, slaughtered on a daily basis in this province as a result of this government's abandonment of workers' interests and right to have some control over safety in the workplace, by the Harris-Eves government's abandonment of workplace inspection, and permitting Ministry of Labour officials, the few that are left, to inspect unsafe work conditions and right to refuse unsafe work by virtue of mere phone calls, inevitably to bosses.

1050

So our exercise shouldn't be to pit worker against worker. Our exercise shouldn't be to deprive workers of their right to earn a living in an already difficult context. Our exercise should be to attack governments like this government for its anti-worker agenda. Our exercise should be to encourage workers to join and participate in their trade unions and to work together in solidarity, be it from one province to the other or from one country to another, to achieve the justice that workers have achieved over the course of generations and decades of struggle.

We will not be supporting this legislation. We understand the motivation for it. It's contrary to the charter, and at the end of the day, it's not really in workers' interests.

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I know the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane has good intentions in introducing Bill 14. His heart is certainly in the right place. He shares with me a long-time concern that Quebec takes unfair advantage in its relationship with Ontario and, for that matter, other provinces in Canada. I am pleased to see him breaking with the slavish devotion that his leader, Mr McGuinty, shows toward the federal Liberals in this regard.

However, I do consider Mr Ramsay's bill radical and draconian. It seems to me he's trying to kill a mosquito with a sledgehammer. It reminds me of the United States's mindless approach to protectionism, personified by their new agriculture and lumber policies. This bill also may result in unintended consequences that have not been considered.

First, I suggest that industry does not support the proposed legislation; that includes both businesses and workers. Ontario's mining industry historically has relied on open labour mobility, both nationally and internationally, to remain competitive. There are many skilled jobs that require specialized knowledge which may be found in workers outside of Ontario. With this legislation, if a specific skilled worker happens to reside in Quebec, he or she would not be able to work for an Ontario mine even though that skill may not be available here.

As well, some Ontario mining companies currently operate both in Ontario and Quebec. These companies often rely on shifting workers between operations and regions for practical and competitive reasons. Bill 14 would punish these companies, preventing them from conducting their operations in a way they have for years, and would challenge their ability to compete in the international market.

The forestry industry also relies on similar open mobility between Ontario and Quebec. Why, I ask members of this House, would the Ontario Legislature clamp down on these industries and prevent them from conducting their business in the way they now do? This will not help Ontario's competitiveness and certainly will not preserve jobs for hard-working Ontarians. Instead, it may indeed cause jobs to be lost, jobs of Ontario workers working in Quebec.

Consider how Quebec may react to this legislation. Bill 14 could cause a massive retaliation. Quebec could prohibit Ontario workers from working in those industries in Quebec, hurting Ontario families. As a result of Bill 14, trade and mobility between our provinces would suffer. This would lead to an unstable situation, tipping the playing field first one way and then the other.

The Ernie Eves government supports fairness and the protection of Ontario workers and their jobs. This bill does not solve the problem; it only creates new ones. For this reason, I cannot support Bill 14.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate? The chair recognizes the member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to the bill that my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane has brought to the floor of the

Legislature this morning. I certainly admire his courage in presenting an issue to protect the people of Ontario.

I've listened very carefully to the debate here this morning and the lectures about what our role and responsibility here is, our responsibilities as legislators. I would suggest to you that we have a responsibility to be advocates for the people of Ontario. What my colleague Mr Ramsay is trying to bring to the floor is the fact that there are people in Ontario who are not being treated fairly and something has to be done about it. This is a very important issue within the labour sector in Ontario. This is one part of the labour sector. We've heard the former Minister of Labour, now the new Minister of Environment and Energy, speak to the issue of the government's Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act, which refers only to MUSH sector jobs, contract jobs.

I have another labour issue in my own riding that is somewhat related to this where there is a cement plant, Lafarge Canada, and there's a strike there. The tradespeople in that situation have been on strike since December 13, 2001, out of work, walking the line. What the company has done is import scabs from the province of Quebec. These good men and women who have built the company and brought it the success it has enjoyed most recently are now victimized and the collective bargaining process, in my opinion, has been hijacked. We have a responsibility as legislators to advocate, to stand up and say, "This is wrong," because those same tradespeople who are walking a line in Ontario today could not walk across the border to the province of Quebec and gain employment there in a similar situation.

Mr Colle: It's a double standard.

Mrs Dombrowsky: There is a double standard here. My colleague has recognized in his community another example where there are labour issues where people in our province have no advantage; where people from another province do have an advantage; where our workers, our trained people, can't gain employment across the border but their trained people can gain employment in Ontario. The member of the government has suggested that this type of legislation could cost jobs within our community. I think my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane had demonstrated, when you talk about the population of the community of Kirkland Lake, that that has cost thousands of jobs if you consider the numbers by which the population has declined in his community.

Again, I admire and support this legislation. I admire my colleague because he has chosen a very radical way to advocate for workers in Ontario, and I'm very prepared to support any kind of initiative that advocates and puts Ontario people on the same playing field as everyone else in Canada.

The Acting Speaker: My apologies; the only thing I had right about your riding was the "Hastings" and I did not include the proper part of "Frontenac-Lennox and Addington."

The member for Timiskaming-Cochrane has two minutes to reply.

Mr Ramsay: I appreciate all the members who participated in the debate today. I'd like to point out that the last time this bill was debated in the House was on November 2, 2000, and at that time it did pass second reading. We'll have to see how the vote goes at noon hour today. In fact, I was just looking at some of the past speeches, and at that time the member from Welland-Thorold waxed eloquent in support of the bill. Of course, the only thing that has changed on this bill is the date, to bring it up to date.

I'd just like to say to the members of the House that in my heart this is not the type of action I would really like to take. But as has been expressed by other members of the House and myself, what I'm looking for is a fair, level playing field so that workers in northwestern Quebec and northeastern Ontario could work together, could work in either province in similar jobs and compete for those jobs as individuals without having the Quebec government basically tilt the playing field in the favour of Quebec workers. The member for Cambridge had said that this was maybe using a sledgehammer to defeat a mosquito. He would have to live in my area to understand that the hundreds and hundreds of Quebec workers who are displacing our workers really have had a devastating and profound impact on the economy of northeastern Ontario and, similarly, on all of northern Ontario.

It is time that somebody stood up for the workers of northeastern Ontario. This act does that. It's time somebody stood up to the government of Quebec, which doesn't want to play by the rules that the member from Welland-Thorold talks about.

I believe in free labour mobility right across this province. What I want to do is propose this bill as a wake-up call to both the Ontario Ministry of Labour and the province of Quebec to say that workers in this country need fair opportunity to work anywhere in this county, and that Ontario workers should have the right to work in Quebec as Quebec workers do in Ontario. It's time we stood up for the workers of northeastern Ontario.

1100

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT
(CONSUMER PROTECTION), 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ
(PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR)

Mr Hampton moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to protect consumers / Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'électricité afin de protéger les consommateurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): According to standing order 96, the member has 10 minutes to make a presentation.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): This is an amendment to the Electricity Act which I believe

the experience on the doorstep out there tells us all is badly needed. What's happening on the doorsteps across this province is electricity consumers are in some cases being misled; in other cases, electricity consumers are being lied to. We also have evidence of electricity consumers having their signatures forged on contracts. Also, we have reports of time after time where electricity consumers are subjected to the most unfair, unprincipled high-pressure sales techniques. I don't think anyone could defend this kind of behaviour.

We're really talking about a fairness issue here: people on their doorsteps being confronted by so-called retail electricity salespersons who are not honest, who are not providing complete information, in some cases are providing absolutely misleading information and in other cases are just outright lying to people, and finally, in the worst of all cases, signatures have been forged. We have to do something in this Legislature to protect consumers across the province from this very unfair situation.

What will the act do? The first thing it will do is allow the consumer to avoid an electricity retail sales contract at any time by giving the seller 15 days' written notice of the fact that the consumer will cease to be bound by the contract. We're essentially saying to all those people out there who have been lied to or manipulated or, in some cases, deceived by misleading information, "You now have a remedy. You can avoid the contract." I would suggest that this would go a long way toward righting some of the wrongs that have happened to a number of consumers.

The second thing it would do is that a contract for the sale of electricity that's made between a consumer and a person other than a distributor before the day the Electricity Amendment Act, 2002, comes into force is of course voidable and new contracts simply would not be allowed.

Why do I think this ought to be the case? Let's look at it. These electricity retailers out there don't generate electricity, they don't transmit electricity, they don't distribute electricity. They don't do anything meaningful or necessary in the process of bringing electricity from generating stations to people so they can use it in their homes or in their businesses. All they do is engage in a game of speculation and fear. That's all they do.

Just to give you an example of some of the things that are happening, most people in this province know what they pay on a per-kilowatt-hour basis for generation, transmission and distribution. They get that information on their bill. These door-to-door sales rip-off artists go to people and they compare the price of generation to that all-in price without letting someone know that in fact they are comparing apples to oranges. They say to people, "Here's what you're paying now, but we would give you this deal." In fact, because all they are talking about is the price of generating electricity—they're not including the price of transmission, they're not including the price of distribution, and they're not including the debt retirement charge of the bill—people are being misled.

As it stands now, roughly, across the province most people are paying a generation price in the neighbourhood of 4.3 cents. The independent marketer will say, "On some days it's been down to 3.8; other days it's been higher than that." But the Ontario Energy Board put out figures that said, "We're looking generally at a price of 4.3." Many of the consumers who are having these door-to-door rip-off artists on their doorstep in fact have unknowingly signed contracts where they're going to be paying 6 cents—not the 4.3, but 6; in other words, literally 50% more than they should be paying. They're not going to discover this until they get their June or July electricity bill, and then they're going to discover, "Holy smokes, am I ever being taken to the cleaners."

The other thing that is so objectionable about this is the misrepresentation that's happening out there. Right now in my constituency there are people who are going door to door wearing Ontario Hydro jackets and representing themselves as Ontario Hydro Energy and trying to say to people, "If you sign a contract with us, you'll be dealing with the trade name Ontario Hydro," which has been around in Ontario, as you know, Speaker, for almost 100 years. It's one of the best trade names in electricity that you could find virtually on the continent. So people are signing. In fact, when they sign these contracts, they are not signing with an Ontario Hydro entity; they're signing with a private organization which is misrepresenting itself. If they read the fine print in the contract, they'll discover that they are paying 6 cents a kilowatt hour, not 3.8 or 4.3. In other words, they're paying a much higher price. If they read other fine print, they'll find that any rebate that might be due to electricity consumers, they have automatically signed over to this rip-off company that is misrepresenting itself.

We cannot allow this to happen. As members of the Legislature, we have to stand up and we have to say, "Look, this is wrong." People deserve full knowledge. They deserve to know exactly what they're buying. They deserve to be able to compare apples to apples, not apples to oranges. But none of that is happening.

Why isn't it happening? First of all, because the government has allowed this kind of misrepresentation to happen. The government has allowed these kinds of door-to-door marketers to get out there and sell on the basis not of true comparisons—apples to apples or oranges to oranges—but on the basis of totally invalid and very misleading information. We as legislators should step in and rectify that situation. People who have signed on the dotted line with these very misleading door-to-door sales representatives have signed contracts which, if they had had access to all of the knowledge, they never would have signed. They would have said, "Get away from my doorstep. This is a rip-off."

So consumers have been kept in the dark on this issue. The government will say, "Oh, but this is for the Ontario Energy Board to rectify." Well, the Ontario Energy Board doesn't have an enforcement and investigation arm in the sense that they can send investigators out there and

do the kind of door-to-door investigation that needs to take place. They simply don't have that.

1110

So to fob it off on the Ontario Energy Board is just completely unrealistic. The Ontario Energy Board does not have the capacity to be a consumer protection agency. It doesn't have the personnel, it doesn't have the expertise, it doesn't have the resources to do that. The government ought to know because in fact in its legislation it created the Ontario Energy Board in this context and didn't give it the investigation capacity, the enforcement capacity or the resources to send door-to-door investigators out there. So the Ontario Energy Board is completely unequipped to do this.

We need to do it here in the Legislature. We need to give people the capacity to void contracts that have been signed on the basis of forgery, on the basis of misleading information, on the basis of high-pressure sales contracts and, moreover, we need to say that electricity retailing, since it doesn't add anything—it doesn't generate electricity, it doesn't transmit, it doesn't distribute; it merely engages in a game of speculation and fearmongering—we should prohibit it.

I want to use the remaining time to say to constituents in my own constituency that these people who are coming to your door wearing Ontario Hydro jackets or something that identifies them with Ontario Hydro, don't sign their contracts. These people have nothing to do with Ontario Hydro or any entity associated with it.

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

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm really pleased to join in the debate this morning with respect to the member's bill, which is An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 to protect consumers. One of the government's main principles in opening Ontario's electricity market to competition has always been to ensure that consumers are protected. We introduced competition to fix the problems of the past and to safeguard our future supply of electricity.

In my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, the source to get your electricity is either Barrie Hydro in the city of Barrie or the Bradford-West Gwillimbury or Innisfil hydro, which is in the town of Innisfil. Quite frankly, those organizations have been in existence for many years, and the practices that they are involved in are certainly without compromise. There's nothing to suggest that the existing retailers or utility companies that are out there don't act above board.

The member's concerns are people who have been lied to, where there has been forgery, people not having full knowledge of what is happening with respect to their choice of electricity, not unlike dealing with the consumer practices that go on with long-distance telephone, also dealing with purchasing your gas, just to name a few.

The government will not compromise the gains that Ontario electricity customers began to see on May 1. We won't allow vulnerable customers and seniors to be

manipulated by unscrupulous retailers, nor will we stand by and watch marketers engage in unfair practices or use false, misleading or deceptive advertising. Our government has moved to protect electricity consumers by putting in place tough laws for energy retailers which require them to operate fairly and honestly. We have provided the Ontario Energy Board with the tools it needs to oversee the retailing practices of marketers and deal with those engaging in questionable practices.

For example, as a condition of their Ontario Energy Board licence, all retailers must follow the electricity retailer code of conduct that establishes guidelines and standards. The code requires retail sales people to carry photo identification when retailing door-to-door, to indicate that they don't represent a distribution utility, to clearly state the price and other terms and to provide a clearly printed contract. As well, retailers must give a customer ample time to understand an offer without pressure or harassment. No customer is required to show their electricity bill or any other information to a retailer unless they decide to sign a contract with that retailer. Electricity retailers are subject to the same consumer protection laws as other sellers in the province under the Consumer Protection Act. Direct sales contracts must include a buyer's right-to-cancel statement in not less than 12-point type, which is a readable size of printed type. It is much larger than so-called "fine print." If there are problems, the Ontario Energy Board, headed by Floyd Laughren, the former Minister of Finance under the NDP when they were in government, has the authority to levy financial penalties against a retailer or revoke or suspend its licence.

In fact, the Ontario Energy Board has a zero tolerance for anyone engaging in questionable marketing practices. This was demonstrated on April 25 of this year when the Ontario Energy Board's director of licensing levied significant fines on two electricity retailers for violations of the code of conduct. Also, on May 17 of this year, the Ontario Energy Board's director of licensing issued a bulletin to all gas and electricity retailers on enhancing consumer awareness and explaining procedures to deal with fraud and misrepresentation, which is essentially what the member opposite wants to be dealt with in terms of giving consumers a proper choice with full knowledge, and to deal with misrepresentation.

The energy board maintains a log of public complaints on retailers as well as details on the nature of the complaint. Ontario Energy Board licensing staff investigate those complaints and work with the companies involved.

The NDP bill that has been tabled today is just not necessary. It seeks to undo the decisions of thousands of Ontario electricity customers who have made a choice. It is telling people that Howard Hampton is in a better position to watch their wallet than they are.

Thousands of customers have chosen their electricity supplier based on the price and service that best meet their needs. That is the kind of decision all of us make when we renew our mortgages. That's the type of decision that all of us make when we go out and rent a

car or we decide to buy anything from a retailer. There is an obligation obviously on the consumer to make sure they know what they're getting. But at the same time, there are laws in place under the Consumer Protection Act, and through the Ontario Energy Board when you're dealing with electricity, to protect the consumer. It is the kind of decision every Ontario electricity customer is capable of making for himself or herself without the help of the NDP or anyone else in this chamber.

Consumer protection is not about taking away choice; it's about providing choice in a strongly regulated competitive market.

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): Dalton McGuinty and Ontario Liberals support protection for electricity consumers. We have not been talking about that just today; we have been talking about that for months and months. In February of this year, Dalton McGuinty introduced a consumer protection plan. In that plan, Ontario Liberals called on the Ontario Energy Board to cancel contracts signed because of unfair sales pitches. To some extent, there has been an attempt to address that evil in this bill.

Dalton McGuinty called on the Ontario Energy Board to fine and suspend the licences of electricity retailers using unfair practices and to place a moratorium on all further selling until consumers are given a clear cost of electricity on their electricity bills so that they can make "apples to apples" comparisons when looking at the bills in question. The moratorium would stay in place until the Ontario Energy Board had provided a standard contract to be used by electricity retailers, eliminating the small print and making matters more clear.

Some of those principles I believe are embodied in this bill; and I have to guess that, because it's a very short bill. I also have to guess it because it's a very short bill that's been provided on very short notice. I received a copy of it yesterday afternoon, I guess, when he introduced it in the Legislature. We have not had time to determine whether or not phrases such as "The consumer is entitled to avoid a contract" in fact are making reference to a previous subsection where he wants to "void" a contract. There's a pretty big difference in law between "voiding" and "avoiding"—a "voidable" contract. Needless to say, it's something that we need to be looking at and would need to look at at the committee stage.

Let me say, in principle, Ontario Liberals are going to support any measure that attempts to protect consumers. But at the committee stage we will be, I say to Mr Hampton, submitting many, many amendments to cover off the many other areas where consumers are being ripped off and to deal with some of the problems in the bill that I want to speak to right now.

1120

The leader of the third party says that in fact what is going on with respect to selling electricity at the door involves a game of speculation and fear. I think everybody in this House knows, because they've received constituency calls, that consumers are being ripped off.

There's no doubt about it. One guess is that thousands of contracts were entered into where the consumers didn't really know what they were signing.

There is a process in place, however inadequate, to address that situation. A consumer who has grave concerns can contact the Ontario Energy Board. There's a problem, because they may find themselves on hold. The lines are busy, more often than not. It's difficult to get through. But there is a process by which a contract could be addressed, if it in fact was unfair. It could be voided and someone could be fined. We do have a process. It's not good enough. It's not nearly good enough. We need the McGuinty consumer protection plan, at the very least.

This bill, I fear, may have an intentional, perhaps an inadvertent, effect. I'll let the leader of the third party address this charge. By wiping out the retail market, would we not be creating even greater electricity volatility in the province of Ontario? Would the leader of the third party, through this bill, either intentionally or inadvertently end up causing his very own perfect storm that he claims he doesn't want to have in the province of Ontario?

Why? You wipe out the retail part of the market. Number one, the volatility that follows is something we simply could not predict right now. Number two, there's nothing in this bill that protects the province of Ontario from the enormous exposure, the liabilities, that will follow. About a million contracts have been signed through the retail arm. About a quarter of the province, a quarter of Ontarians, have engaged in retail contracts. If all those people cancel all their contracts—and under this bill, they are the ones who decide. "We cancel the contract; 15 days' notice. I may have known what I was signing, I may like my contract, it may be fair, but Jeez, everybody's cancelling their contracts. Maybe I should too." I don't think that's responsible.

I think it is irresponsible what this government did in permitting the kind of door-to-door activity that it did and not policing it. But I think that wiping out the retail arm willy-nilly, dramatically affecting the volatility of our electricity market, exposing the province of Ontario to enormous liabilities, in fact is going to result in a situation which is worse. So clearly, this bill needs some major changes.

Interjection.

Mr Bryant: I hear some heckles. I don't even think the member understands a thing I'm saying.

Mr Wayne Wetlaufer (Kitchener Centre): You're the one who doesn't understand what you're talking about.

Mr Bryant: Right now I'm being critical of the bill that you're critical of, so in fact, we're in agreement. But that's probably beyond you right now.

Before I share my time with the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, let me say in closing that what this government has done is engaged in a billion-dollar botch-up of electricity reform, electricity reform that in 1997 all three parties agreed was necessary. We didn't agree on

exactly how it would take place, but we knew that it had to.

In that first stage of electricity reform, people got to sign contracts. It was the government's job to look after the public interest, to look after those people. That didn't happen. Yet it is that same body and that same government that is supposed to be policing our electricity market. We do not have great confidence right now. When you throw into the mix the botched-up, illegal attempted sale of Hydro One, you have an enormously unstable market, not one in which we are going to get people to come into Ontario, make made-in-Ontario power for Ontarians, to end the situation where we are a net importer of electricity.

The government's billion-dollar botch-up must be fixed. I'm not sure if this is the way we're going to fix it, but I will support in principle a bill that attempts to help consumers in Ontario.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I will probably be sharing the remainder of my time with Mr Gilchrist from Scarborough.

To start on the positive side, I just want to put on the record, with respect to the leader of the New Democratic Party, that I really respect the fact that he has been a champion in the whole debate of this right from the very beginning. Whether or not he was right, at least I knew where he was coming from.

This bill was obviously put together hastily. It's very small, one page. For the TV here, I could read the preamble to you. It really doesn't solve very much. In fact, the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford—the beautiful member—actually said it all: it's really quite unnecessary. But it is a statement in time, and I understand the purpose and the politics of it all. He's trying to further state his strong advocacy for keeping the old Ontario Hydro as it is. Our side here is that it's clear from the Macdonald commission and every other independent—including the power workers—that the current model doesn't work. Primarily, he's saying a couple of things with respect to the right to sell.

Again, the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford, a very respected and highly trained lawyer, which I'm not, which is probably a positive for me, is sort of saying that, "No person other than a distributor shall sell or offer to sell electricity to a consumer." In my case, what has happened is that in my riding of Durham there's Scugog, Oshawa and Clarington. Oshawa has a very successful local utility company, and the sole owner of that is of course the city of Oshawa—the Municipal Electric Association, now replaced by the Ontario Energy Association; that's their name. The remainder—Ajax, Pickering and Clarington—formed a conglomerate, if you will, of three previous local municipal electrical associations under the name of Veridian. Veridian is the first one to form a private company which was under the original restructuring bill by the government and is very successful. The principal shareholders are of course the municipal levels. They have a retail arm agreement with Mississauga Hydro—I forget the name; it's Hydro Energy or what-

ever it's called. They do the retailing, the actual selling to the consumers.

I don't think it's correct to suggest in this bill that they're the wrong people to do that. But I do agree that it's important to correct on the record that we want to protect consumers. I refer right back to the base record here, our throne speech, seizing tomorrow's opportunities, or whatever it was called. It has four important objectives:

"First, it will ensure an efficient supply of energy that is competitive for the people of Ontario and in the international marketplace." We have to realize that this is the reality.

"Second, it will ensure that the necessary capital is provided to rebuild and modernize the transmission and distribution of power in Ontario."

The third commitment by Premier Ernie Eves: "It will bring market discipline to Hydro One," something that clearly isn't there, "the province's transmission company—and prevent any possibility of the recurrence of staggering debts, such as the ... \$38-billion debt, while eliminating it.

"And fourth"—this is very important—"it will achieve these goals while protecting consumers."

It goes on to say, "Your government believes the people of Ontario should have a voice in the future direction of one of Ontario's most important resources." I couldn't agree more. "Your government has the courage to listen, the willingness to consult and the ability to take the right course of action in the interest of all Ontarians."

There it is in writing. It's a complete commitment that really makes redundant Mr Hampton's small, rather timely private member's bill.

I say in conclusion, though, that the real issue here on the unscrupulous activities that I've heard about and the Ontario Energy Board under the "capable leadership" of Floyd Laughren, the previous New Democratic Party Treasurer of Ontario, who ran up \$11 billion in debt—a capable person. But he is running that now and he basically, I think, is a good, honest spokesperson. I believe we should strengthen the role and powers of the Ontario Energy Board to penalize these unscrupulous practices, and that's the message I hear from our Minister of Environment and Energy, Mr Stockwell, as well as our Premier. I'm confident that this bill, although it speaks to an important issue, is completely unnecessary and probably I will not be supporting it. I do want to save some time for the member from Scarborough East. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

1130

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): I want to rise to address the bill before the House standing in the name of the member from Kenora. Let me say, as someone who sat in a committee four years ago when the Legislature was dealing with the whole issue of change in the electricity policy—and the member for Durham, who just spoke, was there, I think, for this testimony—I remember distinctly several witnesses, but

most importantly the representatives from the Consumers' Association, telling that legislative committee dealing with the then Bill 35, an act to change electricity policy in Ontario, "If you as a government and Legislature are going to proceed with what is known as retail competition, you must do two things. First and foremost, you must educate in a significant, ongoing way the broad base of retail customers, who will not understand this very difficult and in some cases impenetrable new world without the help of good, user-friendly public information." And we were told, particularly by the Consumers' Association, that must be done at the beginning. Secondly, we were told, "You can only proceed with this kind of retail competition if you have a very tough-minded regulator who's going to act in the public interest to protect electricity customers from what we can predict will be some unscrupulous behaviour."

