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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 18 June 2002

Mardi 18 juin 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 18 June 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 18 juin 2002

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INVESTIGATION INTO CHILD ABUSE

Mr John C. Cleary (Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh): I rise today to renew my call for a public inquiry into the handling of allegations of child abuse in my community.

Last night I was at the installation of the seventh bishop of Alexandria-Cornwall at St Finnan's Cathedral, where there was standing room only. Some 80 to 100 concerned citizens gathered outside in support of a public inquiry. They want answers to the questions that have plagued the community for years.

I was pleased that the new bishop, Paul-André Durocher, spoke with the protesters yesterday and said he would meet with them within the next few weeks to talk about allegations of child sexual abuse. He even announced during the installation ceremony his intention to meet with a group of citizens and he got thunderous applause. Many said afterwards that the new bishop was a breath of fresh air.

Yesterday's demonstration wasn't the first time my community has rallied to support an inquiry. Two years ago the member for Ottawa West-Nepean introduced a bill to have a public inquiry and many of my constituents gathered petitions with over 12,000 names. The opposing side could only gather 100.

The new bishop has taken positive steps in showing his willingness to open dialogue with the people of my community. It's time now for the government to take another step in the right direction and immediately call a public inquiry.

FUNDRAISING

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): As we go through the summer months into September, in Ontario and across this country there are fundraising efforts being undertaken by any number of volunteer and charitable organizations. One of the leaders among those fundraisers is our firefighters. Indeed, Welland's volunteer firefighting companies were awarded Ontario's Fire Department of the Year award by the Muscular Dystrophy Association of Canada.

Regrettably, though, this government, its policies and its stupid squeegee kid bill have inhibited and frustrated firefighters' efforts to raise money for muscular dystrophy. Indeed, as you well know, last September down in Welland just one nutbar calling the police forced the police to shut down the fundraising activities by firefighters.

Steve Pandur from Welland Volunteer Fire Company Number 4 has written to the Premier. I've joined him with a letter of my own and I raise this issue in the House today. This, Premier, has resulted, with the squeegee kid law, in a shortfall of a quarter of a million dollars in the funds that could have been raised here in Ontario. It's time for this Premier to take control of the matter and introduce amendments so that firefighters like Steve Pandur, and his colleagues in Welland, across Niagara and across this province, can continue to do the good work they've been doing for so many years to help so many. It's time for this government to get off its duff.

HOUSE OF BLESSING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to congratulate Stratford's House of Blessing on their new location at 423 Erie Street in Stratford.

For almost 20 years, the House of Blessing has been providing extremely beneficial programs and services to the people of Stratford and the surrounding communities. It's a place that many people have turned to in times of crisis and desperation. The House of Blessing provides food, clothing, toys, furniture, counselling and spiritual advice to about 500 people every month. Before moving into their new location, the House of Blessing operated from a small house in Stratford that was only 81 square metres. Their new facility has 729 square metres and includes space for a community room, a walk-in cooler and freezer, an area for furniture and equipment repair, many rooms for counselling, storage and clothing displays. This may even interest the member for Windsor.

I want to take this opportunity to commend Florence Kehl, the founder and executive director of the House of Blessing, for her passion and dedication to those individuals and families who sometimes need a helping hand.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): What about the Common Sense Revolution?

Mr Johnson: I'll speak louder to get over the heckling from the member from Windsor.

Florence Kehl's husband, Norman, also deserves special recognition for his commitment. I also want to

applaud the efforts of Peter Black, the chair of the board of directors, and the board members, volunteers, businesses and agencies in my riding that continue to provide support.

Please join me in wishing the House of Blessing every success in their new location.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain):

Yesterday afternoon, Ontario colleges and students were once again shortchanged by the Eves Conservatives. While Ontario's 24 colleges of applied arts and technology provide 40% of post-secondary opportunities for high school graduates, they received less than 7% of the \$75 million for operating grants the government introduced to address the double cohort.

The double cohort is not just a university problem. Colleges are facing the same challenges as our universities. Following a decade of underfunding, yesterday's budget does nothing to change the fact that per student funding in Ontario remains well below the national average. We are still last. Enrolment in colleges has increased by 35%, while at the same time provincial funding as decreased by 40%.