There was virtually nothing done, until very recently, by either the government or the energy board to inform consumers. My colleague Mr Bryant a moment ago outlined what Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have advocated for some time now. I want to make the point that at this juncture we have about a million retail contracts that have been entered into. My guess is that at least 20% are grade A stinkers, and that means that there are hundreds of thousands of electricity consumers, many of them older people, who have been ripped off; and many of these people have been ripped off by our own company, Hydro One. I had a meeting some weeks ago in the village of Beachburg in my constituency and I had three elderly women tell me about what happened on their street, with agents of Hydro One walking in at dusk waving scissors, grabbing Hydro bills out of their hands, cutting them up and walking out the door. That's just one of several examples.

Those people, many of them, are not going to understand what happened to them until some time in mid to late June or July of this year. In that case it was our company, Hydro One. My own father signed a contract some months ago—after I told him quite frankly to be careful; yes, it's true. But do you know one of the reasons he signed? Because the person who came to him was from Ontario Hydro One and he thought that by signing with that company he was making a good deal. Nobody told him, least of all Hydro One, that he would be one of nearly 200,000 customers who signed up with Hydro One only to have their entire business sold away at the eve of market opening in late April of this spring to Union Energy, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Epcor of Edmonton, Alberta. That's just another example of how Ontario consumers were scammed and ripped off by, in this case, our own company. And there will be a political whirlwind, make no mistake about it. We are just weeks away from tens of thousands of Ontario customers mad as hell at what was done to them.

My colleague from Glengarry is just arriving. He's got a great story to tell about how he was the victim of what looks like a pure forgery.

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): Let's hear from your colleague.

Mr Conway: He may speak at some point. The minister of economic development trivializes this. Well, let's talk about this.

Interjections.

Mr Conway: I just want to say to my colleagues in this Legislature, mark my words: four to six weeks from now, your constituency offices are going to be doing little else than explaining to people these electricity bills. We failed miserably to protect people in a fair and sensible way. We were warned by a number of knowledgeable witnesses.

I see just this week that the Ontario Energy Board has published a new bulletin. I give them some credit: they now seem to be alive to the problems in the marketplace. Forgery, apparently, is now an issue of which they are seized. It is too late for hundreds of thousands of people. We talk about protecting the consumer; we haven't done nearly enough. It's a failure of public responsibility by this government, including the minister of economic development. As I say, one of the worst offenders is our own company.

Let me just add this: for the new electricity order to work, we have to have a very effective regulator. For months now, in fact for years now, there have been complaints. They've been all over the consumer columns in the Ontario press. They've been reported to members on both sides of the House. The regulator has been very, very slow to action. I've spoken to Mr Laughren about this, and there is no question that the early going in this electricity business gives me great concern about just how effective our regulator is, not just in the easy part of this—regulating this kind of retail misconduct—but what the regulator's power is really going to be when they have to get at the really complicated stuff that we've seen, particularly in the United States.

I do want to give my friend Mr Lalonde the last 48 seconds.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): I should be able to defend myself. Yes, someone has forged my signature not only once, but twice. It's in the detectives' hands at the present time. But in Alexandria, people walked in on the Quesnel family. This company, which is called Ontario Energy Savings Corp, should have its licence withdrawn. I'm told they are liars, they are robbers, and the OEB should withdraw their licence immediately. The Quesnel family was told, "If you don't sign in 20 minutes, we are cutting your power off tomorrow." This is the approach that these retailers are taking with the people.

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

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to respond to the bill before us here today, a bill that would seek to return us to the days of ballooning debt, out-of-control bureaucracies, wasteful construction practices, \$38 billion in accumul-

ated debt, no consumer choice. That's precisely the world that the NDP would have us go back to.

This bill was very hastily put together. I could criticize it on any number of legal bases as well. The very language in there is quite improper in a number of cases. But let me object more to the principle. While I am very sympathetic to the member from Glengarry and the comments he has just made, that is precisely why the regulations that are already in place include extraordinary protection for consumers. The power is there for the OEB to come down like a ton of bricks on any retailer that engages in unscrupulous practice. I am sure the member will pursue that matter through the appropriate fora and that the appropriate remedies will be taken against the offenders if, as and when their offence is proven.

But that one example should not take us away, should not deter us, from continuing down a path that is no different from the path that was taken in telecommunications 10 years ago. Ten years ago, we had only one choice for phone companies. Now you have at least two choices for local phone service, an infinite number of choices for long-distance carriers, and four different cell-phone companies. You have, in today's dollars, lower costs for phone service than you had 10 years ago. The member opposite still has not come up with a single commodity ever where if more people bring more product to a market, prices go up. But somehow we're going to suspend all the laws of supply and demand just because this is something that the vaunted old monopoly of Ontario Hydro used to deliver to our doors.

1140

The fact of the matter is, the old monopolistic ways aren't worth protecting. They aren't worth defending. The member should be ashamed to stand up and suggest consumers would be better protected by throwing on another \$3,000 for every man, woman and child in this province—their share of the accumulated Ontario Hydro debt. That was the legacy of having a monopoly. That was the legacy of a lack of consumer choice.

On top of everything else, the reality is that for the first time ever we now have, as of right, the ability for anybody who wants to generate green power the chance to sell into the marketplace. We were constrained. If Ontario Hydro didn't think a wind turbine was a good idea or a solar array was a good idea, you didn't have a choice. You didn't have a chance to buy green power. You were going to buy coal. That's what delivered the peak power in this province, and still does. But under our new system, if someone like Toronto Hydro Energy Services wants to put a wind turbine down on the waterfront, they will absolutely and positively have the ability to sell that power into the grid. Consumers who want to do something about cleaning up our environment will have, as a right, the ability to buy that power.

This bill is wrong. The bill would take us back down a very dangerous path. That's why I will be opposing.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

The leader from Kenora-Rainy River has two minutes to reply.

Mr Hampton: I'm pleased to respond to some of the comments. I won't be responding to Mr Gilchrist's comments because in fact they didn't address anything in the bill. The bill is about consumer protection. The bill is about those close to one million people out there across this province who in many cases have been misled, have been lied to, have had their signatures forged or have been threatened with having their power shut off if they didn't sign with one of these door-to-door rip-off retail electricity outfits. That's what it's about.

The government members who want to pretend that they are in favour of protecting consumers alluded to some things that I think need to be addressed. First of all, they said that signing a contract with one of these electricity retailers is like signing a mortgage. The reality is, these retail contracts are like signing a mortgage with a very crooked salesman. Furthermore, most people, when they're signing a mortgage, don't have to deal with someone who is deliberately misleading them. They don't have to deal with someone who is willing to forge their signature. They don't have to deal with someone who knowingly is providing them with false information. They don't have to deal with someone who threatens them. They don't have to deal with crooks. Furthermore, when people are signing a mortgage, they generally know what they're paying now and therefore they're able to examine the alternatives carefully. But the way the government has designed the so-called retailing of electricity, people don't have the information to be able to compare. People don't have the information to be able to know what is the price of generation now and what is the price of generated electricity that is being offered to them or, in many cases, directed to them by these retail consumers.

That is why this legislation should be passed. This should be about protecting the consumer, something that the Ontario Energy Board doesn't have the tools to do now. That's why this legislation is necessary.

The Acting Speaker: Pursuant to standing order 96, the House stands suspended until 12 noon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1159.

FAIRNESS IS A TWO-WAY STREET ACT
(MINERS AND FORESTRY
WORKERS), 2002

LOI DE 2002 PORTANT QUE LA JUSTICE
N'EST PAS À SENS UNIQUE
(MINEURS ET TRAVAILLEURS
FORESTIERS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The time allotted for private members' public business has expired, so we will go through the voting procedure.

Mr Ramsay has moved second reading of Bill 14. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; this will be a five-minute bell. We will defer those bells until after the other item of business.

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT
(CONSUMER PROTECTION), 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ
(PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): We will now deal with ballot item number 44.

Mr Hampton has moved second reading of Bill 55. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

FAIRNESS IS A TWO-WAY STREET ACT
(MINERS AND FORESTRY
WORKERS), 2002

LOI DE 2002 PORTANT QUE LA JUSTICE
N'EST PAS À SENS UNIQUE
(MINEURS ET TRAVAILLEURS
FORESTIERS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Ramsay has moved second reading of Bill 14. All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Ecker, Janet | Molinari, Tina R. |
| Arnott, Ted | Elliott, Brenda | Mushinski, Marilyn |
| Baird, John R. | Flaherty, Jim | O'Toole, John |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Galt, Doug | Ouellette, Jerry J. |
| Bountrogianni, Marie | Gerretsen, John | Patten, Richard |
| Boyer, Claudette | Gravelle, Michael | Peters, Steve |
| Bradley, James J. | Guzzo, Garry J. | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Bryant, Michael | Hoy, Pat | Ramsay, David |
| Caplan, David | Hudak, Tim | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Clement, Tony | Jackson, Cameron | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Colle, Mike | Johns, Helen | Sampson, Rob |
| Conway, Sean G. | Kells, Morley | Sergio, Mario |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Kennedy, Gerard | Smitherman, George |
| Cunningham, Dianne | Klees, Frank | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Curling, Alvin | Kwinter, Monte | Stockwell, Chris |
| DeFaria, Carl | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Turnbull, David |
| Di Cocco, Caroline | Levac, David | Wilson, Jim |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | Marland, Margaret | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Duncan, Dwight | Mazzilli, Frank | Young, David |
| Dunlop, Garfield | McLeod, Lyn | |

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

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Barrett, Toby | Gill, Raminder | Maves, Bart |
| Christopherson, David | Hampton, Howard | Munro, Julia |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Kormos, Peter | Spina, Joseph |
| Churley, Marilyn | Marchese, Rosario | Tascona, Joseph N. |

| | | |
|------------------|------------------|-------------------|
| Coburn, Brian | Martel, Shelley | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Gilchrist, Steve | Martiniuk, Gerry | |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 59; the nays are 17.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Shall the bill be referred to a standing committee?

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I would request that the bill be referred to the general government committee.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour, please stand.

All those opposed, please stand.

The majority is not in favour. The bill will be referred to the committee of the whole.

The doors will be open for 30 seconds to let those come in or leave.

ELECTRICITY AMENDMENT ACT
(CONSUMER PROTECTION), 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉLECTRICITÉ
(PROTECTION DU CONSOMMATEUR)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Mr Hampton has moved second reading of Bill 55. All those in favour will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Curling, Alvin | Levac, David |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Di Cocco, Caroline | Marchese, Rosario |
| Bountrogianni, Marie | Dombrowsky, Leona | Martel, Shelley |
| Boyer, Claudette | Duncan, Dwight | McLeod, Lyn |
| Bradley, James J. | Gerretsen, John | Patten, Richard |
| Bryant, Michael | Gravelle, Michael | Peters, Steve |
| Caplan, David | Hampton, Howard | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Christopherson, David | Hoy, Pat | Ramsay, David |
| Churley, Marilyn | Kennedy, Gerard | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Colle, Mike | Kormos, Peter | Sergio, Mario |
| Conway, Sean G. | Kwinter, Monte | Smitherman, George |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | |

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

Nays

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Gilchrist, Steve | Mushinski, Marilyn |
| Baird, John R. | Gill, Raminder | O'Toole, John |
| Barrett, Toby | Guzzo, Garry J. | Ouellette, Jerry J. |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Jackson, Cameron | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Clark, Brad | Johns, Helen | Sampson, Rob |
| Clement, Tony | Kells, Morley | Spina, Joseph |
| Coburn, Brian | Klees, Frank | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Cunningham, Dianne | Marland, Margaret | Stockwell, Chris |
| DeFaria, Carl | Martiniuk, Gerry | Tascona, Joseph N. |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Maves, Bart | Turnbull, David |
| Ecker, Janet | Mazzilli, Frank | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Elliott, Brenda | Miller, Norm | Wilson, Jim |
| Flaherty, Jim | Molinari, Tina R. | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Galt, Doug | Munro, Julia | Young, David |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The eyes are 35; the nays are 42.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

This House stands adjourned until 1:30 this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1215 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOME CARE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): My colleague the member for Windsor West asked a question of the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care earlier this week. She asked whether it was acceptable that personal care for seniors should be rationed to the point of getting one bath per week. This was not a hypothetical question. My colleague was referring to a specific case in Ottawa of a 76-year-old woman, a stroke victim living at home on her own, who can bathe only with assistance. Her home care hours had been reduced, and she does get just one bath per week.

The newly appointed executive director of the community care access centre in Ottawa was quite clear about the situation. Given increasing need for service and no new money, they are cutting back on hours of care in order to get people off the waiting list. Sadly, the associate minister chose to ignore both the question and the reality of what is happening in home care under his government.

There are two ways of handling waiting lists. One is to provide enough funding to meet the needs and still offer quality care. The other is to cut budgets and demand that more people be given less service. That is clearly the direction this government has taken.

In 15 years in this Legislature, I have never seen anything more vicious than the January firing and replacing of selected executive directors and board members of community care access centres in this province. The new appointees have been given their marching orders: waiting lists are to be made to disappear regardless of what cuts have to be made in the quality of care that is offered. It's happening in Ottawa, it's happening in my home community of Thunder Bay and it will keep happening across this province as long as the government is more concerned about tax cuts than care.

GO TRANSIT

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Ever since our government took full control of GO Transit, it is my pleasure to report that GO Transit continues to improve their service. On April 29, service on the Georgetown GO train line increased to nine eastbound and nine westbound trains each workday. This is great news for the people and economy of Brampton and Malton. My constituents rely heavily on GO Transit to get around. I hope this added service encourages more

drivers to get on the GO. These new trains will also better serve those who are already using GO, giving passengers more flexible travel times.

We are also happy to see \$4.2 million worth of improvements to the Bramalea GO station, as well as increased GO bus service. The Highway 407 GO bus route now offers my constituents a 25-minute ride to York University or a 70-minute ride to McMaster University, as well as direct rides to the cities of Hamilton and Pickering.

These Smart Growth improvements in transportation are steps in the right direction, but like many of my constituents I recognize more needs to be done to truly meet our city's rapidly growing needs. In particular, let me urge the Minister of Transportation to push forward with the quick extension of Highway 427 north of Queen Street and the extension of Highway 410 north of Bovaird Drive. I know this government is committed to keeping people moving and keeping the economy strong.

Interjection: Keeping them on the GO.

Mr Gill: Exactly.

LABOUR MOBILITY

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane): I'd like to state how pleased I was that the Ontario Legislature this morning supported the passage of second reading of my private member's bill, Bill 14, Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act, which basically sets up some penalties for Quebec workers in northeastern Ontario specifically for coming into Ontario and stealing Ontarians' jobs when Ontario workers don't have the same access to those jobs in the province of Quebec.

As a Canadian, I believe in free labour mobility and feel we should not be having roadblocks. But enough is enough, and when Quebec continues to put up those roadblocks against Ontario workers, it's time that somebody stood up.

I was a little disappointed that the government members did block referral to the standing committee on general government, but it still stays alive and could be called at any time in committee of the whole.

What I was really surprised about, though, was the stance of the NDP caucus in the Legislature. When I brought this bill forward three years ago, maybe because there was a federal election going on—I know Len Wood was running in Timmins-James Bay for the New Democratic Party—they supported it, but this time they decided not to support it. I think the problem is not only the same today, but unfortunately it has worsened. Many workers in northern Ontario have had their jobs stolen by Quebec workers. It's time somebody stood up and said enough is enough. Maybe it takes some tough remedy to do that, but we're prepared to do that over here in the Liberal caucus. I would hope that other northern members from all parties would finally support and stand up for the workers of northeastern Ontario.

CURTIS JOSEPH

Mrs Julia Munro (York North): I rise today in light of the current circumstances to talk about a constituent of mine. Curtis Shayne Joseph was born in Keswick, Ontario, in April 1967. For those of you who do not recognize the name, I will refer to him as “Cujo,” the star goalie for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Cujo attended the University of Wisconsin on a hockey scholarship and then signed as a free agent to the St Louis Blues in 1989. In 1994, Cujo was traded to the Edmonton Oilers—happy to be back in Canada. It was not until the summer of 1998 that Cujo signed a four-year contract with the Toronto Maple Leafs.

Curtis Joseph has proudly represented Canada in the world championships and at the Olympics. I am proud to honour a talented member of my constituency and a Canadian champion. I want to let Cujo know that tonight we are all wishing him well and we’ll be screaming, “Go, Leafs, go.”

ONTARIO SECURITY

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): Yesterday, the Minister of Public Safety and Security caught all Ontarians, even the Premier, by surprise in announcing that a terrorist cell associated with Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda network was forced to leave the province. Further, he stated that there are other known terrorist groups operating in Ontario. I remind the government of the seriousness of this statement. The government has said it was simply a case of surveillance. However, we are no safer as Ontarians, as North Americans, if this group of terrorists is operating just outside our borders.

The Anti-Terrorism Act at the federal level has given the police the ability to arrest suspected terrorists. It contains a beefed-up police power of arrest without warrant in section 83.3(4)(b). The police can arrest someone if they “suspect on reasonable grounds that the detention of the person in custody is necessary in order to prevent a terrorist activity.”

Gary Trotter, the former crown counsel, says that this provision allows the police to arrest someone even if the threat that they may commit an offence is not imminent: “The section seems aimed at taking individuals out of circulation in the hopes of preventing terrorist activities.”

I find it strange that a government that prides itself on being tough on crime and terrorism, that threatens to throw squeegee kids and the homeless in jail, that kicks kids out of school for swearing, could do nothing about the terrorist cell lurking in our midst. I find that if this government was serious about fighting terrorism, it would not have let them slip away.

KITCHENER LAWN BOWLING CLUB

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): I rise today to comment on a very important day in my riding of Kitchener Centre. The Kitchener Lawn Bowling Club

will be 100 years old on June 2, 2002. This weekend, on Saturday, May 25, I will be at the club to join in the celebrations and to present the club with a certificate.

Lawn bowling can be traced back to the Norman Conquest in Britain. Always popular with the people, it was banned in 1366 for fear that archery would suffer. However, once guns and powder arrived, that threat disappeared.

It was mainly the rich who enjoyed this sport originally. It was the sport of kings, of the clergy, of nobility and men of quality. It excluded women, I will say, at that time. Shakespeare and Sir Francis Drake were avid fans.

In Victorian times the game was vigorously revived. Scottish immigrants introduced the game wherever they went. The game spread to Australia, South Africa, India, Japan and Hong Kong. Canada’s first bowling green was probably in Annapolis, Nova Scotia.

Kitchener’s lawn bowling club, one of four in the twin cities of Kitchener and Waterloo, was formed as the Berlin Lawn Bowling Club on June 2, 1902. Most of the well-known names in Kitchener’s history were members. Over the past 40 years many changes have taken place, but the game remains basically the same. Lawn bowling is a sport for all to enjoy.

I invite everyone to come to Kitchener and participate in the festivities, have a good time and learn the game.

1340

NORTHERN UNIVERSITY FUNDING

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): Dalton McGuinty and the Liberal Party believe that there is a role for government to ensure that the wealth and opportunities of our province are shared and accessible to all citizens regardless of where they live. Regrettably, the same cannot be said of the Conservative government of this province. I’m concerned by this government’s record of shortchanging the citizens and students of northern Ontario.

A new report released this week revealed that students at Lakehead, Laurentian, Algoma and Nipissing University are paying a greater share of the education bill than students in other areas of the province.

Only 4% of the government’s operating grant goes to these schools—4%. What this means is that northern schools are being forced to dig even deeper into tuition to cover their operating costs. The study also underscores that the neo-conservative policy of linking public dollars to private co-financing is not working. It does what all Conservative policies are meant to do: benefit those who already have. This is wrong, and these inequities should be stopped.

I recently raised the same concern when this government announced new applied degree programs for the colleges. Twelve applied degree programs were announced, and none were in the north.

This government has neglected the students of the north by denying the colleges and universities of northern Ontario the tools they need to advance their region.

I call on the Premier and his government to level the playing field and ensure that opportunities are distributed in a more balanced way, allowing all Ontarians an opportunity to prosper.

PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): This afternoon I'll be introducing the Tommy Douglas Act (Patients' Bill of Rights) on behalf of the New Democratic Party. This is the third time the NDP has introduced a patients' bill of rights. In 1998, the first bill was introduced by Marion Boyd and was debated at second reading. Conservative members spoke in favour of the bill and then voted against referring it to the social development committee. The bill was reintroduced in April 1999 but died on the order paper. I am pleased to introduce it again today.

The Tommy Douglas bill of rights sets out what Ontario patients can and should expect from the publicly funded, publicly administered health care system. The bill provides for an Ontario health care standards commissioner who will establish provincial standards for high-quality health care in association with health care professionals and organizations.

The health care standards commissioner will be responsible for monitoring the provisions of the patients' bill of rights to ensure compliance and to make recommendations to the Legislature for improvements to laws and policies governing health care. The commissioner will investigate complaints and report annually to the Legislature.

The bill provides whistle-blower protection for health care workers who report incidences where our health care system has let down patients and their families. The bill would extend the principles of the Canada Health Act to the long-term-care sector.

My bill will be debated next Thursday morning, and I trust that all members will support it, especially government members, since the former Minister of Health, Elizabeth Witmer, promised a bill of rights to ONA and RNAO in 1997. It was a commitment in the 1999 Conservative election platform and was promised again by this government in the throne speeches and budgets of 1999 and 2000.

I look forward to passage next week and to referral to committee.

VINCE AUDIBERT BOATHOUSE

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): On May 11, the new home of the St John Ambulance water patrol program was opened at the newly dedicated Vince Audibert Boathouse. The boathouse replaces an aging structure that served the unit for 20 years.

The St John Ambulance water patrol unit provides an essential service to the people of Niagara Falls. By monitoring the fast-flowing water currents of the Chippawa Creek, this program has prevented our residents and

tourists from countless accidents and injuries over the many years.

The unit's old boathouse was decrepit and increasingly in need of replacement. The program subsequently rented a slip at the boat club in Chippawa. This, however, meant that expensive rescue equipment had to be hauled between the organization's headquarters and the launch.

The community decided to rally together to build a new boathouse. Funding was provided by private donations, corporate supporters like OPG, and city council, while the tireless and dedicated members of the Chippawa Volunteer Firefighters Association offered free labour.

The boathouse is named after Mr Vince Audibert, the chairman of the boat patrol committee, whose steadfast commitment and drive saw the completion of this project. Mr Audibert is a long-time volunteer in the Niagara community and has always been the principal driver behind the boat patrol.

This boathouse represents the true spirit of co-operation in Niagara Falls. I'd like to offer my congratulations to everybody involved.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I beg leave to present a report from the standing committee on public accounts and move its adoption.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): Your committee recommends that the following bill be not reported:

Bill 95, An Act to require open meetings and more stringent conflict rules for provincial and municipal boards, commissions and other public bodies / *Projet de loi 95, Loi exigeant des réunions publiques et des règles plus strictes de règlement de conflit pour les commissions et conseils provinciaux et municipaux ainsi que les autres organismes publics.*

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1345 to 1350.

The Speaker: Mr Gerretsen has moved the adoption of the report of the standing committee on public accounts regarding Bill 95.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Baird, John R.
Barrett, Toby

Gill, Raminder
Guzzo, Garry J.
Hudak, Tim

Mushinski, Marilyn
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Chudleigh, Ted | Jackson, Cameron | Runciman, Robert W. |
| Clement, Tony | Johns, Helen | Sampson, Rob |
| Coburn, Brian | Johnson, Bert | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Cunningham, Dianne | Klees, Frank | Stewart, R. Gary |
| DeFaria, Carl | Marland, Margaret | Stockwell, Chris |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Martiniuk, Gerry | Turnbull, David |
| Ecker, Janet | Maves, Bart | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Elliott, Brenda | Mazzilli, Frank | Wilson, Jim |
| Flaherty, Jim | Miller, Norm | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Galt, Doug | Molinari, Tina R. | Wood, Bob |
| Gilchrist, Steve | Munro, Julia | |

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

Nays

| | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Duncan, Dwight | McLeod, Lyn |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Gerretsen, John | Parsons, Ernie |
| Bountrogianni, Marie | Gravelle, Michael | Patten, Richard |
| Bradley, James J. | Hampton, Howard | Peters, Steve |
| Bryant, Michael | Kennedy, Gerard | Prue, Michael |
| Colle, Mike | Kormos, Peter | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Conway, Sean G. | Kwinter, Monte | Ramsay, David |
| Curling, Alvin | Levac, David | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Di Cocco, Caroline | Marchese, Rosario | Sergio, Mario |
| Dombrowsky, Leona | Martel, Shelley | Smitherman, George |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 41; the nays are 30.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: This morning the government members of the standing committee on public accounts defeated Bill 95. I guess what it shows is that the government doesn't have the political courage to support this legislation.

The Speaker: That is not a point of order, I'm afraid.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TOMMY DOUGLAS ACT (PATIENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS), 2002 LOI TOMMY DOUGLAS DE 2002 SUR LA DÉCLARATION DES DROITS DES PATIENTS

Ms Martel moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 27, An Act to promote patients' rights and to increase accountability in Ontario's health care system /
Projet de loi 27, Loi visant à promouvoir les droits des patients et à accroître l'obligation de rendre des comptes dans le système de soins de santé de l'Ontario.

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

The member for a short statement?

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): The Tommy Douglas Act codifies the rights of residents of Ontario who receive health care services in the form of a patients' bill of rights. The bill provides for the appointment of a health care standards commissioner, an officer of the Legislature, who will perform functions such as par-

ticipating in the setting of health care standards and the development of complaint procedures, monitoring health care standards and making recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and to the Legislature. The bill establishes whistle-blower protection for the employees, the providers of health care services. The bill requires conspicuous posting of copies of the patients' bill of rights and of the whistle-blower protection provisions.

RICHARD RUSTON

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to say some remarks about yet another deceased member of this Legislature.

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

Mr Conway: As we speak, about 350 kilometres southwest of this place, in the beautiful flatlands of Essex county, my old friend Dick Ruston is being laid to rest. I know that on behalf of Dalton McGuinty and one of our colleagues particularly, Bruce Crozier—the current member for Essex is attending the funeral this afternoon—we want to extend our condolences to his wife of 59 years, Shirley, and to their children.

Dick Ruston was the Liberal member for Essex North for 17 or 18 years, from 1967 to 1985, and a very good member was he. I counted Dick as a good friend.

My friend Bradley is a much calmer, more diplomatic person today, largely because of the tutelage that he underwent when Dick Ruston was the whip. If Dick were here today, he'd say, "Now, Conway, keep it fairly short, and not too much baloney." That's not always an easy thing for me to do.

He was a plain-talking, positive kind of guy who had very definite views. My friend Mr Sterling might remember some of those views. I can think of a couple of pretty contentious issues where Dick didn't mind telling the Minister of Education just exactly what he thought. It was his opinion and maybe not necessarily the opinion of his colleagues.

He was out of that old, clear Grit tradition of southwestern Ontario. He believed in local government. The best government, he would argue, is the smaller unit closest to the people. He certainly brought that opinion to our caucus over his long years of service here.

Dick served as the reeve of Maidstone township before coming here and was, as I indicated earlier, whip of our caucus for many years.

Most politicians like to skate. Dick Ruston liked to dance. He was a hell of a good dancer. He knew how to have a good time. One of the things I think we must observe about the political class is that we are sometimes given to a little too much wringing of the hands. I've sometimes felt that, after a while, your average member of the Legislature or the Parliament has lost sight of how to have a good time. Dick Ruston always knew how to balance the important business that was his responsibility

with a good time. He certainly enjoyed a very full and happy retirement, although the last few years were difficult as he struggled with Alzheimer's disease.

He was, as I indicated earlier, a man of the people who was very positive, very frank, a valuable member of our caucus; somebody who brought a definite set of opinions to local and provincial issues.

As I said earlier, when I came here in 1975, he took me under his wing. I considered him a very good friend. We had many happy times together in his home down in Woodslee.

I want to say particularly to his wife, Shirley, who was such a happy partner of his through those many years of public life: to you, Shirley, and to your family, we express our condolences. We want you to know that your husband's memory will be long cherished by his colleagues, past and present.

1400

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm honoured on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus to join in this tribute to former member Dick Ruston, who passed away at the age of 82. He had a full political career, of course, like so many politicians not only of his era but currently serving at the municipal level, not just in elected political positions but on so many boards and agencies and charitable organizations, where he helped and did an outstanding job at making his community a better place—a full political life and also a full life in his own right. He was 82 years old when he passed away, and for 18 of those years, from 1967 to 1985, he served here in this Legislature, of course as an opposition member.

Perhaps one of the real tests of the electability of a politician is a politician who can get himself or herself elected contrary to the prevailing wave, if you will. Dick Ruston did that, being elected from down in Essex when the Conservatives were, as they were, firmly entrenched, perhaps far differently from the way they are now. But at a time when the Conservatives were firmly entrenched, clearly for a gentleman like Mr Ruston to find himself elected and then re-elected and re-elected again was an indication not only of his popularity but of his talents and skills.

One reads numerous newspaper reports and reads of the despair of his then leader, David Peterson, at his retiring in 1985. Of course, by retiring he passed that riding on and wasn't able to share in the period of time when the Liberals formed the government. But he served not only his community; he served his party and he served this assembly.

I note that Jim Foulds, an NDP member from the Thunder Bay area who served with Dick Ruston and who was as partisan a politician as ever could have been or ever will be, and who noted the same of Mr Ruston in his recollections of him, also indicated that when he and Mr Ruston would leave this chamber, as was the case with so many of the other colleagues of Mr Ruston, partisanship was set aside and abandoned. It speaks to an era when there was a higher degree of collegiality here, some

genuine friendships developing and perhaps levels of trust which the passage of time have made at the very least more difficult.

I also note that when Mr Ruston retired in 1985, his community of course wanted to pay tribute to him—Mr Ruston was 65 years old at the time. The Knights of Columbus hall was used for a public gathering, a dinner to fete Mr Ruston. Not only were there numerous Liberals there, as one would expect, and of course family members and friends from the community and colleagues from the municipal political level, but one will note that at that tribute to Mr Ruston there were also prominent New Democrats of the day. He was clearly loved by his community, loved by his colleagues and, as important, respected by his colleagues.

The role of whip is a unique challenge in any caucus and, clearly, when Mr Peterson chose Mr Ruston as his whip, he took note of the many qualities and skills Mr Ruston had.

So New Democrats join with other members in this assembly in paying tribute to Mr Ruston, acknowledging his tremendous contribution to his community and to the province—his service here in this assembly—and we join other members in passing on our condolences, our most sincere sympathies, to his family but also to his many, many friends and colleagues in his community and beyond.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Transportation): I had the pleasure of sitting in the Legislature with Dick Ruston from 1977 to 1985. I guess Dick sort of missed the timing, in terms of his parliamentary career, because he was here for 15 or 18 years, and yet he came in in 1985, just at the end of the long dynasty—42 years—of the Progressive Conservative Party, and never got to the government side.

But one of the things I can remember about Dick was his frankness and his straightforwardness. There was no spin on this gentleman to speak of at all. But he carried that characteristic not only in terms of debate he would have in this place—and none of that directness was ever taken as being mean-spirited; it was just directness in terms of his talk about issues.

I must say at this juncture too that I guess his most ardent interventions came on behalf of the farming community of southwestern Ontario. That's where he placed himself in terms of politics. While Mr Conway refers to him as a Grit of southwestern Ontario, I can tell you that probably Dick was far right of a lot of the people on this side of the House at this time, and at that time as well.

He would also carry this frankness toward meeting with government ministers. I think he was able to achieve a great deal on behalf of his constituents during that time, because they respected the directness and the fact that he would also hold to his word in terms of any kind of dealings he had with a minister in order to gain an advantage for a constituent or for a municipality that he represented as well.

As Mr Kormos mentioned, that was a time when there was perhaps more closeness between the two sides of the

House. I quite frankly attribute that to the intervention of television in 1986 or 1987. That has in some ways worked against members of the ilk of Dick Ruston, in that his speeches were usually relatively short, compact and direct, and perhaps they don't really fit today's Parliament in terms of the kind of representation he might bring.

I can remember spending many nights in this Legislature, sitting with him either on that side or on this side and talking to him about the problems in his constituency and the problems with the government and about issues. He also was a very solid member for his party. He participated fully in this Legislature in opposition. He was there for the votes. He was there in committee. He spoke in committee. He participated fully and was indeed a tribute to this institution as a member of the provincial Parliament.

I believe Dick and his wife Shirley had five children, and our party would like to extend our condolences to all of them, to the family and to his community, which I am sure remembers him well. We remember Dick well, and we thank his family for sharing so much of Dick with the rest of Ontario.

The Speaker: I thank members for their comments and will ensure the family receives copies of Hansard with the comments here today.

VISITOR

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): I'd like to welcome to the members' gallery a visitor from the city of Manfredonia, Italy, in the province of Puglia, Domenico D'Aciero.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): My question is for the Minister of Health. I'm holding in my hand part 1 of the Walkerton report. Of the 28 recommendations in part 1 of the Walkerton inquiry report, you have only implemented eight.

The number 1 recommendation of this report is for you to have hired full-time medical officers of health for every community in Ontario. You haven't done that. There are still at least seven communities in Ontario with no full-time medical officer of health.

1410

This was the number one recommendation in part one. I'd like you to explain to this House why two years after Walkerton you have not implemented this number one recommendation.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I am in complete agreement with the honourable member that it is desirable and indeed necessary to have full-time medical officers of health in our

province. As she may know, but I would be happy to let the rest of the House know, it is difficult to find the qualified personnel who can take over that responsibility. I think we have an obligation to make sure we have qualified personnel. If the honourable member has a list that I'm unaware of, please share it with me. In the meantime, we will do everything we can to find excellent personnel who are available on a full-time basis to do this job. That has got to be one of our first priorities.

Mrs Pupatello: I can't believe this answer. My colleagues on this side of the House cannot believe that you would say in this House, "We'd love to hire them but we can't find people to hire." It's a big world out there, Minister. We'd like to see some kind of paper trail on exactly what you have done to satisfy this number one recommendation in part one. Now we are waiting—maybe at 1 o'clock, maybe at 4 o'clock today—for the next part, part two, of Walkerton, but you haven't managed to satisfy the number one recommendation of the first part of this inquiry report.

You'll remember Dr Schabas. He was the fellow who spoke at the inquiry. Dr Schabas was the fellow who said, at the time that he testified at the Walkerton inquiry, that Mike Harris turned his back on public health. Here's what he said just recently in a local Canadian Medical Association Journal, "Ten months after my testimony, there are still seven Ontario health units without a medical officer of health." Stand in your place today and tell this House what you will be doing about this. How can you answer that you haven't been able to find them when you've had two years since Walkerton to satisfy that number one recommendation?

Hon Mr Clement: If we want to put all the facts on the table, the honourable member would know that in the meantime there have been interim medical officers of health who have been retained to provide for the responsibilities that have to be discharged. That is the interim. The honourable member should know that we want to be in a position to hire the very best people who have the best qualifications and we will undertake to do so at the earliest available opportunity.

Mrs Pupatello: The minister must have just admitted that those who are acting clearly are not qualified to do the job. Why would you appoint them to act? The question still remains two years after Walkerton. Today we were to receive a report, which is part two, of recommendations coming out of that inquiry, but after two years you haven't managed to satisfy the number one recommendation. There are seven communities in Ontario—Huron, Lambton, Oxford, Elgin-St Thomas, Haldimand-Norfolk, Timiskaming, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph—that have no full-time medical officer of health.

Minister, what do you say to these communities after the debacle of the government's responsibilities around Walkerton? You cannot stand in your place today and say that you have satisfied any more than eight of the 28 recommendations that came out of part one. What will you have to say when part two becomes available to us today? What responsibility does this Minister of Health

have to the people of Ontario, and in particular to the people of Ontario with no full-time medical officer of health?

Hon Mr Clement: I believe I gave the answer, that we have interim medical officers of health. I don't know where she gets this "eight recommendations fulfilled." That's probably her list, which is a partisan political list, I'm sure.

On this side of the House we take the Walkerton inquiry recommendations very seriously. We are doing so in a non-partisan way for the benefit of the people of Ontario, to ensure that we have the best water quality standards, the best public health standards. That is what we are aspiring to on this side of the House. We're trying to take the politics out of this; they're trying to keep it in.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Health. With today's news of pediatric hospital cuts, you are breaking your promises to the families of southwestern Ontario. Your predecessor promised in 1999, during the election campaign, that these children's programs would be preserved. Then you yourself, at the height of a leadership campaign, came to London and told families that there was no plan to strip pediatric programs from either London or Ottawa.

Now we know exactly what you're going to do. Without these services, very ill children are going to have to travel very far. Minutes can be spent saving a child's life that shouldn't be spent travelling down the highways of this province.

Will you tell the parents and families of southwestern Ontario why you're breaking your faith with them? Why are you putting the lives of these young children at risk? Minister, why are you cutting the heart out of health care in southwestern Ontario today?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The honourable member should know that I created the specialized pediatric services review for the express purpose of ensuring that we have the best health care for our children. As a parent myself I'd want to know that if my children required specialized pediatric cardiac services, they would have the best services somewhere in Ontario. That is what this report recommends. It is a report that focuses on the best results for our kids, so that they live longer, healthier lives if they're afflicted with the need to have this kind of surgery.

If the honourable member wants to stand in his place and say that his motive is different from that, I challenge him to do so. But I know him well enough to know that he would want to have the best results for our children. That is what this report indicates is possible and desirable, and it creates a path that we have accepted.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): To the same minister: the decision you made today effectively devastates cardiac care in eastern Ontario.

Interjection: It does not.

Mr Patten: It does so. If you take that program out of the cardiac program at the Children's Hospital now, what do you think is going to happen? I guarantee that you will lose cardiac doctors—I guarantee you that—and they will have a weaker program, and that will ricochet all the way through eastern Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr Patten: It's not some little hick town. CHEO serves a million and a half to two million people throughout all of eastern Ontario. And I hope that you, Sterling, will stand up and fight for it as well.

What about the families? I didn't hear you talk about any of the families that are going to have to travel 400 kilometres to 600 kilometres with a sick child to a centralized service.

Every other program in the province is hurt by your decision today; I guarantee it. It's going to be devastating. I also want you to think: is Sick Kids going to have a program for francophone families from eastern Ontario, as CHEO does? They don't have one now; I doubt they'll have one in the future. What are you going to tell the families of eastern Ontario?

Hon Mr Clement: I would tell them what I would tell any member of this House, that the evidence is in. If the honourable member does not believe our own specialized experts, the best experts in the world, about the need to create a high-volume specialized centre, maybe he'll listen to the Manitoba report of 2002 or the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry of October 2001 in England or the office of our own chief coroner in November 2001. The evidence is in, and it indicates that low volumes do not equal best outcomes.

We are creating a province-wide network that will provide for the best children's care in Ontario. This is better, and it is perceived to be better both by experts at CHEO and experts in London. This is going to create better outcomes for the kids of our province. That's why we had to make that decision. If the honourable member can stand in his place and say he is not for that, I'd like to hear him do that.

The Speaker: Last supplementary.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Minister, those communities, especially London and Ottawa, have been reeling. First, in 1999, they were going to be cut, and then they weren't going to be cut. During your own leadership race it was going to be cut, and then it was not going to be cut. Today it is being cut. The only thing that has changed since 1999 is politics. First to save your bacon during a general election and then to attempt your own leadership race, you changed your position, because those facts didn't matter then. What will happen in both Ottawa and London is that they will not be able to recruit and retain the specialists they currently have. They will not be able to go into the future and say they have a world-class centre that offers all these programs.

I would like to ask this minister if he has the support of local Tory MPPs from those areas. I want to know the position of Frank Mazzilli, Dianne Cunningham, Bob Wood, Garry Guzzo, Norm Sterling and John Baird. Do

those local Tory MPPs support you in your decision today, because politically, expediently, it's OK for you to make that decision today? Will you tell us if those local Tory MPPs support your decision?

1420

Hon Mr Clement: I encourage the honourable member to read the report, created by some of the best pediatricians in the world. It included Dr Tom Frewan, who is indeed from the London Health Sciences Centre. He said today, "I'd like to make a comment because I know our local MPPs, which cross party lines, have all ... illustrated real concern.... This report, in my opinion, as chief of pediatrics at Children's Hospital Western Ontario, puts us on a firm footing as far as the delivery of a whole range of pediatric specialized services.... London's role in the delivery of pediatric specialized care" will not be diminished. "Indeed it creates a provincial system and gives us now an opportunity ... to bring our needs and issues to the minister's attention."

That is what the chief pediatrician in London is saying. If the honourable member or any member of her caucus can stand in their place and say they do not want the better results, I encourage them to do it now, and then the people of Ontario can render their judgment.

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier and is about Walkerton. Today, Commissioner O'Connor has delivered the final report of the Walkerton inquiry. Now is the time to take decisive steps to ensure that this tragedy never happens again. My question to you is, will you commit to speedy passage of the Safe Drinking Water Act put forward by my colleague Ms Churley over two years ago, a Safe Drinking Water Act which has now been pending before this Legislature for almost two years? Will you commit to passing the Safe Drinking Water Act?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): In response to the leader of the third party, the leader is right: the Attorney General has just received part two of the report from Walkerton, from the commissioner. That report will be made available to the public as quickly as possible.

As far as the initiatives we have taken, I think the leader of the third party knows full well that we have taken incredible steps, very aggressive action, in order to ensure that the people in Ontario have access to safe drinking water. We did initiate what we called Operation Clean Water. We introduced the drinking water protection regulation. I can assure the leader of the third party we will continue to move forward in a way that we will provide all people in this province with very safe, clean drinking water.

Mr Hampton: It was a simple question. Will you commit to passing the Safe Drinking Water Act? Just out of decency, I think you should be able to tell the people of Ontario yes.

But I have a couple of other questions. Will the provincial government create an office of the chief inspector

of drinking water systems? Will the Ministry of Environment increase its commitment to strict enforcement of all regulations and provisions related to the safety of drinking water; in other words, hire back some of the 900 staff that you fired before Walkerton happened? Will you commit to those two things?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The leader of the third party knows full well that we have been moving forward very aggressively in order to ensure that we have safe drinking water for all citizens in Ontario. We presently have the toughest drinking water regulations in Canada. In fact, other jurisdictions are copying the initiatives and measures we have undertaken. Just recently, as the member knows, we announced that we would be proceeding to implement the doubling of the number of inspectors and we would be ensuring that one out of three annual inspections will be unannounced. We have been increasing the number of individuals who are going to be available in order to ensure that drinking water in this province is safe.

Mr Hampton: Minister, it is recorded in part one of the Walkerton inquiry that your government laid off 900 inspectors, enforcement officers and other scientific support officers who supported safe drinking water in this province. Now you want public kudos for hiring 26 of 900 back.

But I have a couple of other questions. Will the provincial government ensure that programs relating to the safety of drinking water are adequately funded? In other words, not only will you hire back the staff, but will you ensure that the programs related to safe drinking water are adequately funded, something that obviously didn't happen in the three and four years before the tragedy at Walkerton? Will you make that commitment, Minister?

Hon Mrs Witmer: We have invested a considerable amount of resources in the protection of providing safe drinking water to the people of this province in recent years. I'd just like to speak to the fact that, for example, under Operation Clean Water we announced \$10 million in funding for groundwater studies in Ontario municipalities. This was the largest single investment in groundwater protection in the history of this province. That was a very significant step forward.

We've also invested, through SuperBuild, \$10 billion in strategic infrastructure projects, including improvements to municipal water and sewage systems. Again, that's going to leverage \$10 billion or more from the private and the broader public sector. We're implementing a \$6-million provincial groundwater monitoring network. I could go on and on. For example, we committed \$240 million under SuperBuild's Ontario small town and rural development. We have—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. I'm afraid the Deputy Premier's time is up. New question.

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Minister, there are all of those announcements, but most of the money hasn't gone out the door yet because muni-

cipalities are wondering where it is. All of that doesn't amount to what was there before your government started cutting and chopping out of the ministry that was supposed to protect our water.

But I have another question. Part of the debate about nutrient management is that initially your government wanted to fob the responsibility for controlling nutrient management off to local municipalities. Most recently you wanted to put it with the Ministry of Agriculture. We all know it belongs with the Ministry of Environment.

Minister, is your government prepared to commit that the Ministry of Environment will take the lead role in regulating the potential impacts of farm activities on drinking water sources? Not the Ministry of Agriculture, not municipalities; the Ministry of the Environment. Are you prepared to make that commitment?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'm going to ask the Minister of the Environment to respond to that question. I know he's prepared.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): What this government is prepared to state today is that we will ensure that the inspections are carried out by the proper staff, by the government and by the appropriate ministry involved.

I understand your question being that you don't think the Ministry of Agriculture can provide inspections to the level of the Ministry of Environment. Frankly, I don't agree. I think the Ministry of Agriculture is capable of doing that. When that decision is made, though, we will announce the decision and inform the people of the province of Ontario. But let me say very clearly, our priority is to make sure the inspections are done, they're done well and they're done comprehensively. We will ensure that those commitments are met regardless of the ministry that does the inspections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Supplementary?

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, I believe that your ministry has not adequately responded to the recommendations in part one of the Walkerton inquiry. What I want to ask you today is, should Judge O'Connor recommend that you bring in a comprehensive Safe Drinking Water Act, will you indeed commit today to do that?

The Speaker: The member is supposed to do a supplementary and a follow-up on the same topic. I've been trying to follow and see if it is. Is it related to the same topic?

Mr Hampton: Yes.

The Speaker: Proceed.

1430

Ms Churley: Minister, we're talking about safe drinking water here. It's all related. I'm asking you specifically, should the judge, in part two of the Walkerton inquiry, recommend that your government bring in a comprehensive Safe Drinking Water Act, will you commit today that you will bring in such an act as quickly as possible?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Before we start speculating on what the report says and start speculating about proposed solutions and start speculating on what this side or that side of the House will do, I think all reasonable people would agree that we take the time to read the report.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Why didn't you release it earlier?

Hon Mr Stockwell: Now it seems to me—and the answer to the heckle from the member for St Catharines is, we didn't get the report. We didn't have the report. The report was only delivered today to the Attorney General at 1:30, and they're working feverishly to get it up on the Web site to ensure the people of the province of Ontario have the report. Reasonable people would think that before you start making commitments or speculating on what a report says, you and I may want to take on the crazy task of reading the report.

MINISTRY OF THE ENVIRONMENT STAFF

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question to the Deputy Premier. In 1996, Finance Minister Ernie Eves, in his stampede to cut taxes for the rich before balancing the budget, made huge and damaging cuts to the Ministry of the Environment despite clear warnings that these cuts would pose a serious risk to public health and safety.

The environment ministry was hit particularly hard in staff and resources by this slash-and-burn approach. Almost 50% of the budget and one third of the staff was lost. The number of individuals dedicated to drinking water protection when the Conservative government took office in 1995 was 114. You cut that number by 48%, leaving only 48 when the axe quit swinging.

After the release of part one of the Walkerton report, you have implemented only eight of 28 recommendations and you've hired only 26 water inspectors to try to appear to be doing something significant to address your problems.

When will you agree to restore the staffing levels for water protection to at least what they were before Finance Minister Ernie Eves put the boots to the Ministry of the Environment in 1996, 1997 and 1998?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'll refer that to the Minister of Environment.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): The rhetoric is far exceeding the question. The question is about the report and the implementation of that report.

Let me just say to the member opposite that we've been working at top speed to deal with this report and implement the changes and recommendations that were put in place. We as a government have committed to implementing all the recommendations. In fact, we'd done so even beforehand, before the report came out, before the recommendations were in fact put in place. Since then, we're up to: one out of every three inspec-

tions will be unannounced; inspectors will follow a written protocol that ensures more thorough and effective inspections; follow-up inspections within one year of any inspection that discloses a deficiency; increasing the number of dedicated water system inspectors to 51 permanent. We've implemented all those, including that all municipalities have to be informed through their certificates of approval whether they need to have continuous chlorine and turbidity monitoring and alarms.

This government has worked quickly and we continue to plan on working quickly to implement the recommendations. The question was: we've been slow in this? Not at all; exactly the opposite. We've been quick. We were quick off the mark before the report came out to implement them, and we've been quick off the mark to implement the report. That's an unfair comment.

Mr Bradley: Let me tell you what one of your ministry officials said, rather than what you're saying politically today. In an article this year, one of your officials said, "Our problem is we don't have the staff to review the reports and help the waterworks fix the problem. We just hope the damn reports aren't too bad," said a senior environment ministry official speaking on condition of anonymity," of course. "As far as I can see, the top brass at the ministry is ducking and hiding. I don't see a lot of extra people being hired to improve water quality. We just seem to be spin-doctoring our way through yet another reorganization of staff," said the environment ministry" official.

I agree with that official. It's obvious now that billions of dollars will be required to repair and restore the water treatment and sewage treatment infrastructure in Ontario. Your government, with great fanfare, makes a lot of announcements, but it doesn't follow through on them.