Colleges have warned that \$125 million is needed if they are to meet the enrolment increase of the double cohort and the anticipated skills shortage. The reality of their situation appears to have been lost on this government. Communities across Ontario will soon face critical skilled labour shortages. With an aging population and a dwindling labour supply, my own community of Hamilton will be among the first to confront this crisis. Yesterday, Premier Eves undermined the very institutions our communities will depend on as they tackle the emerging worker shortage. Lack of provincial support will make it impossible for colleges to successfully meet both this human resource challenge and the government's pledge surrounding the double cohort.

OUTSTANDING YOUNG FARMER PROGRAM

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): Everyone here knows the importance of good farmers to the economy of this great province of Ontario. We have many excellent farmers in Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order.

Mr Stewart: Thank you, Mr Speaker. This happens to be a fairly important statement for people in my riding.

We have many excellent farmers, and I rise today to show my appreciation for their dedication, hard work and wisdom. In particular, I would like to recognize Ontario's outstanding young farm family for 2002, John and Eadie Steele and their two children, Ian and Chelsea, who reside in my riding of Peterborough. The Steele family was chosen for this honour in April, at the 23rd annual

awards banquet in Mississauga. The Outstanding Young Farmer program was designed to recognize farm couples who exemplify excellence in their profession. As well, the program strives to promote agriculture among the urban population.

For the first time in the history of this program, the operators of a sheep farm have been awarded this title. John and Eadie Steele emigrated from England in May 1990. By June 1991, they had their first 67 commercial ewes on rented pasture, and in April 1993, they purchased their current farm of 300 acres near Norwood in Peterborough county. The Steele family will represent Ontario in the national competition to be held during the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair in Toronto this November.

I would like to thank and compliment all farming families, such as the Steeles, for the high-quality farm operations they run.

To the Steele family, the best of luck in the national competition this fall.

1340

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Yesterday's budget just showed us very clearly that the Ontario Ernie Eves government has no idea what it's doing in terms of taking care of people's health care. What we saw in the last seven years with the development of the Health Services Restructuring Commission was that it yanked funding away from hospitals. Now, seven years later, you're attempting to make announcements about putting money back into hospitals.

I ask this government, what happened to primary care reform? What happened to getting us family doctors so that people who have to access the system have the physicians ready on the front lines to do the job they're supposed to do?

The budget yesterday did nothing to address where we're going in health care. All it did was pour money back in that you took out seven years ago, and it's an acknowledgement as clear as day that you have no idea what you're doing in health care.

Yesterday the minister and the government decided to muse about MRIs and CTs in a private clinic. Where will the radiologists come from? Are you going to siphon them from the public sector? Where are the technicians to run these machines? Again, you won't address the shortages in personnel in the health system. How can you ever make the health system work?

I ask this government again, where does it think it's going? I agree with Liz Witmer when she said on her first day on the job as the health minister that this government has no vision. Yesterday's budget said the same thing: this government has no vision. The only group that does is the Ontario Liberal Party.

ST LUKE CATHOLIC SCHOOL

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): St Luke Catholic school, located in my riding of Mississauga South, is the first school in Mississauga and Peel region to receive a level one certificate for the progressive excellence program, PEP, of the National Quality Institute. I was privileged to attend the awards ceremony on May 31 when St Luke Catholic school received this honour.

The PEP program helps to increase levels of student achievement so that children and youth can acquire the knowledge, skills and values they need to become responsible members of society. The program serves as a template for schools to continually strive for excellence and gain recognition for their achievements.

At the first level of certification, a school is setting a foundation for moving forward on the program's Roadmap to Excellence, which culminates in the national and international recognition of the Canada Awards for Excellence.

What makes a school like St Luke so special? This school has a vibrant community spirit. The students love being at school and rave about their extracurricular activities and field trips. Their parents speak enthusiastically of the school's innovative, dedicated teachers who foster a love of learning. The teachers commend their principal, Andre Young, for providing visionary leadership that maximizes the staff's diverse strengths.

I am happy to wish the St Luke Catholic school community every success as you progress through the PEP program. With the coordinated efforts of parents, teachers and church, you are providing an exceptional learning experience that will benefit your students throughout their lives.

TAXATION

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): We in the official opposition are delighted to hear that gone are the days when tax cuts create jobs, gone are the days when tax cuts increase government revenue and gone are the days when tax cuts work. Finally, gone are the days when that gang says, "We're doing what we said we'd do."