Are you now prepared to commit the billions of dollars that will be required in investing in the water and sewer infrastructure in this province to restore the kind of safety to our water system that is required, or are you prepared to simply continue to spend money on government advertising, a \$2-billion tax gift to the rich and a half-billion-dollar tax gift to those who are in private schools?

Hon Mr Stockwell: You quote some anonymous person, and you read it into the record here and you ask me—

Mr Bradley: What do you think would happen if he gave his name? He'd be fired.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You had your question. I'm trying to give you the answer. You asked the question. I'm trying to respond. You asked the question. You quote some anonymous person who said X, Y and Z. I have no idea who this person is. You say it's a senior staff person. I have no idea who the senior staff person is. I have no idea how much reliance to lend to the quote, so it's really quite unfair for you to come into this House and start quoting ghosts about whether or not we're doing the right job.

Secondly, 65 new staff for SWAT, 69 for Operation Clean Water, the increases that I talked about there as far as inspections are concerned.

The frustration on the other side of the House is that we are moving quickly. The frustration on the other side of the House is that we have hired staff. The frustration on the other side of the House is that they know that we treat this as a tragedy. We have dealt with it in a professional, governmental approach and we have dealt with it fairly. The frustration on that side of the House is, the only quotes you can dig up to condemn us are from an anonymous source.

FEDERAL AIRPORT SECURITY FEES

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation. I was very pleased to see that the provincial government reacted quickly to strengthen tourism after September 11, investing \$10 million in new funding to aggressively market Ontario. What we got from the federal government was an air travellers' security charge that hurts all people who use airplanes.

This past weekend, Minister, you represented Ontario at the federal-provincial-territorial conference in Halifax. How do provincial and territorial ministers of tourism view this tax?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): I thank my colleague, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, for his question. I want to report that all my fellow cabinet ministers from across Canada were on the same page in our concern about this air travellers' security charge. We felt that it was rather excessive and punitive.

It's very clear to those of us who have rural and remote areas of our provinces that, for example, in Ontario a person travelling with a connecting flight to Sudbury on a return ticket will end up spending \$48 on the security tax. In fact, in some instances, we found out that the cost of taxes and surcharges was greater than the cost of the flight for many Canadians. This tax, quite frankly, discriminates against people living in rural and remote areas. As ministers, we agreed that the tax must be repealed, significantly reduced or modified; say, no charge for planes under 60 seats, as they do in the United States.

Mr Gill: Minister, I understand that this was the fourth year in a row that the federal minister of tourism has ignored the concerns of the tourism industry by not attending the conference. How did the provincial and territorial tourism ministers communicate their message to the federal government?

Hon Mr Jackson: It's interesting to note that we actually had the president and CEO of Air Canada show up and meet with us but we couldn't get a federal cabinet minister to show up. What we said as ministers was that we need a champion for tourism and economic development in Ottawa, which we don't have today. We know that the federal government has not been aggressive in protecting Canadians with respect to air policies. And certainly it's been strangling—strangling—tourism.

The members opposite might be interested to know that the deal that Air Canada has with the federal govern-

ment is that, as of January 4, 2003, Air Canada can cancel any flight to any city anywhere in Canada, at will. The ministers were very concerned about this. We're concerned about it in Ontario, if the members opposite aren't. We ask that we be given far more notice than the 120 days that the federal government has settled for, and we hope to get a meeting with Allan Rock here in Toronto or in Ottawa or someplace where that minister will show up and speak to the tourism ministers. Tourism is too big an industry in this province, too many jobs, to be neglected by the federal government in this way.

1440

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is to the Deputy Premier. It has come to my attention that in fact the comments made by the Minister of Public Safety and Security yesterday in this House and outside this House may have breached national security laws, may have breached provincial and federal laws by alerting other sleeper cells under surveillance that they may be under surveillance, by letting a sleeper cell that was under surveillance know they are no longer under surveillance and otherwise providing a status report on a terrorist investigation before an arrest has been made. This is totally inappropriate.

I am asking you to commit, in the Attorney General's absence from the House, to having the Deputy Attorney General investigate the matter to see if any laws have been breached. Would you consider doing that, Deputy Premier?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): Mr Speaker, I am going to refer that to the Minister of Public Safety and Security.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): This was not an unexpected question, given a query from the Globe and Mail earlier today. I'm sure the Globe and Mail has contacted the opposition parties to raise this in the House.

This is not a view shared by police services in this province or by Major-General Lewis MacKenzie. I believe, as do most Ontarians, that Canadians have a right to know. This is not a Liberal perspective, and we all understand that by viewing the activities in Ottawa. We believe that Canadians have a right to know about these sorts of situations.

This government is committed to public safety and public security. I want to say, with respect to this, that it was raised in the context of comments made by the Vice-President of the United States that a terrorist attack against the United States is inevitable and what our reaction in this province would be.

I will continue in the supplementary.

Mr Bryant: While I appreciate the words from the Minister of Public Safety and Security, we can't ask the minister to investigate himself. I want his name cleared. I want to ensure that no laws have been breached.

Interjections.

Mr Bryant: The government laughs. The government thinks this is funny. I am telling you that there is a serious concern that laws have been broken. You laughed when this same minister was found in violation of the Young Offenders Act. He is not infallible. I have laid a very serious allegation on the table. I have said there has been a breach of national security. I have said that in fact there has been surveillance—

Hon Mr Runciman: On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: The member opposite said I was found in violation of the Young Offenders Act. Everyone in this House who has been paying attention for the last five years knows that is not true.

Mr Bryant: Everybody in this House understands that the minister—pardon me?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I apologize. I'm arguing with the House leader and I shouldn't be doing that. I will ignore him and listen to you. I apologize to the member.

Mr Bryant: Thank you. My question is this: Deputy Premier, will the government look into whether or not the Solicitor General has in fact broken any laws, yes or no?

Hon Mr Runciman: I think the member's failure to apologize is beneath contempt and shows disrespect, not just for me as a member of this Legislature, but for all of us as members of this assembly.

Ontarians and Canadians do not share the view of the Liberal Party of Ontario or the Liberal Party of Canada when it comes to security issues in this country. When the Vice-President of the United States says that a terrorist attack against the United States is inevitable, I think we should be making Canadians aware in terms of questions or issues of complacency in this country.

If indeed there is a terrorist attack against the United States and there are any clear linkages to this country, it could have a devastating impact on the economy of Ontario and the economy of Canada. We cannot be complacent. This government believes in public safety and public security and we believe in Canadians' right to know.

Mr Bryant: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to correct the record. In fact, the minister was investigated and cleared of any wrongdoing with respect to the Young Offenders Act. I did not mean to mislead the House and I apologize for doing so.

The Speaker: I thank the member. I know that's what he did mean.

MARRIAGE

Mr Bob Wood (London West): My question is to the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Marriages in Ontario can currently be performed only by a minister of religion, a judge or a justice of the peace. The conduct of marriage ceremonies is not a core function of our judicial officers, and many judges and justices of the peace agree with this view. Surely the time has come to change the law to permit the appointment of civil marriage commissioners who would be authorized to perform

marriage ceremonies. This would result in better service to the public and will permit our judicial officers to concentrate on their core functions. Does the minister support changing the law to permit the appointment of civil marriage commissioners?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I want to commend the member for London West on his activity on this file, championing a policy view that he feels strongly about and, in addition, the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

As was indicated by the member, currently the methods to solemnize marriage in Ontario are through religious services, a justice of the peace or a judge. In fact Bill 74, sponsored by the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and currently before the House, has been referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

To answer the member's question, the answer is no in terms of proceeding at this point in time with legislation from the ministry. If I look at some of the priorities that I want to bring forward as minister, in terms of promoting the Ontario wine industry, jobs and growth in that area, to the LCBO and allowing Europeans fair access to the grape and wine products of this province, in terms of moving forward with legislation to modernize consumer protection in this province in today's day and age, other issues like privacy are of a higher priority level for the ministry at this point in time.

Mr Wood: As members of the House will recall, I first raised this matter with one of the minister's predecessors a couple of years ago. I would hope the minister shares my view that if there's a good business case to do something, something should be done. I think it's fairly clear that there's a good business case to do this. It will save the government money and it will improve service for the people of this province. Could the minister share with us when he's going to take a definitive position on this issue?

Hon Mr Hudak: The position of the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services is not to proceed with legislation from the ministry. A private member's bill is before the House. Obviously, if passed by the assembly, we would implement that bill according to the wishes of the assembly. But if I look at some of the scope that has a broad-based impact across the province, the good things we can do through this ministry—consumer protection, working to protect privacy, especially personal health information, in Ontario as well as promoting the hospitality industry, the grape and wine industry in particular—those will be the first things out of the gate to build on the work of my predecessors.

In terms of the marriage ceremony, the solemnity and the decorum that are involved, it's a very sensitive issue with long traditions in Ontario. Before any action would take place, I think careful consideration of the matter and broad-based consultation are necessary. But in terms of the energies of this ministry and the staff of this ministry, we have other priorities that are moving forward at this point in time.

YOUNG OFFENDER FACILITY

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a question to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. You know that workers at Kennedy House Youth Services in Uxbridge have been locked out of their jobs for almost a year now. Kennedy House is supposed to house 80 young offenders, and until very recently it housed but 10; as of today it houses none. Yet in February of this year your colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing told OPSEU members that full funding was still flowing through to Kennedy House. Our concern is that full funding continues to flow during a period of time when no young offenders are being housed. Why would you continue to provide funding for 80 offenders when the number is now zero?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague across the way for the question. He will know that there are services offered at Kennedy House for managers and funding flows for that. With regard to other issues, though, at Kennedy House, because there is an ongoing investigation it would be inappropriate for me to discuss those matters.

1450

Mr Kormos: I'm interested in being told by the minister that there's an investigation ongoing. This, in and of itself, is news, and perhaps the minister would elaborate on the investigation that's being conducted.

Minister, once again, will you please tell us whether or not there are young offenders being housed, how many are being housed and whether or not full funding is flowing on a per capita basis for 80 young offenders when in fact there are none and when in effect what your ministry is doing is financing union-busting on the part of Kennedy House, financing strikebreaking by virtue of hiring scabs and ineptly handling taxpayers' funds when it comes to young offender facilities?

Hon Mrs Elliott: The member opposite would know that the ministry should not get involved in contract negotiations. Although the Kennedy House employees are on strike, indeed the managers are not.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): My question is to the Minister of Energy. On May 17, Mark Garner, the director of licensing at the Ontario Energy Board, issued an updated bulletin to gas marketers and electricity retailers in Ontario. It's good news because the provincial regulator is strengthening or clarifying the regulatory controls around such issues as forgery, misrepresentation and other issues of consumer awareness. This, however, comes months after hundreds of thousands of Ontario consumers, many of them senior citizens, signed up with unscrupulous electricity marketers who have clearly ripped them off.

My question to the Minister of Energy is: notwithstanding the bulletin of May 17, 2002, on these matters,

what specific remediation is he as Minister of Energy for Ontario prepared to offer to all of those people in the past two years, prior to this bulletin, who did not have the benefit of this help and who have, in substantial numbers, been abused and ripped off?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): The remediation's already in place. It exists today. The simple fact of the matter is if anyone feels they were abused or ripped off—and I'm not prepared to paint all retailers with the same brush. I think there are some out there that aren't operating fairly and the OEB is dealing with them, but the vast majority I think are. But let me be clear: the remediation already exists. If anyone feels or any of your constituents feel that they were taken advantage of or fraudulently led to believe certain terms and conditions about the contract, they may actually make application to the Ontario Energy Board.

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): If they can get through on the phone.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Submit this complaint and the Ontario Energy Board will investigate and deal with that complaint. That is what they are there to do and that is what they have been doing.

Mr Conway: I agree that not all contracts are bad. We have roughly a million contracts in place. I'm guessing that about 200,000 of those contracts are grade A stinkers.

According to this bulletin, your own government has been seriously misrepresented by some of these marketers. Many people would take your advice; they would call the energy board. But as my friend Kennedy just intoned, and most of us who've had an experience in this connection in the last number of months could agree, how many constituents have said, "Try to call the energy board"? You can't get through. It takes days or weeks, and when you do get through you're told either directly or indirectly, "We are a very limited police force. We have very limited resources to do the job that's before us."

Question, Minister: given what has happened, are you prepared to allocate to this increasingly important but increasingly beleaguered provincial referee, the Ontario Energy Board, additional resources so that some of this outrageous and unscrupulous activity in the electricity marketplace, much of which is targeted at defenceless senior citizens, can be better policed by a more well-resourced police force, namely, the energy board?

Hon Mr Stockwell: I know Kennedy intoned the comment that was followed up by Conway, and I'm sure Kennedy and Conway may find that to be a good position to put out to the public. But what I have heard from the Ontario Energy Board is that they get requests to investigate and they investigate. If they come to me, I say to my friend Conway and my friend Kennedy—and I will intone this—and request more money to police, then yes, that's something this government would look at very seriously and, if necessary, would deliver.

But the fact remains that this is the same OEB that levied fines of \$56,000 on two retailers on April 26

because they investigated, because they found fraudulent behaviour and because we have given them enough money to do those kinds of investigations and levy those kinds of fines.

I say to the members opposite, including Kennedy and Conway, that if you have examples you need to have looked into, I suggest you bring them to the attention of the Ontario Energy Board, and if you have any difficulty, bring them to the Ministry of Energy office and we'll be happy to forward them for you. I have seen none. I have not seen one from my friends Kennedy or Conway.

CHILD CARE

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a question for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. There has been a lot of media attention lately to do with child care. In my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka, I have also been getting a lot of questions to do with child care from constituents. My constituents want to know if your ministry is planning on cutting \$200 million from child care.

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I'd like to address this question, because there has been some information going around lately and I want the opportunity to properly correct the record.

Last January at a news conference, Minister Baird responded to a document that was circulating in the public and stated very clearly that \$200 million would not be cut from child care. I'd like to quote that: "I made it very clear that it was not an option that I had ... seen, and that it was not something that was being considered. Furthermore, the Ontario government is not considering any plan to cut \$200 million from child care."

For the record, this minister supports that statement. When I refer to child care, I refer to informal and regulated child care. Our government has implemented many new initiatives to support child care. It's something we're proud of, and we know that parents in this province appreciate that.

Mr Miller: My constituents appreciate that reassurance.

Some of the concerns my constituents have been telling me about echo the report that was released in Toronto recently. They want to know why our government didn't invest the \$144 million from the federal government in child care services.

Hon Mrs Elliott: When the \$144 million was transferred to Ontario from the federal government, we had to decide how best we thought it would be directed to meet Ontario children's needs. Our decision was to try to direct those funds to the most vulnerable. So we targeted funding to things like autism.

We introduced the Ontario Early Years centres. I was just in the Oak Ridges moraine area today with my colleague Frank Klees. We opened one of the second phase of the Early Years centres, one of 61 that are about to be opened across the province—well received and an

excellent opportunity for parents to get information to help their children.

This year we are going to spend \$700 million to help parents with child care needs across this province. Some \$200 million of that will be directed exclusively to low- and modest-income parents through the Ontario child care supplement for working families.

That \$144 million is being spent—every penny of it—on programs for children who are most vulnerable here in this province.

ONTARIANS WITH DISABILITIES LEGISLATION

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question today is to the Minister of Citizenship. Ontarians with disabilities have searched hard and long for the new, wonderful, softer, kinder Premier. They have not yet found him. In fact, the search has been fruitless.

Since 1990, Ontarians with disabilities have received exactly the same number of dollars for their disability pension—not a penny more. While he was with Comsoc, Minister Baird and his staff on average, every month, billed the taxpayers \$930.95 for bar and restaurant tabs. An Ontarian on disabilities receiving the absolute maximum receives \$930 for accommodation, for food and for clothing. There's no money in there for restaurants. Your government jammed through the Ontarians with Disabilities Act in December. It was so urgent to get it through that there was very limited public consultation. Your wonderful clause on the parking fines was not proclaimed; 95% of that bill has not yet been proclaimed.

Minister, my question to you is, now that the public show is over, when will you proclaim the Ontarians with Disabilities Act?

1500

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I would like to thank the member for the question. The Ontario government is committed to fully proclaiming the Ontarians with Disabilities Act as soon as possible. We are committed to an Ontario where no new barriers are created and existing ones are removed, to ensure greater accessibility and enhanced independence for all persons with disabilities. We passed the legislation. Last December the government passed its Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Canada's most far-reaching and comprehensive legislation for disabled people. Key portions have been proclaimed. They were proclaimed in February 2002. We plan to proclaim the remaining sections of the act in the fall of this year.

Mr Parsons: In the fall of this year? What was the rush to get it through before Christmas, then? You have proclaimed the title, which was really what the object was, and you have proclaimed the portion allowing the minister to establish the Ontarians with disabilities Accessibility Advisory Council. Now, Minister Jackson made some commitments on that. He said that the disabled community would have input into the process.

They've not had that. You have appointed five Ontarians to that committee—great people, but very limited disabilities. You have not given them input into it. You have appointed zero women to the advisory committee—not one.

I'm asking you, Minister, if you will adhere to the commitments. You promised that you would put the disabled community in the driver's seat. They're still trying to hitchhike a ride on this vehicle. They've got lots of rhetoric. They need some action. Will you appoint a full cross-section of individuals and will you give the disabled community some input into it? At least keep your promise on that.

Hon Mr DeFaria: I again thank the member for his follow-up, but I reject the premise he puts forward. Complex pieces of legislation are often proclaimed in stages. We need to put the tools in place, the structures and all the necessary supports, such as the council and the Accessibility Directorate of Ontario. That's what we have done in the first phase we proclaimed. I recently announced the appointment of the chair, the vice-chair and three additional members of the Accessibility Advisory Council. Further appointments will be made shortly.

The legislation is the first in Canada to put persons with disabilities at the forefront of change, with their majority representation on the new council and on municipality advisory committees. The ODA is an important part of Ontarians' right to full accessibility, but it's not the only element. The act builds on an already multi-billion dollar annual commitment for people with disabilities and a strong government commitment to continue to move forward.

PORTUGUESE CANADIAN COMMUNITY

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is also for the minister responsible for citizenship. As the first person of Portuguese descent to be named Minister of Citizenship, I know that you, Minister, have a special interest in Ontario's diverse population. Indeed, as you're fully aware, we have a significant community of Portuguese people in my hometown of Listowel. Would you please stand in your place today and outline for us what the government is doing to support these diverse communities in Ontario?

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): Thank you for the question, especially coming from the member for Perth.

This government recognizes that cultural diversity is one of our province's greatest strengths. Ontario has welcomed approximately 120,000 immigrants each year for the last 10 years, more than half of all newcomers to Canada. This government has always been interested in reaching out to our new communities in the province. The government recognizes the benefits of our diversity, both culturally and economically. Ontario will always be a province where proud and productive people from every culture, every religion, every race and every coun-

try will be welcome. Ontario is a land of opportunity, and our government will ensure that it continues to be so.

Mr Johnson: As you mentioned, every year we welcome many newcomers to our province. You will recall the background that I gave you on Mr Joe Borges from the Listowel area, who for quite a few years was responsible for having the only bullfights in Canada, in and near Listowel. Unfortunately, other problems have developed. He used to fly matadors and horses in from both California and Lisbon, Portugal. I think it was the quarantine on the horses that were particularly—for those who don't know, I also wanted to explain that the Portuguese method of bullfighting does not harm the bull. They have collars with Velcro for it, and they don't injure the animal at all.

Minister, you mentioned that Ontario communities are welcoming. What has the province done to create a more welcoming environment for these newcomers?

Hon Mr DeFaria: I appreciate the question, especially coming from a member who is so involved with not only the Portuguese community but also with cattle and horses and is very interested in that issue. I am very pleased to say that this province is committed to ensuring that Ontario continues to be a welcoming province. Creating an environment where all Ontarians can participate fully strengthens our ability to compete globally. Ontario provides assistance to newcomers from many government sources, totalling \$50 million per year. The \$3.9 million invested in the newcomer settlement program funds more than 80 community agencies that provide settlement services. The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities spends more than \$6 million a year—

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

SAFE DRINKING WATER LEGISLATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Earlier in question period I asked you six fairly basic questions about your government's willingness to protect our province's drinking water. They weren't deep, philosophical questions; they're fairly basic if you're really serious about protecting drinking water.

Now I'm going to tell you where those questions came from. They come from part two of the Walkerton inquiry. Every one of those questions I asked you is a recommendation of Mr Justice O'Connor. Recommendation 67: "The provincial government should enact a Safe Drinking Water Act." Recommendation 72: "The provincial government should create an office of Chief Inspector-Drinking Water Systems." Recommendation 75: "The Ministry of the Environment should increase its commitment to strict enforcement of all regulations and provisions related to the safety of drinking water." Recommendation 78: "The provincial government should ensure that programs relating to the safety of drinking water are adequately funded." Recommendation 80: "The drinking water branch should prepare an annual 'State of On-

tario's Drinking Water Report,' which should be tabled in the Legislature." Recommendation 11: "The Ministry of the Environment should take the lead role in regulating the potential impacts of farm activities on drinking water sources."

Those are all recommendations from Mr Justice O'Connor from part two of his report. Are you prepared to implement them?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): In response to the leader of the third party, we have not yet seen part two of the report on Walkerton. I can tell you, however, that we are looking forward to reviewing it and very carefully considering all of the recommendations within the report.

1510

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order 55, I have a statement of business of the House for next week.

Monday afternoon's business is still to be determined. On Monday evening we'll begin second reading on Bill 135.

Tuesday afternoon will be the NDP opposition day. On Tuesday evening we'll be debating Bill 135.

Wednesday afternoon's business is still to be determined. On Wednesday evening we will be debating Bill 135.

On Thursday morning, during private members' business, we will discuss ballot item 45, standing in the name of Ms Martel, and ballot item 46, standing in the name of Mr Wood.

Thursday afternoon's business is still to be determined.

PETITIONS

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke): Might I suggest to the government House leader that when you're doing that, I think it's a very useful thing to have just a brief identification of the legislation for those of us who are sitting here.

I'm very pleased, under petitions today, to present a petition gathered together by Abram Taylor and signed by over 100 students of a great high school, Madawaska Valley District High School, in the great county of Renfrew. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, do petition the Legislature as follows:

"Whereas average tuition fees in Ontario are the second-highest in Canada; and

"Whereas average undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have more than doubled in the past 10 years; and

"Whereas tuition fees for deregulated programs have, in certain cases, doubled and tripled; and

"Whereas Statistics Canada has documented a link between increasing tuition fees and diminishing access to post-secondary education; and

"Whereas four other provincial governments have taken a leadership role by freezing and reducing tuition fees;

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

"Freeze tuition fees for all programs at their current levels, and

"Take steps to reduce the tuition fees of all graduate programs, post-diploma programs and professional programs for which tuition fees have been deregulated since 1998."

As I said earlier, this petition is signed by over 100 young people from Barry's Bay, Killaloe, Round Lake Centre and Palmer Rapids. I'm very pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately institute real patient-based budgeting for health care services, including home care, so as to ensure that working families in Ontario can access the care services they need."

This is signed by a number of constituents, primarily from a community in my riding, Atikokan. I affix my signature as I'm in agreement with their concerns.

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO SAVINGS OFFICE

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Province of Ontario Savings Office was created in 1922 by united farmers and labour as a unique banking facility that allowed Ontarians to invest in their province; and

"Whereas the Province of Ontario Savings Office enjoys a strong popularity among Ontario residents, with over 100,000 accounts and over \$2.8 billion on deposit; and

"Whereas the Province of Ontario Savings Office offers customers attractive interest rates, generous chequing privileges and personalized efficient service, and every dollar deposited is guaranteed by the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas POSO has 23 branches serving 17 communities across Ontario, including Hamilton, Windsor, Ottawa and small communities in northern Ontario not served by other banks or trust companies. Places like Pickle Lake, Armstrong, Killarney, Gogama and Virginiatown; and

"Whereas the Harris government announced in its latest budget that it will put the Province of Ontario Savings Office on the auction block, even though it is a consistent revenue generator, and even though this revenue could help Ontario's crumbling infrastructure after years of Tory neglect;

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

"To save the people's bank, the Province of Ontario Savings Office, so that it can continue its historic role of providing excellent banking services to families in communities across Ontario; so that people in small towns will not be forced to go further afield for banking services and forced to go to private, for-profit banks."

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

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I have a petition sent to me by the Alzheimer's Society of Thunder Bay, and I am very grateful they have. I am pleased to read their petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas people with Alzheimer's disease deserve to have equal access to the full range of drugs, including Reminyl; and

"Whereas Reminyl has been proven to be a viable alternative to Aricept and Exelon and will provide an alternative for people for whom the other two other drugs are not a good therapeutic choice; and

"Whereas there is a need to broaden the choice of therapeutic alternatives for persons with Alzheimer's disease; and

"Whereas without coverage under the Ontario drug benefit plan, many people for whom Reminyl is the most appropriate therapeutic choice will not be able to afford this drug;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned citizens of Ontario and residents of northwestern Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To add Reminyl to the Ontario Drug Benefit Formulary at the earliest possible opportunity."

It's signed by hundreds of my constituents and residents in northwestern Ontario, and I'm very pleased to sign this petition.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

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

"Whereas the residents of Centre Hastings are facing an immediate and critical situation in accessing physician services; and

"Whereas a retiring family physician has been unsuccessful in procuring a replacement physician, potentially leaving 5,000 patients without a doctor; and

"Whereas accessibility to already overcrowded hospital emergency departments and walk-in clinics is limited because of distance and availability to transportation; and

"Whereas Centre Hastings has been designated as an underserved area in need of five physicians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act immediately to establish a community health centre in Centre Hastings."

Because I think this is a very good initiative, I happily affix my signature to the petition.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition from one of our great high schools in Davenport riding, St Mary's Secondary School. It reads as follows, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Because we, the undersigned, believe in our responsibility as teachers to maintain a high degree of professionalism; and

"Because such professionalism is best served when professional learning is self-directed and based on teacher need, improves professional skills, improves student learning, is based on best practice accountability and is funded by the appropriate educational authority; and

"Because we oppose the government's teacher testing program and the College of Teachers' professional learning program because they do not meet the objectives of effective professional learning,

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that you repeal all clauses and references to professional learning from the Stability and Excellence in Education Act, 2001."

Since I am very much in favour of this petition, I put my signature to this document.

HYDRO ONE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): "To the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas the Conservative government plans to sell off Hydro One and Ontario's electricity transmission grid—the central nervous system of Ontario's economy;

"Whereas the government never campaigned on selling off this vital \$5-billion public asset and never consulted the people of Ontario on this plan;

"Whereas Ontario families want affordable, reliable electricity—they know that the sale of the grid that carries electricity to their homes is a disaster for consumers;

"Whereas selling the grid will not benefit consumers—the only Ontarians who will benefit are Bay Street brokers and Hydro One executives;

"Whereas selling Hydro One and the grid is like selling every 400-series highway in the province to private interests—selling the grid means the public sector will no longer be responsible for its security and protection;

"Therefore, be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature as follows:

"To demand the Conservative government halt the sale of Hydro One until the government has a clear mandate from the owners of Hydro One—the people of Ontario."

I'm very pleased to sign my name to that petition.

1520

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition that is signed by a number of persons on this controversial issue of the selling of Hydro One. It reads as follows:

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Toronto, demand that the government immediately stop the process of privatizing our electricity transmission system, the network of steel towers, transformers and wooden poles which transmit power from generation plants to our homes, and further to postpone the electricity deregulation process until the Ontario public is given proof that privatization will not result in price increases, and place a moratorium on any further retailing of electricity until the Ontario Energy Board comes up with a standard contract to be used by all retailers; and

"That a standard contract spell out in clear terms that the residential users are waiving their rights to future rebates in exchange for fixed rates over a specified period of time."

Since I am very much in favour of this petition, I am proud to put my name to it.

SOCIAL AUDIT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): "Whereas the Mike Harris government has undertaken a massive reform of the way social service programs are managed and delivered in the province; and

"Whereas the government's language, actions and policies over the last six years have reinforced the worst kind of stereotypes about people on social assistance without offering Ontarians any proof that the policies

they've put in place are meeting the needs of those whose circumstances have forced them to seek temporary assistance from Ontario's social safety net; and

"Whereas this government, when challenged on how well their Ontario Works programs are working, points to welfare caseload numbers as their one and only measurement of success or failure; and

"Whereas a social audit would determine how this government's policies are impacting on low-income children and families and allow for enhancements to improve the well-being, employability and economic security of individuals and families in need;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demand that the government of Ontario conduct a social audit of the Ontario Works program."

I am in full agreement with this and I am pleased to add my name to the signatures on the petition.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): "Whereas the objective of the Ontario disability support plan is to eliminate the stigma of 'welfare' and provide income support to meet the needs of persons with disabilities; and

"Whereas our province will benefit from supporting and encouraging the employment of persons with disabilities; and

"Whereas the present ODSP maximum monthly allowance of \$930 per month for a single person fails to meet basic living requirements; and

"Whereas a person in receipt of ODSP is allowed to earn only \$1,920 per year of employment income without penalty, and

"Whereas this government has made ODSP a barrier to independence for persons with disabilities,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to bring forward meaningful financial improvements to the ODSP, which will include as a minimum a fair and reasonable cost of living."

This comes from Ms Isabel Graham in Toronto. I am very pleased to sign this on behalf of those who have signed this petition.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On behalf of the students at Herman Secondary School in Windsor, Ontario, I am pleased to present the following petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the secondary students in the city of Windsor believe that the new curriculum is poor because it makes classes too difficult and students are dropping out because their grades are going down;

"Whereas OAC has been taken away, leaving students to prepare themselves for post-secondary studies;

"Whereas students believe that adding grade 7 and 8 students to secondary schools will overcrowd those schools;

"Whereas students believe that the French immersion program should continue;

"Whereas there is a lack of funding for textbooks and other important educational resources;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, demand that the Ernie Eves government review the policies adopted by Mike Harris and make the proper management and funding of education a priority."

I am proud to join the students at Herman Secondary School in affixing my signature to this petition.

AUDIOLOGY SERVICES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it's entitled: "Listen, Our Hearing is Important!"

"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 new Harris government policy will virtually eliminate access to publicly funded audiology assessments 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 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."

Of course I affix my signature to this petition.

HOME CARE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

"Whereas the funding provided by the Ontario government, through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, is inadequate to meet the growing need for home care services; and

"Whereas the funding shortfall, coupled with the implications of Bill 46, the Public Sector Accountability Act, currently before the Legislature are forcing community care access centres to make deep cuts in home

care services without any policy direction from the provincial government;

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

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

“(2) That the Legislative Assembly direct the provincial government to provide sufficient funding to community care access centres to support the home care services that are the mandate of community care access centres in the volumes needed to meet their communities’ rapidly growing needs.”

Of course I again affix my signature to this excellent petition.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 22, 2002, on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): You will recall that we left off last night at nearly 6 o’clock. The speakers for the Liberal caucus had completed their time, but we didn’t have questions and comments and of course their response, so we will do that now. We’ll go in rotation. I invite someone from the New Democratic caucus for questions and comments.

I invite questions and comments.

Mr John O’Toole (Durham): As I recall—I did attend all of yesterday’s sitting in the House—we were discussing the throne speech. I had the opportunity to speak and represent my constituents’ concerns, of the riding of Durham. But I sense the tone that I was hearing from the other side is that they don’t see the optimism, that the government is trying to encourage the people of Ontario to look hopefully to the future. The opposition, even in these most balanced of debates, fails to support any initiative of the government, whether it’s new funding announced by the Minister of Education for education, whether it’s new funding announced for family health networks, for health care generally or whether it’s the commitment made by the government to consult thoroughly on the difficult issues of the day, primarily the Hydro One component.

What I’m asking to hear today in some of their empty rhetoric are some solid suggestions to help this province move forward to be a better place for all Ontarians. Take the politics out of it sometimes. With respect, there are a couple of members here from the Liberals and a couple from the NDP who will probably take their Thursday to spend time and represent their constituents thoroughly.

But I’m anxious to hear the content of their communications today and respect the opportunity that our new Premier, Ernie Eves, has offered: a much more open and consultative approach to working together to solve the problems, and that includes all levels of government—the federal Liberal government and the municipal levels of government, whether it’s on transportation issues, environmental issues or the Walkerton issue. I think there is a real willingness.

This is a leap of faith, I know, for the opposition. They criticize continuously and rigorously, with no thought given, in many cases, to the substance of what they are saying.

1530

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions.

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I want to thank my fellow colleagues, the member from Kingston and the Islands, the member from Windsor-St Clair and the member from Don Valley East, for their excellent presentation last evening. They certainly articulated clearly what ordinary Ontarians are saying across this province. Whether they are from northern Ontario, eastern Ontario, southern Ontario or western Ontario, the people across this province are saying that this throne speech was a lot of bluster and very little substance.

The people of Ontario wanted direction. The member for Windsor-St Clair offered that direction when he talked about doctor shortages. The member from Kingston and the Islands talked about that when he spoke about the plight of those people requiring home care services and the devastation this government is wreaking upon those people—vulnerable seniors who have for their entire lives paid their dues, paid their taxes. The only thing they expected was that in the dawning years of their life they would have confidence in the health care system, and they don’t.

The member from Don Valley East articulated very clearly the critical need for housing, the critical need to be compassionate, to understand that the people of Ontario have distinct needs that aren’t being addressed by this government and certainly weren’t addressed in the speech from the throne.

I commend the members from Windsor-St Clair, Don Valley East and Kingston and the Islands because they spoke for the people of Ontario, they articulated the needs of the people of Ontario, and now all they are asking is that you meet the needs of our fellow Ontarians.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): I let it pass the first round because I did not have the privilege of being here last night, but I did listen to the comments of the last two members and I think I can understand what some of the debate was about.

I want to tell you that in this House—and I agreed when they talked about bluster and little substance—there is often very much bluster. If I had been here last night to hear the speeches, I think I would have been very appreciative of at least two of the speakers in terms of what they had to talk about.

The first one was about the CCACs and the very difficult time they are having around this province, with a definite lack of funding. It's not so much that the funding has been decreased—because numbers are being played with here. It's not so much that the numbers are being decreased in any budgetary sense, but how much they are actually being allowed to spend has gone down. Certainly we have seen the travail, the difficulty of people in this province who are taken out of the hospital, who are going home and who have been unable to find appropriate care.

I think we were all very moved in this province in the last couple of days with the secret video that was shot at a Toronto homeless shelter. People were living side by side in unsanitary conditions. People were living side by side with coughing and the potential of tuberculosis. People were living side by side, where diseases like scabies and lice can be transmitted. All of us in this room must be committed to doing something about that.

The speakers who spoke last night must have touched on these issues. I commend them for doing it, and I would ask the government bench opposite to start thinking about the social costs of some of the things you have done in the past. If this is indeed a new government, it's time to make a fresh start, looking at these and doing it right.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): I too was not party to the discussion by the member for Windsor-St Clair, so I didn't hear all his comments. But I did want to make a couple of brief comments on the throne speech, which I've been getting a lot of positive feedback on in my riding, particularly from my municipal colleagues in the municipalities I represent on the opportunity bonds.

This seems to be one of the most positive approaches to looking at long-term investments, long-term infrastructure projects for municipalities. It's an opportunity for municipalities to do something very innovative that the Municipal Act allows them to do. I know we had a lot of discussion on the new Municipal Act last fall, and municipalities asked for that power. They want to do some innovative thinking on their own without the province looking over their shoulders.

Certainly in my riding—in the city of Orillia, in the towns of Midland and Penetanguishene, and in all the townships I represent—there's very positive feedback, particularly when it comes to sewer and water expansion, long-term projects for the growth areas of our province. Of course we haven't introduced the legislation yet, but I look forward to the legislation being introduced in this House and for the opportunity for municipalities, not only in my riding but right across the province, to take advantage of the Ontario opportunity bonds that will be part of that legislation.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Windsor-St Clair has two minutes to respond.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): I thank all the members who participated.

To conclude, it's the view of the official opposition that this throne speech really does nothing. There are

several reannouncements and there's a little bit of good news in certain areas, but by and large it's nothing, just as we've sat for two weeks now and had no legislation.

I do want to say that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have offered real and meaningful alternatives in the areas of health care, education and hydro. We have put forward ideas that will carry the day in the next general election. Only Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals are looking to the future and are going to build for the future.

This government is wrapped up in the morass of Ontario Hydro and can't figure its way out of that. We've had no legislation, no opportunity to debate the really meaningful issues of the day. We challenge the government: lay out your plans, tell us what you're going to do. All we've heard is different signals from different ministers on very significant issues.

Mr Bartolucci: A lot of bluster.

Mr Duncan: That's a very good way of putting it: a lot of bluster.

As I conclude my opportunity to address this speech from the throne, I say to the people of Ontario that Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals have laid out significant plans in the areas of education, health care, hydro and how we ought to be doing business in this province. This government is tired, stale, divided among itself and can't get its act together.

On the hydro question, let us know what you're going to do before you bring in the legislation. If you decide to privatize Hydro One, call a general election before you do that and let the people have a real say. This throne speech is a disaster. It's one of the worst throne speeches ever seen in this House.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant): I've certainly been anxious to have an opportunity to address this first speech from the throne under the Ernie Eves government. It's a government that we are rapidly realizing is building on past accomplishments while paving the way for responsive, common sense administration in the months and certainly the years to come.

I will be focusing my remarks on some of the health priorities outlined in the budget. The member opposite made mention of some of the good news in the speech from the throne, and some of that good news does lie within the realm of health care.

1540

However, further to the issue of health care, there is some bad news. I wish to begin by saying that over the last seven years our government has been forced to step into the breach and fill some gaping funding holes left in the wake of federal government decisions. These are decisions that, from my perspective, virtually abandon health obligations to Ontario and other provinces across the Dominion.

Despite this federal abandonment of health, I'm proud to say that our provincial government continues to work to ensure quality, accessible health care for all. Again, despite the downward spiral federal funding has taken,

our provincial government has increased Ontario's health budget to \$23.7 billion a year—that's billion with a "b"—far above the \$17.4 billion a year that we promised to spend on health every year when we were first elected in 1995. By the way, that \$23.7 billion eats up about 37% of Ontario's annual budget, again despite the federal government turning a deaf ear to provincial requests to meet its obligation to Canadians and restore federal funding to pre-1995 levels.

Our provincial government has moved forward, and here's an example of some of the good news the Liberal member made reference to opposite: we have expanded nurse practitioner programs—these were announced in the throne speech—to respond in large part to concerns around physician shortages.

Despite the federal government turning its back on health, our provincial government continues to consult with people, work with stakeholders and implement the necessary changes to provide our people in Ontario with the best health care system their tax dollars can buy. That would be a world-class system that is both proactive and responsive to the health care needs of all Ontarians.

Our goal from the beginning was to build a health care system that is better for everyone—for people's parents, for their children, their children's children. From the beginning we have moved with the needs of people. We have changed old systems to meet future needs and needs that are becoming clearly apparent as we continue in the 21st century.

Our government recognizes that Ontarians place an enormous value on their publicly funded health system. We also recognize that if that system is going to be there for Ontarians tomorrow, and for days and years to follow, more needs to be done to make our current system even better.

I submit that the health details included in the throne speech closely follow the road map for change that has provided and will continue to provide necessary improvements to our health care system. As reported in the throne speech, our government will find more innovative ways to not only deliver but to expand diagnostic and treatment procedures and services so they are more accessible to all.

All Ontarians, no matter where they live, obviously want to have health care close to home, and regrettably today in our province there remain many people who don't have doctors, communities that are underserved. Families in many, many communities urgently need more physicians. Ontario has moved to address this problem, for example, by helping to pay the tuition of doctors who choose to locate in areas that need doctors. There is more to do, and more is being done, as we know from this throne speech.

Our government will work with the health care community in Ontario to encourage more foreign-trained doctors to locate in underserved areas and increase the certification rate of these skilled individuals.

Family health networks designed to increase access to service are another important part of the government's

plan, and 14 pilot projects are now underway around Ontario. The government's target is to have 80% of eligible family physicians practising in these networks.

One important component of family health networks—a component that is valued by many people in Ontario—is the concept of nurse practitioner. This was mentioned in the throne speech. Our government will work to break down some of the barriers faced by nurse practitioners. Our government will more than double the number of nurse practitioners, but will also expand their role to include, for example, long-term-care facilities, community health centres and emergency rooms. Nurse practitioners will continue to be encouraged to work in communities that have been without physicians for an extended period of time.

It's also important to note that just a few weeks ago our Minister of Health and Long-Term Care announced \$3 million in projects that would see 12 communities—and these are communities that have not had adequate physician coverage for an extended period of time—receive care from nurse practitioners.

Back in March 1999, the Minister of Health announced \$10 million to support 106 full-time-equivalent nurse practitioner positions in underserved areas, in aboriginal health access centres and long-term-care facilities. Also, because of government funding increases, we now see 5,600 more nurses working in 2000 compared to the year 1999. That's more nurses than in any of the previous 10 years. Also, in 2000, the highest number of new nursing graduates entered the profession.

Over the past year or so, I've continued to meet locally in my riding with West Haldimand Hospital and area physicians to discuss doctor shortages; more recently, for example, a meeting at the Caledonia chamber of commerce on this issue.

As for doctor shortages in the neighbouring county of Norfolk, we have plans for a community health centre in Delhi. It's modelled on a very successful centre in Norwich, just to the north of my riding.

These centres are seen not only as a way to recruit physicians but also as an additional weapon in the arsenal to enhance economic development in small communities. Very recently, I sat down with the Delhi Kinsmen Club to help with planning of this ambitious project.

Locally, in my riding, many will remember the work that we did five or six years ago to designate Port Rowan and the old township of Norfolk as underserved. This was the first such designation in southern Ontario. I know Minister Wilson, the health minister at the time, will recall—I think we had to use forms from northern Ontario to introduce this first such designation in the southern part of our province.

There are benefits, obviously, for an underserved designation. These would include a listing on the Ontario Medical Association job registry, reimbursement of travel costs for not only prospective physicians but for their spouses to visit an area, an invitation to the Ministry of Health recruitment tour and, if time has gone by without successfully recruiting a physician, a \$15,000 incentive grant.

We all recognize that an adequate supply and distribution of physicians is needed to meet the needs of our communities across the province. That's why the Ontario government has introduced additional initiatives to access doctors' particular interests locally.

The Ontario taxpayer now provides up to \$40,000 in tuition and location incentives for new medical graduates if they commit to practise in an underserved area. Last year, the government funded an increase in medical school enrolment of 30% and also expanded the number of licences for foreign-trained doctors. Last fall, we announced the establishment of two rural training networks in southern Ontario and, as well, 25 new training positions to increase the number of physicians in rural Ontario.

The Ontario government's locum program assists northern and rural communities by providing temporary medical services and reimbursement of physicians' travel and accommodation costs. In addition, physicians are given \$71-an-hour sessional fees where necessary to work nights, weekends or holidays in some of our emergency departments that may have difficulty with staffing.

1550

As part of the 2000 agreement with the Ontario Medical Association, the Minister of Health has established a clinical clerkship program for third- and fourth-year students. This is a program for students studying in any of the five medical schools for clerkships in rural and northern areas.

We know that in the year 2000 Ontario had 20,370 doctors. This is an increase of 2.8% over 1995. I will say the overall supply of physicians per capita declined slightly, from 18.1 to 17.5 physicians for every 10,000 residents. The number of female physicians has increased by almost 17%; male physicians, a decline of 2%.

I still hear comments about doctors fleeing to the States. However, in the year 2000—we have stats—148 physicians moved abroad and 122 physicians returned, for a net migration of 26, or only 0.1% of all active physicians—hardly a stampede, as described by some.

This winter and this spring, I have spent a number of days door-knocking. The conversation often turns to health care and what's needed to improve it. Oft-mentioned, certainly in my riding: the need for more doctors, more nurses and more money. People continue to tell me, and I've been hearing this for a number of years, "If you're going to spend my tax money on anything, spend it on health." That's exactly what we've been doing, the top priority for this government, to the tune of an extra \$6 billion a year.

Ontario's health budget has now climbed to \$23.7 billion a year—as I've mentioned, far above the \$17.4 billion we originally committed to when we were first elected in 1995. And \$23.7 billion for health amounts to 37% of the provincial budget. But a serious problem remains. This is part of the bad news that comes along with the good news that was mentioned opposite, and that is that the federal government is not paying its fair share. In fact, federal Liberals have cut health spending

since 1995. Federal transfers to the provinces for health and social services this year will be \$400 million lower than in 1994.

As I think we all are aware, when medicare was introduced, Ottawa and the provinces agreed to share health care costs on a 50-50 basis. But over the years, the federal government dropped their 50% support down to 10%. It's now at what I consider a mere 14%, leaving the provinces to foot 86% of the cost. Regrettably, the last federal budget put no new dollars into the health system, despite massive increases in spending.

As former Premier Harris stated at that time, the federal Liberals have shortchanged our health care system and are "the single greatest threat to universal medicare in this country today." He went on to say, "When the bill arrives, Ottawa excuses itself from the table to go to the washroom, leaving the provinces to pick up the tab."

People in Ontario deserve the best health care system their money can buy. Unfortunately, people are not going to get the best system until the federal government begins to pull its weight. Unless Ottawa does pony up its fair share for health care, in my view, the prognosis is less than good. Plainly put, if our health care system is to meet the demands of a population that we all realize is growing, a population that is aging, if our health care system is to offer us the life-saving advances that I feel we deserve, the federal government must start paying its fair share. If it doesn't, the provinces will have some very difficult choices to make.

With its huge budget surplus, Ottawa can afford to do the right thing. It's only fair that the federal government spend some of the surplus on safeguarding people's health. After all, it is certainly people's money in overpayment of taxes that has created that federal surplus. The federal government must make health care funding their number one priority. I refer to an Ipsos-Reid poll which indicated that 82% of people wished to see increased federal health spending. With all the money that taxpayers pay to all levels of government, there clearly should be enough resources to ensure a level of health care that meets Canadians' needs regardless of where they live.

We know Canada's Premiers are committed to ensuring that this will occur. Every province and territory is committed to the principles of medicare. Every Canadian must be able to access this vital public service regardless of their income, regardless of where they live in the Dominion of Canada. But it's not going to be possible, really, for provinces and territories to fund these ongoing increases, these very significant increases in health care costs, while the federal government's share of health spending continues to decline.

Last summer, people in Haldimand, Norfolk and Brant as well as across the province were given an opportunity to have their say on the current state of health care in Ontario. This was referred to as the dialogue on health opinion survey, which asked people to tell the provincial government how they would rate their health care system

and where they think improvements could be made. The overwhelming response indicated what we've been saying all along: health care is the number one priority. Unfortunately, health care is not as high a priority for the federal government. As I mentioned, the 50-50 funding formula has degenerated to an imbalance of 86-14, with the federal share at 14 cents on the dollar. Again, as Premier Harris indicated, federal Liberals are the single greatest threat to universal medicare in the country today.

While these costs are rising and the population is aging, the provinces can't wait for the Romanow report, in my opinion, and neither can the citizens of Canada. They need the federal government to begin paying its fair share. This winter, the Ministry of Health released the results of the opinion survey that was conducted last summer—extensive public consultations with thousands of Ontarians. A majority of Ontarians—77%, actually—rated our health care system as good to fair.

Just to wrap up, I'll highlight four themes that really came through in the results of this survey. A majority of Ontarians revealed that major improvements are being requested of our government in four priority areas: (1) to increase the number of doctors and nurses in the system, (2) to reduce waiting lists, (3) to provide improved access to early diagnostic tools to catch illnesses earlier, and (4) to refocus the health care system to help keep people well in the first place. Obviously, more work needs to be done with respect to not only disease prevention but health promotion and wellness.

We have the results of these surveys. We have these opinions. People in Ontario have spoken loud and clear. People in Ontario want accessibility, they want accountability in their health care system and they clearly want efficiency.

The survey goes on to identify some problems of, as mentioned, rude staff, for example, and unfriendly service, but by and large there was overwhelming support for staff and personnel and for the administration of our health care system.

I thank you for the time.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Prue: I listened and I have to tell you that I agreed with some of the things you said and some I did not. Let's deal with the ones I agreed with.

You spoke long and eloquently on how the federal government has downgraded medicare in the last number of years. I think with that there can be no disagreement. Monies that have been given to the province have been steadily declining, not just since the election of the Conservative government but even before then. They were declining back in the early 1990s and have continued to decline, I think, to somewhat disastrous levels. There needs to be a recognition, not only in this House but in Ottawa and indeed amongst all the parties in Ottawa, and I don't blame just the governing party; I blame the others too—perhaps not my own. The other ones have not been putting the same kind of priority on medicare as they have on a number of other issues, everything from the country's safety to the armed forces

to other laudable goals. But medicare has been left out of the equation. I think that is well said and needs to be said in this House.

1600

Having said that, I think the government of Ontario needs to shoulder some of the blame for what has happened with doctors and nursing in this province. You talked about the disincentives for foreign-trained doctors. I have to tell you that in this province we have an abysmal record on the assessment and equivalency of all foreign-trained professionals. It takes far too long—a year or two or three—for people to jump through the hoops to get their training recognized in any number of disciplines, including the medical one. This province needs to do more in getting that equivalency up to standard. That is a goal we can do that would ensure there are more doctors and more nurse practitioners from foreign countries available than anything else. We should be doing that and it should be in your budget.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I want to congratulate the member from Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant. Every time he rises to speak in the Legislature, he's someone who's very well prepared and has thought through his comments before he rises to speak in the Legislature. Today was no exception.