We witnessed yesterday the biggest flip-flop in the history of politics in this province, maybe second only to the NDP's social contract. And now they're trying to move to clean up the messes that they themselves created. The people of Ontario won't forget that you created those messes. They won't forget the 39 hospitals you closed. They won't forget the schools you closed. They won't forget what you've done to classroom education. They won't forget what you did to the Ministry of the Environment. They certainly will not forget what happened at Walkerton.

This flip-flop, this monumental change of course—they've abandoned their own supporters. They will not win the trust of other voters. There has been one alternative that has been clear and consistent from the

beginning; Dalton McGuinty has offered that. Dalton McGuinty has offered a consistent alternative that will serve the people of this province well. When we're given the chance to implement it, you will be nothing but a bad memory and a bad stain on the history of the province of Ontario.

AIR CADETS

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Last weekend, the Air Cadet League of Canada and the Royal Canadian Air Cadets closed their year-long 60th anniversary celebrations with their 61st national annual general meeting in Niagara Falls.

Throughout this past year, the Air Cadet League of Canada has organized special parades, contests and other commemorative events to celebrate the achievements of their first 60 years.

A national effective speaking contest was held in Niagara Falls on Friday, with a successful air cadet representative from each province participating. The cadets spent five days enjoying the beautiful Niagara area and departed for home on Sunday. Cadets were hosted by local air cadet families in Niagara Falls.

My own constituency assistant, Barbara Greenwood, and her husband, Major Bill Greenwood, graciously accommodated two cadets from Edmonton and Thunder Bay. Major Bill Greenwood was instrumental in organizing cadets from the Niagara area.

Jennifer and Lindsay Shields and Matt Calvert were just three of the cadets participating. All three have had distinguished cadet careers.

I would also like to make mention of John Derousie, a member of the Air Cadet League from Thorold, who was vital in the organization of this event, as was Major Luigi Norio.

I stand in the House today to offer my congratulations to the Air Cadet League of Canada and the Royal Canadian Air Cadets on their 60th anniversary. Best wishes for the many years ahead.

VISITORS

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I invite all members to join me in welcoming Arvid and Linda Heics, who are here as proud grandparents to watch their grandson Colin be one of our pages. Welcome.

ANNUAL REPORT, OFFICE OF THE
INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I beg to inform the House that today I've laid upon the table the annual report of the Office of the Integrity Commissioner for the period April 1, 2001, to March 31, 2002.

ANNUAL REPORT, LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION OFFICE

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I further beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the third annual report from the lobbyists registration office, Office of the Integrity Commissioner, with respect to the administration of the Lobbyist Registration Act, 1998, for the period of April 1, 2001, to March 31, 2002.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF OTTAWA ACT (REMEMBRANCE DAY), 2002

Mr Guzzo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr3, An Act respecting the City of Ottawa.

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

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

ROYAL OTTAWA HEALTH CARE GROUP/SERVICES DE SANTÉ ROYAL OTTAWA ACT, 2002

Mr Patten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr7, An Act respecting Royal Ottawa Health Care Group/Services de Santé Royal Ottawa.

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

Pursuant to standing order 86(a), this bill stands referred to the Commissioners of Estate Bills.

1350

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): My questions today are for the Premier. Premier, as your government lurches from crisis to crisis, crises of your own making, it has become clear that you are willing to say absolutely anything in order to hold on to power. You embraced tax cuts at one point; you now reject them. The Taxpayer Protection Act was your bible from which you drew all of your inspiration, and now you're quite prepared to tear that bible up.

The last time you talked about Hydro One, you told us that it was off the table. We now learn that it is back on the table. You tell us that you were going to move ahead with corporate tax cuts, but now you're not quite so sure about that. Finally, you tell us that you've managed to both support and oppose private school tax credits simultaneously.

Premier, when you are prepared to change your position at the drop of a hat, when you are prepared to say anything in order to hold on to power, why should Ontario families trust you?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The leader of the official opposition obviously didn't hear or read what the Minister of Finance had to say yesterday. On page 7 of this year's budget, he will find a schedule of tax cuts that have been delayed but are going to be implemented and will be delivered by the Minister of Finance in next year's budget.