He specifically talked in part of his remarks about health care and the desire of people around the province to see an increase in the number of doctors and nurses in the system. One of the areas that the throne speech indeed spoke very clearly about was that we want to double the number of nurse practitioners in the province. Nurse practitioners are something this government has implemented over the past few years. We said we'd start out with I believe 109 nurse practitioners across the province and we've done that. Those nurse practitioners have been extremely well received throughout the province no matter where they are, whether it be within doctors' offices, where there are doctors who form group practices in our primary care reform, or whether it be in more remote areas where nurse practitioners are able to take up some of the slack where we don't have enough doctors. They've been extremely well received. The throne speech talked about doubling their numbers. I know that will be well received throughout the province. It will be well received in areas like Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant and across the province.

He also, again, squarely laid the blame for some of the health care woes across this country at the doorstep of the federal government, which is also what every Premier of every province in this country has been doing for several years. There's only one level of government that has continued to reduce health care funding, and that is the federal Liberals'.

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): The members opposite on the government benches would have everyone believe that somehow the state of the health care system in this province and across this great country of ours has been badly damaged as a result of the lack of funding from the federal government. I would

remind members of this House that over the past seven years that this government has been in power, they have increased substantially the accumulated debt of this province to the tune of \$20 billion. As a result, not only have they done that, but at the same time they've been reducing taxes in the billions of dollars.

You can't have it both ways. You can't say, "We don't have enough money for health care because the federal government hasn't been making those transfer payments." In fact, the federal government has increased its funding for health care over the last number of years, therefore trying to restore levels of funding that used to be in place.

What has happened in the last number of years is that this government continues to erode the quality of health care across this province. What do they do? They announce the possible new construction of privatized hospitals: "Bring in the private sector to solve these problems." But that isn't the problem. At first this government attempted to restructure health care by closing down hospitals; now they want to rebuild hospitals, as is the case in my riding.

Well, which one is it going to be? You're either saving money because you're closing down hospitals or you're going to build new hospitals. They can't make up their minds because they haven't got a clue. At the end of the day what people realize is that there are fewer services in each of these communities that are affected, fewer doctors, more underserved areas across this province than ever before.

This government has completely mismanaged the health care system in this province.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I wanted to just deal with the remarks made by the member with respect to nurse practitioners, because the throne speech said that the government would double the number of nurse practitioners working in the province of Ontario and gave us no indication as to when that would happen. That should be of concern to everyone in this place, because there are now 268 nurse practitioners who have graduated in the province of Ontario who are unemployed or underemployed and are not in a position to use their skills for the benefit of people in the province.

The throne speech only talked about the minister's announcement the day before, where he said that \$3 million would be allocated to hire about 20 nurse practitioners to work in underserved areas, and he called those a pilot demonstration. That is an insult to nurse practitioners, who have a scope of practice that has been legislated and who do not, quite frankly, have to be part of any demonstration project to prove their skills.

The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario has had a proposal in before the Ministry of Health for over three years now for the minister to find a compensation scheme so that nurse practitioners can work with—not for—family physicians, especially in underserved areas to deal with the many, many communities that are lacking physicians now.

What is the government's response after three years? A pathetic \$3 million for 20 nurse practitioners to work

in 12 underserved communities as a demonstration. If you're going to double the number of nurse practitioners working in the province—and goodness knows we need their skills and expertise—then I sure hope there's some kind of statement in the budget about that, because the throne speech was very, very short on how you're going to get there.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has two minutes to respond.

Mr Barrett: I appreciate the comments from the member from Beaches-East York. I concur with respect to the federal funding. It goes back further than this government's era. I was not elected during the NDP era, but I certainly recall media reports and reports from Premier Rae at the time of the squeeze that they were in and the lack of support from Ottawa.

I concur, again, as an MPP for a rural riding, and to hear comments from a large urban riding with respect to accreditation of foreign physicians. Foreign physicians I feel are very well received and certainly needed in northern Ontario and in rural Ontario. Anything we can do to speed that process along and to eliminate any unnecessary barriers to bringing foreign physicians on deck—by the same token, and raised by the member from Nickel Belt, any barriers to enhanced use of nurse practitioners—nurse practitioners, again, was addressed by the member from Niagara Falls. I have experience in my local area and on the Six Nations reserve, where a nurse practitioner role has worked out very well. I sincerely hope there are no long-term problems or turf battles between nurse practitioners and physicians.

The member for York South-Weston addressed the issue of the lack of funding by the federal government. We may differ on the extent of that. I do want to make something very, very clear. He raised the issue of tax cuts. After seven years, I would not think anyone would argue that tax cuts certainly create jobs.

1610

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I'm going to share my time with the member for York South-Weston.

I stand, in the few minutes I have, to talk about the throne speech. A throne speech tends to set out the direction of a government: where they plan to take this province, what actions they plan to take and how they're going to get there.

When you look at the throne speech, what astonished me the most is that it followed shortly after a very divisive, nasty, ugly leadership campaign. This government has probably given us more commercials to run a campaign than we could have produced on our own, with their attacking each other and telling us how bad each of the candidates would be for Ontario.

I want to give you an example of that. I read a comment by John Baird, the government whip now, who was the Minister of Community and Social Services at that time. He said, about his confidence in Ernie Eves to lead this province, "When I looked up on the stage, I saw only one person who looked like a Premier and that was Jim

Flaherty.” I hope he has come to terms with that. Clearly he agrees with us that Ernie Eves is not the man to be Premier of Ontario.

His good friend and my friend the minister Tim Hudak said, “Only one candidate tonight showed a clear vision, a vision based on ideas and the courage to stand behind them”—from a Flaherty press release of January 17, 2002.

We see two cabinet ministers who have joined the opposition in clearly saying that Ernie Eves does not have what it takes to be Premier of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr Agostino: These are not my quotes. My Tory friends across the floor are getting excited and heckling. They are not my quotes; they’re quotes from Tory members, and there were many more like them during the leadership campaign. They were your comments, not mine. If you look at the throne speech, they are right. Both John Baird and Tim Hudak are right.

Look at the direction Ernie Eves has set. He said he wants to be different. This is a different style of government. This is a warm and fuzzy, reach out and embrace, group hug, “Let’s get along and reach out to everybody we’ve been on for seven years” style of government. He had a perfect opportunity to do that in the throne speech. Ernie Eves had a perfect opportunity to show us that he’s different from Mike Harris. He could have said in the throne speech, “I’m going to back away from that ridiculous decision to sell Hydro One.” He could have said, “I’m not going to sell the hydro transmission corridor and grid in Ontario, because we don’t believe that’s in the public interest.” He chose not to do that.

Our position on that has been very clear. We believe, first of all, that there should be competition in the generation of hydro. Unlike the NDP, that wants to continue to hide under the apron of Mother Hydro and that ran up those debts in those years, we believe there is room for competition in the generation of hydro. But we believe that the transmission grid, the heart and soul of our energy in this province, should remain in public hands. The government doesn’t. Mike Harris and Ernie Eves are the same. They both believe we should sell Hydro One to the highest bidder, to their corporate friends, and lose any control of our energy in Ontario.

This government had a choice. Ernie Eves could have said, “I’m different from Mike Harris.” Ernie Eves could have said, “I’m going to get rid of the private school funding announced by Mike Harris.” He said a couple of times during the leadership, “Do you think it was a good idea?” I guess Mike talked to him, straightened him out and told him, “Hey, follow the line here. Do as I tell you to do. Don’t back away from private school funding.”

Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals have made it clear that we believe it’s wrong to take \$500 million out of our public school system and put it into private schools. If we form the next government, we’re going to revoke that, we’re going to change that and we’re going to put that money into the public schools in Ontario. Ernie Eves could have made that same decision in the throne speech; he chose not to.

Ernie Eves could have chosen to move away from this obsession with bringing us a corporate tax rate that is substantially lower than most of our bordering states, at a cost of \$2.2 billion. Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals believe we need to be competitive. We need to be competitive with Michigan, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio when it comes to corporate tax rates. But being competitive does not mean we have to be 25% below them in a race to the bottom.

Ernie Eves could have made that same decision. Ernie Eves could have said, “I’m going to scrap the \$2.2-billion corporate giveaway and put that money into health care, education and the environment.” But he chose not to do that, because his friends on Bay Street who sent him here with marching orders would not allow it. Remember, this is a Bay Street banker. His friends on Bay Street will not allow him to go back on that decision. He could have made it very, very clear that he wasn’t going to follow the \$2.2-billion corporate tax cut that Mike Harris set, but Ernie Eves chose not to.

Ernie Eves talked about sending a message to labour: “We want to work with you.” He wanted his minister to meet and work with labour leaders. Ernie Eves could have made some substantial choices in that throne speech of his. He could have said, “I’m going to roll back and reverse these draconian, 1900-style labour laws,” that he brought in. He could have said, “I’m going to roll back the 60-hour workweek,” that puts us on par with many Third World countries. He could have said, “I’m going to fix the overtime provisions,” that basically shaft working people out of overtime. He could have said, “I’m going to restore balance, so people and companies that want to unionize have an opportunity to be on a level playing field with the corporations that are opposed to that,” unlike the balance he has taken away in his legislation.

When you look at the issue of health care, we continue on that same path. Hospitals across this province continue to accumulate debt, not because of running a poor system, but because they’re not getting enough money from the province, and they have to make choices. These choices are either to provide the very essential services that health care and a hospital are supposed to, and if they do they run into debt; or cut those services, and then Ontarians suffer and pay the price. The hospitals have made the right choice and decided that although they are going to run into debt, they are going to continue to provide many of those essential services. But we’ve heard very little from this government.

They announced a token amount for textbooks, when most schools tell you it’s not even enough. They haven’t announced a cent for capital repairs to older schools. I have schools in my riding where the teachers have to move the desks when it rains so the kids don’t get wet. Today in the city of Hamilton, and I’m sure in many other places across Ontario, I have schools where two to three kids have to share textbooks, and where textbooks are falling apart.

That is the reality of Ontario today under Mike Harris and Ernie Eves. Make no distinction; they are the same,

the same policies, the same philosophies. The throne speech did absolutely nothing to convince Ontarians that they're different. Let's remember that the man who is sitting in the Premier's chair today was the finance minister who was next to Mike Harris when every one of these decisions were made that now he says, "Maybe we need to review and look at them." He was there when they made the cuts to health care. He was there when they made the cuts to education. He was there when they made the cuts to the Ministry of the Environment.

In the first Walkerton report, it was made clear that this government must share part of the blame for what happened in Walkerton because of the cuts to the Ministry of the Environment. Frankly, Ernie Eves was the man with the knife who made those cuts. He can't run away from that, and we're not going to let him run away from that. As much as he wants to sugar-coat this new government of his and move a few ministers around and pretend he's reaching out and talking to people and pretend he wants to undo the damage, people are not going to be fooled. This is the same government—the same style, the same folks. Most of the cabinet that is there today was there when Mike Harris was Premier.

Clearly this throne speech showed us that this is a government with no vision. This is a government that has lost its way. This is a government that has no agenda. We have sat here for two weeks, after being out of the House for six months, and not one new piece of legislation has been introduced. There's no indication of what legislation they're going to bring forward. This is a government that is just biding its time to get out for the summer and try to reorganize, try to talk to their pollsters, talk to their American consultants, talk to their American friends and somehow try to find a way.

But it's too late. Ontarians have seen what Ernie Eves is all about; they've seen what Mike Harris is all about. They've seen this is a government that is not going to change. Clearly, we're going to continue to hound these guys everywhere on every issue and make sure Ontarians understand and see clearly that Dalton McGuinty is the man who is fit to be Premier of Ontario and, as John Baird and Tim Hudak have said, Ernie Eves is not.

1620

Mr Cordiano: I am delighted to speak on this throne speech. When I sat here and listened to this throne speech the very day it was read, it sounded eerily familiar. It sounded as if I was listening to—I go back to the days of minority government when we were in power and Frank Miller was in the death throes of his last few months in office and they came out with a throne speech that was nothing short of a deathbed repentance. That's what this speech reminds me of. It's an attempt by this new Premier, who is a new Premier but the same old Ernie Eves who was the finance minister—let's not be deceived by that—and the same group of people who were in power under Mike Harris. It's the very same government, the same people. The players have not changed.

Nor have they changed their direction. This document, which attempted to be a deathbed repentance, this throne

speech, is riddled with, "Well, we're trying to change our direction because we understand that the wind is blowing in a new direction and Ontarians may want a kinder, gentler government and style of leadership. The rancour and acrimony that existed under Mike Harris will be no more."

I say to Ontarians, don't be deceived by what this government is suggesting. The words are fine words but they're nothing but words. There's no meaning in those words because when you examine the document it simply doesn't hold up. There's no substance there to indicate there's a bold new era, as this government would have us believe. They talk about a new era for Ontario.

It goes on in the throne speech to say, "The actions your government took over the past seven years were right for the times." It goes on to talk about how there are new challenges. Frankly, there's nothing to substantiate that this government will make those changes, and in just a moment I will get to the record of this government and what's missing in this document.

They go on to talk about the number of challenges they're going to face, but you know what? Interspersed is the language that harkens back to the old days of the Common Sense Revolution. They don't go so far as to say that the government needs to be in the game; they're still talking about government being on the sidelines. I quote from the throne speech: "Responsible government knows its place. It understands where it does not belong and is prepared to get out of the way." It's still the language of the Common Sense Revolution interwoven into this document. You need to look a little closer but it's still there. Nothing will have changed.

When we talk about education, I want to read a report that was issued by the Toronto Dominion Bank economics department just yesterday, on May 22. This is a scathing report. You have to listen to this. It was an indictment. It says this is what needs to be done and these are some of the serious challenges that are facing the greater Toronto area in this province of ours. It says, "A number of repairs are needed to keep the GTA locomotive running at full steam.

"Despite robust population and employment growths, real income per capita in the GTA area has fallen further behind that in the United States, with the shortfall now measuring nearly 30%."

It goes on to talk about Ontario's place with respect to productivity: "Among provinces and states with more than six million people, Ontario placed 13th out of 16 in terms of relative labour productivity, and results for the GTA are likely similar." Thirteenth out of 16 states in terms of relative labour productivity.

It goes on to talk about how the "reductions in real public spending on post-secondary education in Ontario have compromised the GTA's ability to produce the workers needed in a knowledge-based economy." A scathing indictment of this government's lack of support for post-secondary education funding.

I quote from the report as it goes on: "The infrastructure to support the GTA's growth is not being put in

place. In many areas, proper maintenance is not even being done. On the transportation front, this increases gridlock on GTA roads and highways, threatens the effectiveness of public transit, cuts into productivity and limits the pace at which the GTA's exports to the United States and the rest of Canada can grow."

That's just a scathing indictment of this government's failure to keep us competitive, and yet what does this government have us believe? That all they simply have to do is cut taxes 25% below those of other jurisdictions that surround us and we're competitive.

It's not good enough, my friends, and the bank's report—this is a bank on Bay Street, by the way—supports that view. It's simply not enough. We're not being competitive enough. We're not investing in the kind of infrastructure we need to invest in. There is gridlock that is taking hold of our entire GTA area. It is unproductive. We're not investing in high-knowledge infrastructure for post-secondary institutions and therefore we're not making gains in terms of productivity. That is quite an indictment. As the bank's report points out, we are falling almost 30% behind the United States in terms of productivity and real income growth.

I say to the government, this throne speech which talks about education says very little in terms of the kinds of investments we need to make that the bank has spoken about. It does not talk about new funding sources for our post-secondary institutions. It does not talk about the kinds of investments we need to make in our health care infrastructure to ensure that we still have an accessible system. This government continues to talk about the fact that Ottawa is to blame for all of this. In the face of—

Mr Dunlop: It's \$20 billion, Joe.

Mr Cordiano: You have to take some of the blame. The simple fact is you cut taxes, the government has less revenue. The government has less revenue, the government can't support the hospitals and the health care system that you talk about. If you want to continue to have accessibility in our system, then you need to support the infrastructure that's there. In my own community, this government rushed to close down Northwestern General Hospital. What did it do? It closed down the emergency services of that hospital, it closed down the hospital, and that put an incredible strain on the other hospitals in the area. The Humber River Regional Hospital is on critical care bypass more often than any other hospital in the GTA, and that's as a direct result of shutting down that emergency service at Northwestern.

That is a terrible predicament for the people of my community. What's the government's solution? They don't really have one yet because they haven't made an announcement, but the president of the hospital, Rueben Devlin, wants a new hospital to be built. The Toronto District Health Council recommends building a new hospital because it will adversely affect accessibility for the constituents of my riding to that hospital.

We're left in limbo without the proper services, without the resources that are necessary for people to have good quality health care and access to that health

care. This government mismanages health care and then blames the federal government. It isn't just about money, as I'm proving. It's about mismanaging the resources that are there as well. I have to say that if you keep cutting taxes—again, you've done a good job of that over the last seven years, and I take nothing away from you, but it has resulted in longer waits at hospitals, longer waits for surgeries and less accessibility to the health care that people need. That's the price we've had to pay.

In this throne speech nothing addresses that. My good friend and colleague from Sudbury was talking about nurse—

Ms Martel: Nickel Belt.

Mr Cordiano: Nickel Belt, sorry; I always remember Sudbury as your home—nurse practitioners, announcing a pilot project. It's pathetic. We need a huge number of additional resources to deal with the problems that we see in our health care system. The throne speech would have been the right time to make that announcement, signalling to the public that this government and this new Premier intend to go in an entirely new direction.

Yet that isn't the case here. That is not the case. The soundings that are made to the public want to speak to a kinder, gentler government, a new style of governance. When you read between the lines, you scratch a little below the surface, you recognize that it's the same old bunch that is in power and the same kinds of people are making the decisions as made them before.

1630

The Acting Speaker: The member's time has expired. Comments and questions?

Mr Prue: We had two speakers who spoke fundamentally differently and I'd like to speak mostly about—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Because they're Liberals. They want it both ways.

Mr Prue: That's exactly what I was going to say. Although I agreed with most of their comments, I want to speak mostly about the member from Hamilton, Mr Agostino, because he was talking about Hydro, which is something, I think, dear to New Democrats' hearts. I was reminded, in listening to him, of an old movie called *Dr Doolittle*, because he epitomized the animal in there called the Pushme-Pullyu. For those who don't remember the movie, it was an animal with two heads, and both heads were trying to go in opposite directions all the time on the same issues. I heard, and I think I need to speak to this, the Liberal position on Hydro. I agree with one half of it, but not the other. I find it absolutely strange that they would agree with the privatization of the people who are going out to sell this door-to-door.

Mr Cordiano: Competition, we said.

Mr Prue: Competition, yes, with the questionable sales records that are involved, especially today, when a member of the caucus stood up and asked the Minister of Energy and berated him about those very practices and about those very people and what the Minister of Energy was going to do about it. I have to say I find a position attacking the government on this one during question

period and then telling the government that they're doing it right in this particular session to be a little bit strange.

Having said that, I listened as well to the second speaker. He did have one good sentence, which was the "deathbed repentance." I think I will use that in some future speech because to me this is very much like what happened in the Miller government in the last few days when a government completely changes direction.

Mr Dunlop: It's a pleasure to stand and say a few words on the two speakers from the Liberal Party. There's so much rhetoric here it's hard to know where to begin.

First of all, let's go back to health care. The one party that has failed to fight for health care funding from the federal government is the Ontario Liberal Party. We all know it's at least \$1 billion that the federal government is shorting the province of Ontario. If it was just the province of Ontario, that would be one thing, but it's every province and the three territories in the country of Canada. They're all being shorted. You've heard of the problems in Nova Scotia, you've heard of them in Alberta, you've heard of them in BC and you've heard of them in Ontario. At least Mike Harris and Ernie Eves fought for the money. Dalton McGuinty has done nothing.

What Dalton McGuinty has done, as we heard in the so-called platform speech that Mr Agostino presented, is that he's gone around making between \$9 billion and \$12 billion in promises to people across this province. What he has failed to tell them is where he's going to find the money. He will not tell that. We know where the NDP come from. They're just going to add taxes on to your property tax. But Dalton McGuinty has failed to tell the public. For example, is it higher taxes? We know that he voted against all the 166 tax cuts. We know he'll probably go into deficit spending. We have just balanced the budget three years in a row. He'll increase taxes. Those are the three options to come up with Dalton McGuinty's \$12-billion promises that he's flip-flopped around the province speaking on.

Finally, on Ontario Hydro and Hydro deregulation and privatization, we know where the NDP stands. They're against everything on it. No one knows where these people stand. You don't have a clue on deregulation or privatization. We don't know where you stand. You haven't made a commitment and you haven't got a platform on it.

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): I want to compliment my two colleagues who spoke this afternoon, the member for York South-Weston and the member for Hamilton East, who indeed are very passionate members of our caucus and spoke in that manner.

I may respond to the member for Simcoe to some degree as well right now. Certainly the one party that's very, very clearly distorting everybody's issue on Hydro One is the Conservatives themselves. The fact is that this is a government that presumably is going to now bring forward enabling legislation, with all the options written

down there, and then will decide, sometime when we're off for a summer break—something we probably shouldn't even have—what they're going to do. I think it's unbelievable that they can actually stand up and say they will attempt to get away with that kind of a piece of legislation. That's intolerable.

In terms of the throne speech, it's easy to put some words down on paper, it's easy to be described as a kinder, gentler government, but there really is no evidence in the throne speech of any real substance. Actually, my colleague from York South-Weston was particularly keen on pointing that out. That's it: beneath the surface, where is the real assistance to those people most in need? Where is the assistance to the health care system and to the education system? You can't just use words to do it.

I will get an opportunity to say a few more words later this afternoon and I'll look forward to that opportunity. The bottom line is that ultimately you are judged by what you leave out of the throne speech as well. There are enormous numbers of areas of extraordinary importance to every one of the members in this House and every one of their constituents that were not mentioned at all in this throne speech. I think that is extremely telling. When you see what's not there, when you see no discussion of home care at all, a part of the health care sector that has been just decimated tragically—long-term care as well is a tragedy in that regard. So I'll look forward to it.

I compliment my colleagues for speaking out so strongly.

Ms Martel: I think I want to follow up on the comments made by the member for Hamilton East speaking of Hydro. I find it hard to listen to him say his party is in favour of the door-to-door stuff, that competition, but, by God, are they ever opposed to the sale of Hydro One and are they ever going to do something about it. What a flip-flop.

On December 12, Louise Elliott for CP wrote a great story, the headline of which is, "Ontario Privatizes Hydro One, Sets Deregulation Date for Electricity Market." It goes on to talk about the government's announcement that day of their intention to sell Hydro One. What did Dalton McGuinty say to Louise Elliott about the sale of Hydro One? Here it is on page 3 of the transcript: "Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty said privatizing the company was the right move, but should have been done following an open debate in the Legislature." Now we've had these guys standing here in their place over the last two weeks trying to pretend that they are somehow against the sale of Hydro One. This is what their leader said on December 12, 2001, five short months ago. Let me repeat it, because it's such a good quote: "Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty said privatizing the company was the right move, but should have been done following an open debate in the Legislature." Well, we're going to get that debate, I think.

I'm going to be interested in seeing how Mr McGuinty votes on the privatization of Hydro One. I am going to be watching to see what the Liberal leader is going to do. Is

he going to stand in his place and do like he said he was going to on December 12, which was support the privatization, or is he going to flip-flop, flip-flop some more and this time decide to oppose it because he knows the majority of Ontarians are against it? It's going to be interesting to watch that vote.

The Acting Speaker: The member for York South-Weston has two minutes to respond.

Mr Cordiano: All I can say with regard to this throne speech is that it's not only a deathbed repentance; I would say this is a government that is going to govern by stealth. They're really not going to tell us what they're going to do.

You talk about flip-flops. Where is this government's position when it comes to Hydro? One minute they're selling it; the next they don't know. They're going to have an income trust. They're all over the road map. We don't know what they intend to do.

Interjections.

Mr Cordiano: We're clearly on the record with respect to what we intend to do, but we're not the government. You're the government, so what's really interesting is your position.

You've pulled it back and you want to consult. That's because you realized that you were making a colossal political mistake and your very political lives depended on it. So you've pulled back from the brink.

That's the new style of governance: govern by stealth. You don't really know what direction you're going in because you've got to figure out which way the wind is blowing. That's the new style of governance.

1640

I've got to say this: Mike Harris used to tell it like it was. You knew the direction he was going in. You all had your marching orders and you used to follow them. I gave him some credit for that. At least he stood in his place and you knew where he was coming from and you knew the direction he was going in. I didn't agree with it. With this new leadership, you don't know where you're going. You haven't got a clue. You haven't got a clue and you're just making it up as you go along each and every day. The script depends on which way the wind is blowing. I've got to tell you, gentlemen and ladies, there is a lack of direction, a lack of conviction, and this is certainly a government that hasn't made up its mind when it comes to Hydro. Talk about flip-flops; that's the biggest flip-flop we've seen thus far.

The Acting Speaker: I just wanted to remind you that we go in rotation for speaking and only one person has the floor at a time. Those of you who are tempted to speak out of order, I would remind you that there is another place and you can either go there on your own or I'll help you.

Further debate.

Ms Martel: I'm going to be splitting the time with my colleague from Beaches-East York. I'd like to speak about Hydro, and maybe I'll have a chance to do that, but, as critic, I should probably just focus my remarks in

the time that I have on health care. There are essentially two issues I want to deal with.

The first has to do with the government's announcement in the throne speech that the province is eager to move toward multi-year base funding for the hospitals, which, as you would know, the Ontario Hospital Association has for a long time been calling on the government to do. That would make a great deal of sense because in terms of planning and in terms of acquisition of technology, capital etc, it is true that the hospital association really does need to be able to project two and three years in advance (a) what they think the demand is going to be, (b) what the costs will be to meet that demand and (c) to be able to get some commitment from the government of the day that that money will be in place to respond to those concerns.

What worried me about the announcement in the throne speech, however, was the tie to the federal government with respect to this announcement. I think I should just read this into the record. Page 13 says the following: "Ontario is eager to move toward multi-year base funding for our hospitals. This funding model allows hospitals to better plan around the needs of their communities and those who need care. As it moves toward its goal of multi-year base funding, Ontario needs the federal government's partnership in health care." My question to the government is, does that mean if you don't get partnership and resources from the federal government, you will not be moving to multi-year funding? I think the Ontario Hospital Association deserves a response with respect to that very important question.

I raise that because if you look at the situation of Ontario hospitals, they are hitting a financial crunch. They are up against the fiscal wall. This is an article in the Toronto Star dated May 8, 2002, where the Ontario Hospital Association acknowledged that "more than 60 of the province's 160 hospitals are still carrying deficits totalling more than \$300 million from the fiscal year that ended March 31," and further that "they need an additional \$600 million to \$700 million if they are going to be able to continue providing the same level of service for the remainder of the current fiscal year." That's an additional \$600 million to \$700 million over the base budgets that are already in place. That is a serious financial issue indeed. While the government talks about moving to multi-year funding to provide some stability, the tie to the federal government leaves me very concerned, because the fact of the matter is this government is right to criticize the federal Liberals for their lack of commitment to health care spending.

This is a report that was provided to me by the Ontario Hospital Association. It was done for them by TEAQ Associates. It's called Getting the Right Balance: A Review of Federal-Provincial Fiscal Relations and the Funding of Public Services. It was done in December 2001. This is what it says with respect to federal transfers to provinces:

"In addition, with federal health care funding not keeping pace with provincial spending on health care, the

federal share of total provincial health care spending declined from 16.9% in 1992-93 to 12.9% in 2000-01.”

Secondly, appendix table 4, which is attached, looks specifically at the pattern of federal transfers to provinces for health on a cash as well as a cash-and-tax basis over the past decade. In 1992-93, the federal share on a cash basis stood at 16% of total public sector expenditures and at 24% of insured health care expenditures, including tax transfers. These shares stood at 29% and 43% respectively. Across the board, the shares fell to a trough in 1998-99 before recovering in 2000-01. Except for the share of cash-and-tax transfers as a percentage of insured expenditures, the other three measures still remain below their 1992-93 levels. It is very clear from the work that was done by this group on behalf of the Ontario Hospital Association that there is a significant problem with the feds coming to the table and anteing up the money necessary to deal with health care in the provinces.

Having said that, the provincial government has a lot to answer for as well, because the same report takes a look at provincial funding to hospitals as a percentage of GDP and notes that between 1992 and 1993, Ontario transfers to hospitals stood the third-lowest in the country. If you look at the appendix table 15 that is attached, it shows that in 1992-93 the provincial transfer as a percentage of GDP to hospitals was 3%. In 2000-01, it's down to 2.5%. It's very hard for the provincial government to point fingers at the federal government with respect to health care funding when the fact of the matter remains that the provincial funding to hospitals has dropped since 1992 as a percentage of GDP.

I say to the government, if you're going to try to have the federal government be a more equal partner in terms of hospital funding in particular, in order to achieve the results of multi-year hospital funding, then this government has to stop diverting important dollars going to corporate tax cuts and redirect that back into important social services like health care, education and community-based services. Ontario will not have a leg to stand on in terms of trying to get the feds on board to increase funding to hospitals, especially on a multi-year basis, if Ontario doesn't start to increase its share of GDP that goes to hospitals.

It will be interesting, as the next number of weeks unfold, to determine what the link is between multi-year funding and the federal government, and whether Ontario is going to continue to move toward multi-year funding of hospitals if it doesn't have the federal government on board in a more significant way than the feds have been to date. If Ontario's trying to get the feds on board, what is Ontario going to do to divert some of the money that is now going to corporate tax cuts and have that go back into hospital funding?

The second issue I want to deal with has to do with nurse practitioners. I mentioned this a little bit earlier in a response to another member, but I just wanted to expand on it a little bit more. The throne speech says that the government intends to double the number of nurse practitioners practising in the province and gives absolutely

no timeline or date for that to happen. The sad reality is that if you look at the statistics from the underserved area program publicized by the Ministry of Health, you will see that the number of communities, both in the north and in the south, that require physicians has grown dramatically. The Registered Nurses Association of Ontario had a proposal in at least three years ago to the Ministry of Health to put forward a compensation scheme that would allow them to work with physicians in underserved areas to try and deal with that shortage and to try and deal with more patients.

If you look at the UAP statistics from January to March 2002, 33 communities in the north needed 116 doctors and 82 communities in the south needed 427 doctors. In the most recent listing, from April to June 2002, 36 communities in the north need 114 doctors and 79 in the south need 400. If you compare that to 1995, when we left office, there were only 60 communities that needed 77 doctors in total. We have a very significant doctor shortage problem, and nurse practitioners have an important role to play in dealing with that situation. They are fully qualified within their own scope of practice to work with physicians to deal with the less complicated cases while physicians deal with the more complicated cases involving patients coming through the door. Yet even after three years, the government has done virtually nothing to put in place a compensation scheme so that nurse practitioners can work with physicians in their offices.

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The announcement the minister made last week that there will be 20 nurse practitioners working in 12 underserved communities at a cost of \$3 million is pathetic. It is an insult to nurse practitioners. We have 268 nurse practitioners now who have graduated, who are unemployed or underemployed, and this government has done absolutely nothing to find a way to incorporate their skills and expertise in the health care system, especially in those underserved areas, many, many of which could use their expertise and skills.

It was interesting that the government in the announcement regarding nurse practitioners also said that they wanted to find a role for nurse practitioners to work in community health centres. Well, if the government wants to do that, the government's going to have to take the freeze off the budget of community health centres, which has been in place under this government since it was elected in 1995. We cannot hire more nurse practitioners in community health centres until this government starts to increase the funding for the community health centre program. In that respect, it's interesting to note that the Association of Community Health Centres of Ontario has had a proposal in to this government since about October 2000 that outlines 80 communities that are in a position to go forward with a community health centre; 80 communities, many of them in underserved areas, that have put a proposal in, that are prepared to develop community health centres where doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners and other health care professionals

would be attracted to come and work over the long term. This government has sat on that proposal since that time, the fall of 2000.

If the government is serious, as it says it is in the throne speech, about increasing the role of nurse practitioners in community health centres, then this government should fund that proposal and do it now. We know that community health centres have a proven track record with respect to recruitment and retention, with respect to health promotion and treatment, with respect to the use of salaries versus fee-for-service. If the government really wants to incorporate the skills of nurse practitioners, then the government would lift the freeze and fund that important proposal.

Mr Prue: I'd like to speak to the government and talk to the government about the throne speech and what I think is not in it, is not in the throne speech. What is not in the throne speech in any considerable detail and what needs to be spelled out is what this government plans to do with the towns and cities, the 480 or so of them that currently exist in the province of Ontario.

There were some things in the throne speech about transit. There were a few minor sentences about housing and a few other things, but there was no concerted overall plan regarding what to do with cities. I think that has been a failure of this throne speech and perhaps a failure of the government in general for the last seven years.

A lot of things have changed in the last seven years. We need to understand, all of us, what is happening worldwide with the dynamics of urbanization. We are, in this world, and particularly in this province, becoming more and more urbanized. Some 80% of the people of Ontario now live in towns and cities; only 20% live on farms and in rural and northern areas.

It is not to the country that people are being attracted; in fact, the country population and the northern population in the last census clearly have gone down. It is to the cities that people are gravitating. It is to the cities that people are moving. It is to the cities that newcomers and immigrants are coming.

It is the cities that are having the dynamic economic stimulus of this country and this province. To put it in hockey terms so the members opposite might understand this a little better, this isn't Canada playing the United States at the Olympic gold medals any more; this is cities playing each other. This is Toronto versus Ottawa, Toronto versus Montreal, Toronto versus Cleveland or Chicago. That's what it is. That's what the dynamic of today is.

This throne speech has not dealt with those problems. This throne speech has paid lip service to housing. To the homeless there was nary a mention. All of us, as I said earlier today, have been caught up with the problems in Toronto and elsewhere of people living side by side in all of the inhuman and inhumane conditions, living side by side with the prospects of disease and mental breakdowns.

This throne speech has said very little or nothing about the plight of tenants in Ontario's largest cities—Toronto,

Ottawa, Hamilton, Kitchener-Waterloo and London—where the vacancy rates are below 2% or 1%, where people are struggling to find apartments, where decontrols are causing rents to go beyond the ability of people to pay, and when they can't pay, they're being forced into eviction and the cycle of homelessness begins. There is nothing in the throne speech that speaks to this.

There is nothing in the throne speech that speaks to new housing. Although I was heartened to read in the paper today that there is a glimmer of hope coming out of Ottawa, that the minister is at last talking about housing, it is a pathetic response to an overwhelming need in this province.

There is very little to talk about brownfields cleanup in the cities.

There is very little to talk about gridlock and how this government is going to assist the hundreds of thousands of commuters who make their way in and out of the largest cities of the province each and every day. There is very little funding for transit. Although I am thankful that there is at last a little bit of transit money flowing into places like Ottawa, Toronto and Hamilton, it is woefully inadequate and will be woefully inadequate in the long term.

There is nothing being said here about the problems associated with immigration. Immigration is a wonderful thing for this country and this province, but Ontario is the only province in this country that has yet to sign an accord with the federal government. In the absence of that accord, is it any wonder that we are underfunded by the federal government and receive half of the immigrants but way less than 40% of the resources to deal with them? Is it any wonder that Quebec, which went first into its own grid and has its own immigration program, receives the lion's share of federal monies for new immigrants?

Is it any wonder that this province has such a woeful record in dealing with new immigrants and their qualifications? Engineers, doctors, nurses, chiropractors, people who come from other countries with credentials and hope and a gleam in their eye, wanting to participate in the economy and help the people of this province, have to wait months or years, and in some cases are never able to receive accreditation or even get the equivalency marks they need to start in school and start again. Of all places in Canada, I think Ontario has an obligation, in taking so many immigrants, to do something and do it right. We have failed to do that.

The reality is that 80% of us now live in cities. The reality is that cities are the centres of our arts and culture. The reality is that they are the repositories of our architecture, our history and our heritage. Everybody seems to understand this except the government opposite in its throne speech.

Over the last few months, I have seen the Toronto Star write a huge series of articles and the Globe and Mail write a series of articles, the Association of Muni-

cipalities of Ontario has been advocating for a new deal for cities, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been in the paper almost every day talking about what the cities need, the banks are in on it—TD released something yesterday—and yet there is very little in this throne speech about where this government wants to take our cities.

A few months ago, after I had only been here a couple of months, I helped to co-author and write a report called *A Brighter Idea for Ontario's Cities*. It contains 67 recommendations on what would make urban Ontario a better place for the 80% of citizens who live there. Hopefully, along with my colleagues, I'm going to be working on another one for the rural areas and for northern Ontario.

For the 80%, it recognizes two principles. The first principle is that cities must have autonomy. Cities are not and cannot any longer afford to be the children of the provinces. They can no longer afford to be the children of this province. They need autonomy. They are mature urban areas. In the case of the GTA, it has some 4.6 million people, and I think there are 21 cities within that area. They have expertise to do wonderful work.

1700

The second thing cities need is a secure form of revenue. There was nothing in the throne speech about a permanent transfer of monies to go along with the responsibilities cities have been given in the whole downloading exercise over the last number of years. We are proposing that cities get a permanent source of revenue, everything from two cents on the gas tax to build new homes and an additional two cents from the gas tax to build transit and roads, to money taken from the land transfer tax—which goes directly to the Ontario government for no purpose I can see other than general revenue—to be spent on what it is rightly taken for, and that is to improve the housing in municipal areas we all rely on. That is some \$500 million or \$600 million per year, and it should be going to the cities so they can build necessary housing, so we do not have to see the plight of the homeless in the video we saw, so we don't have to see waiting lists up to seven years to get assisted housing in Toronto, so we don't have to see waiting lists of 14 years to get a three-bedroom apartment for someone who has children, so we don't have to see waiting lists of eight years for senior citizens in Toronto, Ottawa and London trying to get into senior citizens' housing.

We need a new plan, and I believe that plan belongs to the municipalities, who are closest to the people and who understand what they need. I think that is the most serious problem with the throne speech. I would hope the government addresses that in the coming weeks and months. It doesn't have to be in the throne speech to be in the budget. Please start to think about the plight of the 80% of Ontarians who live in our cities.

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Agostino: I certainly was listening, here and in my office, to the comments of the two members of the NDP. I found it quite interesting that in their previous

responses they usually spent most of their time attacking the Liberals. It's almost like there's a pact between Ernie Eves and Howard Hampton to kind of help each other out through the whole election campaign. I find it interesting that they can't understand you can have competition on the generation side with strong regulations to protect consumers. It seems like a bizarre idea to a party that has not had a new idea in 20 years.

Remember, this is a party that says, "Elect us. We're going to change this. We're going to take Hydro One back. We're going to reverse the competition that's going to occur." This is the same party that, when it got elected to power in 1990, first of all was in charge of what turned out to be the biggest economic fiasco and downturn in the history of this province. This is a party that promised public auto insurance when they got elected and then folded immediately after coming to power. This is a party that pretended to support working men and women, and the only government in the history of Ontario that reopened and scrapped negotiated contracts. It was not a Conservative government or a Liberal government; it was an NDP government. Then they want you to believe them, a party that has no credibility left in this province.

Now they want you to believe they're credible on Hydro. They're not credible on anything any more. Regardless of the by-elections you talk about, Ontarians in the last three years have given this party 4% and 5% of support. This is a party that has not had a new idea in 20 years, has no vision, has no direction, is not going anywhere, and Hydro is an absolutely perfect example. They just want to hide under the apron strings of Mother Hydro. When they were in power, there were massive hydro rate increases, massive debt increases, and they're going to promise you more of the same. We don't believe them; most Ontarians don't believe them.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): That's quite a little rant that the member for Hamilton—

Mr Agostino: Thank you, Margaret. I feel better now.

Mrs Marland: I guess it does make you feel better, but it's really a shame to attack the real underdog. I mean, there are only nine members.

Mr Agostino: You guys are friends.

Mrs Marland: That's right. We never formed a government with them the way your party did in 1985, as some of us recall—hardly fondly.

In speaking to the concerns of the member for Beaches-East York, when you're talking about what concerns you—and I realize that coming from a municipal background you have certain priorities you probably have been working on for a long time, through more than one government, I believe, in your case. You were elected as a councillor for some time.

I think it's very fair pool for us to come into the Legislature and we are expected to continue those battles on behalf of our constituents. So I understand where you're coming from, but I think you really do have to study the record of this government over the last seven years. Having sat through your party as government for five years, I know very well that we were in such a state

seven years ago that you would be here in the House today with more complaints than ever if we hadn't been able to exact some of the remedies that we have for the people of this province.

Mr Gravelle: I'm glad to have an opportunity to respond to the remarks made by the members for Nickel Belt and Beaches-East York. I won't try to compete with my colleague from Hamilton East, who made some very strong remarks, and very important ones to make in terms of a party that seems more focused, quite frankly, on attacking Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals than on actually dealing with the government. But I do want to address some of the points that were made by both members. In essence, I think some of them were actually fairly useful remarks.

Certainly I'm very sensitive to the issue of nurse practitioners, which the member for Nickel Belt brought up. There is no question—and the government even seems to agree with this—of the value of nurse practitioners except that they do not show the action that would make one believe that indeed they think they're that important. Certainly in a riding such as I come from, Thunder Bay-Superior North, with many communities with a shortage of doctors and specialists, nurse practitioners can play such an extraordinarily important role. So to have the funding in place for only 20 of them is simply unbelievable. It's a battle we've all been fighting for some time, and it would go a long way to truly helping to deal with the shortage situation as we have it. I would hope the government would listen. Listening to the member for Mississauga South, I don't think the government has listened in that regard at all.

Making some reference to the remarks made by the member for Beaches-East York, I certainly am sympathetic to the situation faced by large municipalities and by the urban centres, but again I find myself feeling the need to make the case for the municipalities that I represent. Although I represent half the city of Thunder Bay, I do represent communities like Schreiber, Nipigon, Red Rock and Marathon that I think really have been treated extremely poorly by this government. When I get an opportunity to speak later, I will talk about some of the main issues that concern me related to that part of my riding.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nickel Belt has two minutes to respond.

Ms Martel: I appreciated the comments about nurse practitioners that were made by my colleague, who also represents a riding in northern Ontario. But what I want to do is return to hydro, because I just had so much fun last time talking about hydro that I think it's worthwhile for me to just repeat some of these things. The problem the Ontario Liberal Party has is that flip-flop, flop-flip like fish in a frying pan on the issue of hydro. It is true that we have a position: we are opposed to the deregulation of the electricity market; we are opposed to the privatization of Hydro One. We have been clear from the outset about that. The problem these folks have is that their leader is saying one thing and some of them are saying something else on any given day of the week.

Louise Elliott is a good writer. I don't think she got this wrong when she interviewed the leader of the Liberal Party, Dalton McGuinty, on December 12 and asked him what he thought about the privatization of Hydro One or the sale of Hydro One. It's not my fault that Liberal leader Dalton McGuinty said that privatizing the company was the right move but should have been done following an open debate in the Legislature. That's what he said. I can't help that. Now he has seen the opinion polls, and people are very much opposed to the sale of Hydro One, so he has changed his tune and now he's opposed.

But that's not the first time that some of them have got caught, because the Ontario Electricity Coalition had a meeting in Kingston earlier in February, and the member for Kingston and the Islands, whom I like very much, who is the chair of a committee I'm on, got caught too, because he got up and said at that meeting that the Liberals were opposed to the deregulation of hydro, and someone at the meeting got up and read this fundraising letter which says, "Throughout Ontario's electricity restructuring process, Dalton and the Ontario Liberals have been consistent supporters of the move to an open electricity market in Ontario," and he got caught.

New Democrats are the only ones. We are opposed to both of those changes.

1710

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): It's a pleasure to enter this debate on the speech from the throne. The speech from the throne is an interesting document. It's about direction. It's about where the government is going to go in the next period of time, between now and the next speech from the throne or the election, whichever comes first.

Obviously, a document that is about direction doesn't always have the detail in it that people would like to see. That detail comes later, as bills are introduced and debated in the House. That's where the detail of the speech from the throne is. The speech from the throne is basically a document that talks about direction and a renewal of the government. It's an interesting process.

That renewal is something that our government and our party, the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, has a very rich and long legacy in. We have renewed ourselves many times in between elections. Over the course of the last 50 to 60 years, we've renewed ourselves with new Premiers, we've renewed ourselves with new policies and we've renewed ourselves at every opportunity with a speech from the throne as well.

The last large renewal started in the early 1990s, when Ontario was going through a very difficult period. Entire North America was having a difficult economic time, and Ontario was having a particularly difficult time with loss of jobs, bankrupt companies and downturns in the economy. Under this scenario, our leader at that time, Mike Harris, went out and consulted with the people of Ontario. He consulted about what their concerns were and what their cares were. What he found at that time was

that people were very concerned about health care, they were very concerned about education, they were very concerned about community safety, but most of all, the one that dominated all of their concerns, was the concern about having a job.

It was out of that set of consultations that the party came up with the Common Sense Revolution, which we talked to the people about, in a renewal of Ontario. After that next election, the people of Ontario accepted that vision of a renewal. Almost immediately after that renewal, we continued to consult. We continued to monitor the people of Ontario, not just the party members, but the broader general public, asking them what they thought, where Ontario should go, what was as important to them as their family. Lo and behold, we found by and large the same three issues were important to them: community safety, education and health care, all underlined strongly by the need for jobs. That security at home, the ability to bring home a paycheque, was a very important part of the people's concerns. Out of that consultation, our party came up with the campaign document, the Blueprint, which we ran successfully on in 1999.

Shortly after that document was published and the election of 1999 was behind us, the success of the past two elections and indeed the success of the last 60 years of the Conservative Party, with the unfortunate interruption of the 10 lost years, the lost decade—that process of renewal seems like a good idea. I think the people of Ontario kind of like to be consulted. I think they like to get the feeling that they're being consulted by the government in power.

So we went out again in 2000, talking to the people of Ontario about Seizing Tomorrow's Opportunities. That consultation is ongoing, and prior to the next election—I am not privy to the agenda, but I can guess as well as the opposition can guess that there will be an election document and it will have a nice flashy name. Maybe it will be Common Sense Revolution Two or whatever. That will contain our party's platforms. But the important part of our party's platform is that it's a result of consultation with the people of Ontario, so it involves a renewal—a renewal as this speech from the throne has made.

It's interesting that this is Premier Eves's first speech from the throne since he's become leader of our party. However, I think Mr Harris, as Premier of this province, has fundamentally changed politics, not only in Ontario but also in Canada, in two very important areas: one is because of the renewal process and because we had this document to guide us through a four-and-a-half-year period of governing. The catchphrase was "Promises made, promises kept." What he did was, when he promised something, he kept that promise. That is something that people in Ontario, and indeed people in Canada and North America, have not always expected from their politicians. I think that is a fundamental change, and I was very proud to be part of that government. That will be a legacy that will live with this party through the renewals on down the road, creating perhaps a confidence that people have in government that they have not had in the past. I think that's a good thing.

The other legacy that Premier Harris brought to politics, again not only in Ontario but perhaps in Canada as well, or many parts of Canada, was tax cuts. In 1995, when we brought in our policy of tax cuts, with the exception of one person—Mark Mullins I believe was his name—there wasn't one economist in one bank, in one Bay Street law firm, in one brokerage house, not one economist anywhere in the country, who would say that tax cuts were a good idea. Everyone unilaterally said, "They won't work."

Guess what? Here we are seven years later. In 1994-95, the revenue that was brought into this province—that's all the money the government collects in taxes and fees, everything that comes in to our government—amounted to \$46 billion. Then we started cutting taxes. The Liberals and NDP in the opposition said, "How can you cut taxes when you have a deficit?" Premier Harris and Mr Eves, the finance minister then, now Premier, said, "We have to cut taxes in order to eliminate the deficit." Gosh, here it is 2000-01, and revenues amounted to \$64 billion. That's \$18 billion more than they were at the end of fiscal 1995. That's \$18 billion, yet we cut taxes on every budget. I think the members who were elected in 1995 are probably the only politicians in the world who have been part of a government that has cut taxes every year that we've been elected, and every year that we've been elected revenues to the government have gone up. What a surprise.

In 1985, when the Liberals and the NDP formed a coalition government, they started raising taxes. Every time they raised taxes, they got a smaller percentage of revenue than they expected. If they raised taxes 3%, they would have expected 3% more revenue. But they didn't get 3% more revenue; they got 2% more revenue, or something of that relative scale. So after doing that for 10 years, raising taxes and getting less revenue, maybe, just maybe, if you did it the other way around it would work. Maybe if you cut taxes, you'd get more revenue. You cut taxes again and you get more revenue. We've been doing it for seven years. The Liberals don't understand it—some of their members do. The NDP doesn't understand it at all. And Ottawa hasn't got a clue, not a clue, as to what cutting taxes could do for this country if indeed we ever got into that in a serious way.