Mr McGuinty: I can understand why the Premier is making desperate efforts today to try to reassure that segment of his corps which is concerned about the recent flip-flop when it comes to tax cuts. But I believe, Premier, that leaders must, in the end, stand on principle and conviction. Ultimately, that's how we earn the trust of our voters. But whatever principles and convictions you had, sir, have now been conveniently jettisoned.

The Taxpayer Protection Act was your bible. You drew your inspiration from that document. You said you would honour that law come hell or high water. But as they say, that was then and this is now.

Premier, if you are prepared to tear up your economic bible, the Taxpayer Protection Act, why is it that Ontario families should trust you on anything at all that you say?

Hon Mr Eves: Our track record on tax reduction speaks for itself. You belonged to a government called the David Peterson government that raised taxes some 37 or 38 times. We on this side of the House reduced taxes 193 times, between Mr Flaherty and myself, and we will continue to reduce taxes a whole pile more times come next March.

Perhaps the Leader of the Opposition is unaware that there were certain events on September 11 that happened in New York, and they resulted in decreases in the US economy, the Canadian economy and virtually every jurisdiction in the western world. We are dealing with those fallouts from revenue from the events of September 11, but we are balancing the books of the province, not once, not twice, not three times but four times in a row—something that you never did.

Mr McGuinty: The only fallout we are dealing with here is the fallout of any principles and convictions that you might have had. That's all we're talking about here.

Premier, you said countless times that tax cuts created jobs, tax cuts spurred on economic growth, tax cuts generated the revenues that would support our social programs. You said there was no such thing as a bad tax cut; all tax cuts were good tax cuts, whether in good or bad economic times. There was simply no such thing as a bad tax cut.

After September 11, your government said it was essential that we accelerate tax cuts. It was important to bring them forward because they would work their usual magic. Now you tell us that today, for some reason, is not a good time to go ahead with your celebrated tax cuts. If you are prepared to say absolutely anything in order to

hang on to power, why should Ontario families trust anything you say?

Hon Mr Eves: In case the leader of the official opposition is interested, there were five more tax cuts in yesterday's budget than your government ever introduced in five years. Talk about principles. I understand you have voted against every single one of the 193—soon to be 198—tax reductions this government has introduced in seven years. You can be free to vote against, if you wish—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Sorry, Premier, it was too noisy. Is the Premier finished? New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mr McGuinty: These questions are also to the Premier. Really, this is all about a question of trust. It is clear that you have different messages for different audiences at different times.

You don't just have two sets of messages, you also have two sets of books. The spending estimates that were also tabled yesterday adopt a radically different approach than the budget. There's a \$210-million discrepancy in the Ministry of Agriculture, for example. The health numbers are off by half a billion dollars. The numbers in the spending estimates for the Ministry of the Environment are \$89 million lower than in the budget. We know we can't trust what you say because you're prepared to say anything. Can you now tell us how we can trust your numbers if in fact you have two different sets of numbers?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the official opposition should be the last one talking about trust and getting the voters' trust in this House. It seems to me the leader of the official opposition protesteth too much.

Very simply, he's talking about tax reductions. We have reduced taxes, including the ones introduced by the minister yesterday, 198 times. I'm sure you'll vote against these five like you did the 193. The people of Ontario certainly know where you stand with respect to those 193. They certainly know where I stand with respect to those 193. How about the five yesterday? How about the 21 to come? Where are you going to stand on those?

Mr McGuinty: What the Premier doesn't seem to understand is that you cannot be both a Tory and a Liberal at the same time. We're the Liberals over here; you are the Conservatives over there. We stand for better health care, better education and protection of the environment. We will never support any tax cuts that compromise those services that families have to be able to count on. People know what we stand for because we've been fighting for those things for seven years. The question I have for you on behalf of Ontario families is, what do you stand for?

Hon Mr Eves: I stand for the 193 we've passed, the five introduced yesterday and the 21 more to come in March. That's what I stand for, and you'll have a chance to vote against these too.

1400

Mr McGuinty: I happen to believe that credible leadership is all about conviction, principle and integrity. With this budget, this Premier has jettisoned whatever principles, convictions and integrity he might have had. This is a Premier who is prepared to say anything in order to hang on to power. Tax cuts that he once embraced as a magic elixir have now been jettisoned. The Taxpayer Protection Act, which was once his bible, he is now prepared to tear up. Those are all gone.