1720

I think that's the legacy the Mike Harris-Ernie Eves government of 1995 to 2001 will leave with Ontario. Not too long ago, back in late January, February, I think it was, there was a federal budget that was coming down. All of the talk, all across Canada, all the newspaper stories, all the speculation on the television, the talk radio shows, all of that conversation was about what items in the federal budget would be cut. Whereabouts were the tax cuts going to come? There was no speculation about increased sin taxes—liquor taxes, tobacco taxes, gasoline taxes—which were the traditional favourites. Remember back in the 1980s, whenever there was a budget coming down you used to line up and get your car filled up with gas because you knew that taxes were going up on gas;

you used to go to the liquor store and buy what you needed there, or to the beer store and buy what you needed there, because you knew that the next day there were going to be more taxes on them? There were all of these sin taxes that continued to be raised every year. Yet in the last federal budget, in the last budget in Alberta, in the last budget in the Maritimes, all the conversation was about tax cuts and where those tax cuts would occur. I think that's a legacy that Mike Harris has brought to the country of Canada and to the various provinces within Canada. I hope that legacy lasts for a long time, because on my retirement from these hallowed halls I would like to have been part of a government that never introduced a tax increase and in fact introduced a tax cut every year that I served in this place.

Talking about renewal, in the springtime I guess we think about the renewal of nature. I go back to the Ministry of Natural Resources, where some time ago I served as the parliamentary assistant. Talking about the legacy that we leave for Ontario, one of the great legacies that I believe we will leave for Ontario is Ontario's Living Legacy, that program that will increase the number of parks and protected areas in this province to a little over 22 million acres. It's hard to imagine how big 22 million acres is, but as we drive around Ontario, we see a lot of agricultural land. We see corn and soybeans growing; we see a lot of orchards; we see a lot of pasture. If you drive from here to Windsor or indeed from here to Barrie, if you drive through the north, you see pockets of it. If you took all of that agricultural land in the province of Ontario and doubled it, that would be approximately the number of parks and conservation areas that we now have in Ontario. This government has put almost 50% of that land under protection. I think that will be a legacy that will live on.

The problems we have in financing health care, the problems we have in ensuring a good education for our children, those problems will come and go. They will increase in intensity as economic times dictate and they will fade away as we solve some of those problems as we go down the road. But maintaining land in pristine condition, in the condition it was in when Europeans first arrived on these shores, and maintaining that volume of land, one of the greatest parks and conservation areas in the world, is a legacy that I believe will live on far beyond the time in which we have the problems of today. I think in looking forward to the future it'll be a marvelous thing to look back at the legacy we've created, with all of that parkland being protected for our children, for our grandchildren, for their great-grandchildren to see and to travel through and to enjoy.

I was part of that process in Ontario's Living Legacy in the creation of the Great Lakes heritage coast parkland. The Great Lakes heritage coast is an area that runs along the north shore of the Great Lakes, starting at Pigeon River, which is the western end of the Great Lakes where it meets Minnesota at the American border. It's interesting as you travel the Great Lakes heritage coast across the north shore of Lake Superior, the

different landscapes that you run into and meet. You meet them because it is a very personal thing. The more you travel in this province and the more you see the northland and the more you appreciate the vastness of this province, it's a wonderful thing to experience.

Travelling across there, on the north shore of Lake Superior, just west of Schreiber, between Schreiber and Red Bay, there's an area along there which is almost a rain forest. It's a northern rain forest. In the summertime, every evening the fogs come in and roll across that land, dropping moisture. It's a very, very strong growth area for mosses, encouraging a particular type of wildlife in that area. The member from Thunder Bay nods knowingly. It's a wonderful place to experience.

As you travel farther east, you run into that rugged, rugged coastline, Lake Superior Provincial Park, all the way down from Marathon and Wawa and across what is perhaps some of the greatest wilderness in the world that people can get to within maybe a two- or three-hour drive from an international airport. It's a true value that we have in Ontario to develop that for a high-end tourism business.

Of course if you're selling tourism in a wilderness area, if you have too many tourists, you're not going to have wilderness area very long; it's going to be developed. Striking that balance between tourism and taking advantage of that wilderness and losing that wilderness is a very important part of the future of the Great Lakes heritage coast. I hope that balance will be struck and found.

Recently, I was involved in a study that talked about the future of some of the core industries in Ontario; again, talking about the possibility of a renewal of those areas. One of the areas was the construction industry. Something that a lot of people don't understand or don't know about our construction industry in Ontario is that it is one of the greatest industries in Ontario. It employs a huge number of people. It is one of the safest construction industries in the world. That's something that is very, very important, to make sure that the people working in those industries are safe and secure. We do have one of the best safety records of any construction industry in the world. It's a very successful industry. It's very innovative.

If you look at the new Toronto airport, which is being built up there, it is in fact the largest construction project ever undertaken in Canada. It's worth about \$4.4 billion. It's significantly higher than the next two in construction. It involved a tremendous amount of innovative construction technique. That innovation has attracted world attention. People come to Canada to hire contractors to design and build large structures, highways, those types of things, in other parts of the world. That's a good export business for us. Canada, of course, depends very strongly on its export business.

Another area that I looked at was the petrochemical industry, which was extremely interesting and is an area in which we are a leader in North America. The petrochemical industry is one that has a large cluster of

primary producers in Sarnia, which is, again, a world leader, a world leader in safety.

It was in Sarnia that they came up with the concept of responsible care. Responsible care is a simple concept in that you take a product, you take an element, natural gas or oil or ethylene or propylene or one of those chemicals, and you produce it into something. Responsible care follows that product; it follows that product through its life, and at the end, it follows that product into a responsible disposal of that chemical to ensure that it doesn't become a piece of pollution in our environment. That responsible care program has spread worldwide, and it was started right here in Sarnia, in Ontario. I believe that about 95% of the North American petrochemical industry are participants in it.

It's with great sorrow that I tell you that I've run out of time, and I haven't even got to the best parts of my speech, but I'll try to time myself better next time.

1730

The Acting Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):

The member opposite says that it's with great reluctance that he sits down and that he hadn't even gotten to the best parts of his speech. I'd say "hear, hear" to that. But he did seem to be well out of energy, so I want to say we are thankful for just 20-minute time slots today.

I found it interesting that the member talked about the \$4.4-billion renovation job that's going on, the redevelopment at Pearson airport, forgetting to mention all the while that this was that great public asset that, as a result of the fortuitous efforts on the part of the Chrétien government, has remained in public hands; that in the last dying days of the scandal-plagued Mulroney government—the government that this government is inspired by—they sought to give away this prized asset to a bunch of their rich friends, the benefactors of years of the spoils of the federal government getting greased up just a little bit more on the way out the door.

I think the Pearson airport redevelopment does provide some source for stimulation—a stimulation of ideas about the capacity of a public asset to be maintained in public hands, but at the same time to be energized. These folks opposite have talked as though hydro is not an asset that Ontarians could on the one hand make sure serves them well into the future, but still stays as a prized asset. I would just say to the member opposite who spoke of that that there are other options with respect to hydro than the one that has been favoured by this government, which is a quick sell-off to rich corporate entities.

I'll leave the member's wanderings, those romantic wanderings around the shore of Lake Superior, to be commented on just a little bit more effectively by the member in the Legislature who actually has the honour of representing that very same area, and that's my friend from Thunder Bay, who will be speaking next for our party.

Mr Prue: I've listened in some awe to the travelogue, but there are a few things that need to be said. He said that the taxes going down each and every year was a

good thing. I would probably have a hard time if I walked out on the street and asked people if they thought their taxes going down was not a good thing. It's a simple sale. What is not a good thing is the results of the taxes going down. This government went out and attacked teachers; they went out and attacked doctors; they went out and attacked the health care system; they went out and attacked municipalities; they went out and attacked the poor. The result of the taxes going down is all the deprivation that we now see in the richest province in the richest country in the world.

I need to speak a little bit too—maybe a little bit off topic—about what Mrs Marland from Mississauga South said about whether the municipalities are better off now than they were then. Absolutely not. Before 1997, every municipality balanced their budget. In the last three years, not one of them in the GTA has been able to do it. Before 1997 and before this government, they had largely paid off all of their debts. All of those debts in municipalities have increased hugely, particularly in the city of Toronto, which is now a billion dollars in debt, when they were almost debt-free in 1995.

You asked the question, what happened in the municipalities? Before this government there was federal-provincial-municipal co-operation, there was a building boom of daycare centres, there was a building boom of places where people went to swim and to play, and not one thing has been built since 1995. Before this government, the municipalities were left alone to do what they did best. With this government, they were amalgamated against their will and they have wholly unwieldy structures that no longer work. Are they better off today? Absolutely not.

Mr Maves: There's a silly comment from the member opposite that I just can't let go of. I just did a brand new emergency ward opening in Welland a week ago. There are SuperBuild signs all over the place that the members opposite get upset about because we have so many building signs out there about all of the things the government of Ontario is contributing to. Two years ago alone, a billion dollars was spent by this government just in college and university renewal. So to say that nothing has been built since 1995 is rhetoric in the extreme.

I want to compliment my colleague from Halton, who also by the way gave a great speech on renewal in the province of Ontario. I enjoyed listening to him. I always do; he's a learned man. He was a PA to economic development and trade. Some members opposite may want to have a look at the competitiveness report that he authored. It's an excellent report and the member from Halton deserves credit for that.

He's a very keen tax cutter. He knows that in this jurisdiction, when you look at all of the combined property taxes and sales taxes and income taxes and corporate taxes and capital taxes and on and on, this province was overtaxed over the years. And the 199 tax cuts this government brought in have had great results. The results are that over 800,000 more people today are working in Ontario than were in 1995. Those people are all paying

taxes. What's the result of that? Actually, we have \$15 billion more in revenue coming in in the province of Ontario, because all those more people are working and paying taxes than we had in 1995. What has that allowed us to do? It has allowed us to balance the budget of the province three years in a row and spend an additional \$6 billion, for example, on health care.

Mr Gravelle: I certainly appreciate the part of the member for Halton's speech related to his travels through northern Ontario, particularly those parts that are very much in my riding. I can tell him that Mayor Bob Krause of Schreiber I'm sure would send his best regards to the member, who I think has had the pleasure of having a dinner especially put on by Mayor Krause on previous trips up there. The Great Lakes heritage coast is one of the projects that people in my part of the riding are excited about. I still am waiting to see exactly what will come out of the concept itself, but certainly I know that they are always happy to have you there, Mr Chudleigh, so please come back any time.

I also hope that one of the things that happens when you travel through my riding is that you hopefully also see some of the problems that we have there and some of the needs, and we would be very grateful if you would also push those forward; for example, the drive between Thunder Bay and Nipigon. One will note that we've been trying to get that part of the highway four-laned for the last 10 or 11 years. It was first announced back in 1990 by the David Peterson government and there was some progress made early on, but we've had none of that move forward since then. It has become a real hazard in terms of driving and we'd love to have you push for that. Certainly we'd love you to stop in Red Rock, a community that now no longer has a doctor. It would be wonderful if you could help us arrange a meeting of Mr Clement, the health minister, with the reeve of that community. The town of Schreiber, a fabulous community, one that's working very, very hard to overcome the fact that it has lost a great deal of its industrial base—we would love to have your help in getting the young offender facility located there. Terrace Bay—I can go on and I will go on, in fact. We'd love to have Birchwood Terrace, a fabulous former home for the aged, once again being utilized. We could use support for that. So I say to you, as much as I appreciate your trip and that beautiful travelogue, what we need is help to get our economy going again and to help us make the communities prosper. So I look forward to that help in the future.

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

Mr Chudleigh: I started off my comments by saying that the NDP didn't understand tax cuts, and lo and behold, the member for Beaches-East York stood up and proved me right again. He talked about the results of the tax cuts, as to what happened in our community. He missed the point. If it hadn't been for our tax cuts, we wouldn't have had the extra \$15 billion, we wouldn't have been able to make the reinvestment of \$8 billion into health care, soon to be \$8 billion in health care. We

wouldn't have had that revenue. That's why your government continued to raise taxes. That's why your government upset everybody in the province. That's why you suffered that huge defeat on that wonderful evening of June 8, 1995, and Ontario entered into the recovery phase. It's part of the results of those tax cuts that have given us safer communities—communities that have never been safer.

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It's given us an educational system, where we've re-invested another billion dollars, that has created opportunities for children to learn how to actually read while they're in 12 or 13 years of school in Ontario. That wasn't happening before under your government, but it is happening now.

It gave us the opportunity to reinvest in health care, where we're building new hospitals around the province in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste Marie, Ottawa. That kind of reinvestment comes with the tax cuts and the responsible economic decision-making that this province has been so short of in the lost decade.

I thank the member for Niagara Falls, who was very kind in his comments, and the member for Thunder Bay-Superior North. On his way home and over the summer, I'm sure he'll bump into Bob Krause. I hope he has good luck in creating that parkland he's talking about on the beach—

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

Mr Gravelle: I'm glad to have an opportunity to speak a little more at length in relation to the throne speech, certainly to some degree what's in the throne speech but more specifically what's not in the throne speech. That is what I think people expect. When a throne speech comes forward, we anticipate it. We look to see if we're going to get a sense of direction from the government. What are their priorities? What are the issues that matter to them?

Certainly we saw a document that had some of that in it, in terms of multi-year funding for hospitals and school boards. In general, I think those were good things. We have some concerns literally about what that will mean in terms of adequate funding. But quite frankly, as I looked at the document more carefully, I was more struck by what was not in it, and it was difficult not to be struck by those things.

However, having said that, let me begin by saying something nice about the throne speech, if I may, which is the announcement of the full campuses for the northern medical school, one being in Sudbury, one being in Thunder Bay. It was in the throne speech. The Premier came to Thunder Bay about a week after that and confirmed that indeed Thunder Bay—Lakehead University—will be receiving a full medical school for the full four-year program, which we're very pleased about.

This was an extraordinary battle. Quite frankly, it shouldn't have happened the way that it did, if I may say. When the announcement was first made about the medical school back in April of last year, Thunder Bay

was only going to have a satellite campus. There was an extraordinary lobbying effort done by a number of organizations, groups and individuals: the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association. The Nishnawbe-Aski Nation played an extraordinarily important role. Those who had been involved with the medical school proposed in the first place at Lakehead University did a great job of convincing the government and convincing the new Premier, who was the would-be Premier at the time, that indeed it needed to be a shared, equal campus. We're very pleased by that.

So I will say thank you. I'm pleased that was in the throne speech. I thought it was important that it was in the throne speech. I'm pleased that it was confirmed.

Having said that, it's difficult for me to have anything much more complimentary to say about the contents of the throne speech, because as I said, I'm struck most specifically by what's not there. We didn't hear anything related to home care, an area that is of extraordinary importance. This is a government that decided back in 1996, very early in their term, to restructure the health care system, to close a number of hospitals—although they promised they wouldn't close any hospitals.

If one sums up the whole process, it was going to be OK to do that because they were going to move more supports into the community. There was going to be more home care. Unfortunately, that process didn't quite work the way I think it should have. What we had was a situation whereby the hospitals were downsized, there were fewer acute care beds, patients were put into a state of turmoil. We've certainly seen what was happening in the health care system. But the long and short is that the home care sector had a huge extra responsibility, was in many ways taking on acute care patients in their homes.

Suddenly last year the government decided they were going to freeze the amount of money they were providing for home care, which meant a \$175-million shortfall. In my riding of Thunder Bay-Superior North and in the Thunder Bay district community care access centre, there was a \$9-million shortfall. So this had devastating effects on so many people who wanted to stay in their homes, so many people who had to leave the hospitals to go home and who needed care in their homes, people who actually could no longer stay at home and had to go back into the hospital once that freeze was put in place. The freeze ended up being a severe cutback.

So we were certainly hoping to see something related to home care in the throne speech. I will still, I guess, hope that we will see some of that in the budget, because there's no question we need to have an increase in the home care budget and we need to have it as quickly as possible.

There's one thing I do want to talk about, too. I see that the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services is here. Earlier today, I participated in a press conference with members of Autism Society Ontario, Autism Society Canada and some parents of children with autism. The minister earlier today in question period made reference to some of the federal funds for child

care going into support for children with autism. But what was startling about the press conference today was the revelation that there is a Ministry of Health document, which is on the OHIP database, which indicates that the number of children with autism in the province of Ontario is certainly at least double what the ministry has been saying.

As it stands now, there is a therapy called applied behaviour analysis, which is an intensive form of therapy for young children with autism that can have remarkable results. Parents certainly told me about that. The problem is, as a result of the underfunding by the province, only about one third of the children who are now officially diagnosed with autism are able to receive that therapy. As a result, families are putting themselves in a dreadful situation where they are forced to mortgage their homes and use their salaries to fund the therapy, which is absolutely crucial. But today at the press conference, we learned that indeed there is a 1998 Ministry of Health report, which indicates that the number of children with autism is double the amount we think. So the shortfall is enormous and extremely sad. We certainly would love to have seen in the throne speech some relationship with the funding in terms of children with autism. It's a real tragedy.

May I say also, at the press conference today what was really so interesting was sort of a cost-benefit analysis in terms of what the costs will be to the health care system, to the education system and to the social service system for children who do not receive the help they need at that early age. It's extraordinary. It truly is in the billions of dollars that will be required for those children who do not receive the help they need and deserve. The truly sad part about all this is that the success rate of the ABA—the applied behaviour analysis—is so remarkable that probably 50% of the children who receive that particular therapy and help are virtually indistinguishable from everyone else in society when they are successfully through that process.

I certainly call upon the government to look in that direction. Right now they are using federal funds, which should be in the regulated child care sector, to provide some of that help. There should be provincial funding for that and we'd like to see that in the system as well. Certainly, that was an upsetting press conference because we saw very emotional testimony from families who have children with autism.

This is also, may I say, before I go on to my next area—and, God, I've got so many I'll never get to them all—a medical issue. It's a brain disorder. Right now it's under the ministry of community and family services, and the fact is it's a medical issue and it should be, I believe, under the Ministry of Health. If a child breaks a leg or if a child is stricken with cancer and needs chemotherapy, nobody questions the fact that the support will be there from the province. What we're seeing is that because autism is funded by the Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services, the help isn't there for all the children, which is wrong, let alone the fact that the

province cuts off the funding after you turn the age of six. So we have children who are very successfully going through the therapy cut off when they reach the age of six, which is really, really sad. Certainly, I have constituents who have come to me.

1750

Another area which I think, again, we did not see in the throne speech was any reference to mental health services, and specifically children's mental health services.

There is an organization in Thunder Bay, the Lakehead Regional Family Centre, which provides very high quality resources and services for children and for families that have children with mental health problems. It's an organization that deserves our praise. They do the job under a great deal of stress. One of the sad things about the mental health sector in terms of the community is that the people who work there are certainly not paid at the same level as those who are in hospitals and other facilities. That's a problem as it is. It's hard to maintain staff.

But the most significant problem we have with the Lakehead Regional Family Centre is that because of all the pressures, because of provincial underfunding and the fact that there's actually been a decrease in funding of 8% over the last 10 years—not an increase, a decrease—they are absolutely stretched to the limit. Their caseload has increased by 150%, but their ability to actually deliver services is now stretched to the point where they have declared there will be a \$200,000 deficit in the fiscal year we're in right now, which we would love the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services to provide for, because the funding comes from that ministry, of which I'm the critic, so there's no question that I would love to see that.

The ministry responded to the crisis at the Lakehead Regional Family Centre by saying they would go through a program review and help them manage it. The fact is that what we really need is more resources. I can't imagine what would be more important than children's mental health services in terms of resource needs. I would like to think that indeed the ministry and the minister would be listening to that need.

May I say—I'm speaking of my riding and the Lakehead Regional Family Centre—that this is a problem across the province. It's rather sad that we literally have to go begging for help for mental health services in this great province of ours, let alone that we have to go begging for mental health services for children. Again, each individual story and family situation is tragic. The help is there, but if you leave the regional family centres in the province unable to fulfill those responsibilities because they are in a deficit position and not able to maintain their staff, you're simply not doing well.

That's the other side of what the member for Halton was talking about. He was talking about the importance of tax cuts and what tax cuts had brought to the people of Ontario. I acknowledge that on the surface everybody certainly likes a tax cut. It's an appealing thing to have in

place, but the price we're paying for this in our province is phenomenal. When I have to come here and beg the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services to find the funding for children's mental health services or beg the minister to find the funding so that children with autism can receive the ABA treatment, then something is really wrong. That's the other side of the tax cuts. It's really unfair and wrong that indeed that's the case.

I know I don't have a lot of time left, but I do want to touch on at least a couple of the issues in my riding as well.

I made reference to the member for Halton travelling through my riding, and we appreciate that. It's good to have government members and ministers there; I'm always glad to see them. But we want them to understand the issues that are there and that are really important.

We need a fair share of funds for our capital transportation needs. I made reference to four-laning of the highway between Thunder Bay and Nipigon. It's something that's absolutely in place. Premier Eves was in Thunder Bay last week and he actually made reference to it. After seven years of me standing up and speaking about the need to four-lane that highway and to increase safety and give us the kind of quality roads that absolutely will make a difference in northwestern Ontario, it was good to hear him talk about it. I hope we see something in the budget.

There are other transportation issues that concern me. We need to go beyond rehabilitation—I appreciate that some money has been spent rehabilitating the roads—and into capital expansion. It's something I intend to vigorously continue to fight for.

We need to have an advance warning light system all the way along the Thunder Bay Expressway. That's something that saves lives. May I say that's thanks to the late Al Palladini. Back in 1995, when he was Minister of Transportation, he agreed to put an advance warning light at one of the intersections of the Thunder Bay Expressway, and ever since then we have not had a fatality. The system works. I just wish I could convince the Minister of Transportation, Mr Sterling, and others, that an advance warning light system all the way along the system would really work. You've got a highway system, and suddenly you've got lights and people go through. It's something that everybody's been calling for. I certainly want to continue to fight for that.

I want a better deal for my municipalities. I do represent so many communities. It's a big riding. I represent the north side of Thunder Bay, and my riding goes for 300-plus kilometres along Highway 17 through Dorion, through Hurkett, through Shuniah township, through Nipigon, through Red Rock, Schreiber, Terrace Bay, Marathon, Pick River, the municipality of Greenstone—now there's a story. It used to be Beardmore, Longlac, Geraldton and Nakina and a number of other unincorporated communities like Jellicoe and Caramat—forced to amalgamate, in essence, finally, two years ago. We now have a council that is doing its absolute best to make

this new municipality work but we're not getting the help that we need from the province to be able to actually make this municipality work. We're not getting the support in terms of taxation, the transition ratios for TransCanada PipeLine; we're not getting the support we need. That is another issue.

Mayor Primeau and I did a series of public meetings in Greenstone over the wintertime, in the winter break. I'll tell you, people there are very, very unhappy about the fact that if you lived in an area that was formerly unincorporated—they're now dealing with increased property tax rates which are such a startling change that it's causing some of them to really wonder whether they can stay in that community. That is certainly a problem.

Many other issues: I talked about Schreiber and the young offender facility, Birchwood Terrace, tremendous concerns about silicosis and occupation disease in the Hemlo gold mines, the need for a justice of the peace in Marathon. These are all things I'm going to fight for. Certainly in terms of the throne speech, it's very sad that there were so many of these elements missing, elements that will mean so much to people. It's quite a price that we're paying for this particular kind of government.

The Acting Speaker: I just wanted to point out the presence in the members' west gallery of Ruth Grier, a representative in this House for the 33rd, 34th and 35th Parliaments. We're glad you could be here today.

The Legislature has just completed six days of debate on the throne speech.

On May 13, 2002, Mrs Mushinski moved, seconded by Mr Wettlaufer, that an humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has addressed to us."

On Tuesday, May 14, 2002, Mr McGuinty moved that the motion for an address to the reply to the speech from the throne be amended by adding the following thereto:

"That the address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session be

amended by striking out all the words after 'We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario, now assembled,' and substituting the following:

"Whereas working families in Ontario deserve a government that will provide them with accessible health care, the best public education system in the world, a clean environment and a strong economy;

"Whereas the speech from the throne proved that the Eves government will continue to support the failed policies from the Harris regime, such as two-tier health care, private school tax credits, corporate taxes lower than Alabama's, compromised environmental protection and the privatization of Hydro One;

"Therefore, this House profoundly regrets that nothing has changed. The Eves government is out of touch with the people of Ontario and will continue to adopt policies that cater to their friends on Bay Street rather than hard-working Ontario families."

On Wednesday, May 15, 2002, Mr Hampton moved that:

"The amendment to the government motion to the throne speech be amended by adding the following:

"This House condemns the privatization and de-regulation of Hydro, private sector involvement in health care and the government's unrelenting attacks on workers' rights."

The first question to be decided is Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion.

All those in favour of Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members, this will be a 30-minute bell.

Hark: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I'd like to request that the vote on the amendment to the amendment to the address in reply to the speech from the throne be deferred until May 27, 2002."

That's signed by the chief government whip, the Honourable John Baird. It appears to be in order. So be it.

It being past 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm, Monday, May 27, 2002.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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