I ask you again, Premier, on behalf of Ontario families, if you are prepared to say anything to hang on to power, why should we trust you when you say anything at all?

Hon Mr Eves: Anybody who squeals and whines that loud must have a serious problem, or think they do, as we go forward.

We know exactly where you stand with respect to promises. This is a quote from Dalton McGuinty on March 1, 1998, "I think people understand that when we make promises—"

Interjections.

The Speaker: Sorry to interrupt the Premier. Will the Premier take his seat? It's too noisy. We'll just wait. The Premier did have some time. Once it settles down we'll let him come back and finish up. Premier?

Hon Mr Eves: I think people understand that "when we make promises," meaning the Liberals, "generally that calls for" a tax hike. You're exactly right; the people do know where you stand on tax hike issues, and you're going to have a chance to prove it to them 219 times before the next provincial election.

SALES AND RENTALS REVENUE

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I have a question for the Premier. There is a revenue line in yesterday's budget called "Sales and Rentals." Over the years this line has consistently averaged \$600 million, except in the year 1999-2000 when the ill-conceived Highway 407 sell-off increased it to \$2.13 billion.

This fiscal year, the sales and rentals revenue line balloons to \$2.42 billion. My question is: will you admit that the \$2.42 billion in this year's budget includes some or all of the proceeds from a sale of part of Hydro One? Yes or no, Premier?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): First of all, he talks about Highway 407. He should know a lot about Highway 407; he was part of the cabinet that decided that with respect to Highway 407, a toll highway, they were going to privatize it. But the NDP's definition of privatization was that if the private sector took the highway and lost money, the government, ie the taxpayers, would pick up the losses; if they made money, they'd get to keep it all. That was your idea of privatization. Is there any wonder you're against it? Anybody could figure out that anyone would take on a highway or any other asset if they had the government underwriting the losses and they got to

keep all the profits. That was Bob Rae's solution to privatizing Highway 407.

With respect to your question about this year's budget, there are figures in the budget, of course, about commercialization of assets as we go forward, and Hydro One is definitely part of that.

Mr Hampton: Premier, I think that's an important admission. We were told yesterday by budget officials that they were counting on \$700 million, and possibly \$1 billion, in proceeds from Hydro One. They also told us something else: that proceeds from the sale of generating stations would also be included. Would you confirm for us that in that \$2.42-billion revenue line entitled "Sales and Rentals" some of the big numbers actually come from selling off hydro generating stations as well?

Hon Mr Eves: I don't believe there are any hugely significant numbers in there from the sale of OPG assets. There may be a project that has been agreed to that's in there that you'd already be aware of.

Mr Hampton: Once again, Premier, when we talked with Ministry of Finance officials yesterday, they readily admitted that the \$2.42 billion revenue line included the proceeds of selling off some of the hydro generating stations.

I guess my question to you is, will you admit to the Legislature and to the people of Ontario that, without this foolish sell-off of our most valuable public assets, your government would not have a balanced budget this year and you would not have the money to put into health care? It is only through selling off those assets that you have any money to put into health care or education.

Hon Mr Eves: We are definitely going to bring private sector discipline to Hydro One. We've said that in this House. We've said that for several days in a row.

With respect to Hydro One, though, we are not going to part with public control of the asset. It will remain in the control of the people of the province of Ontario, but there will be private sector discipline brought to bear with respect to that asset.

Mr Hampton: The only so-called private sector discipline we've seen with respect to Hydro One has been the bloated and fat salaries that mimic the private sector behaviour on Bay Street.

ONTARIO POWER GENERATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): I want to return to the hydro generating stations because just last week we had an opportunity to talk with some of the officials from Ontario Power Generation, who said that, in view of the recession in the United States and of the fact that generating capacity is not being totally used up there in the aftermath of the recession, if they were to try to sell their generating stations right now they would get very low prices—in fact, someone said "giveaway prices."

Your budget counts on sales and rentals of those hydro plants this year. I'm asking you, Premier, why would you

sell hydro generating stations at giveaway prices just to feed your budget?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The Minister of Energy would be happy to respond.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): "Someone." "Someone" said this to you. Could you be a little more vague?

I have not heard anyone at OPG making that suggestion. If you want to suggest to me that there are good times to sell generating power, or that generating stations have bad times, of course they do. But let me tell you, there will be no generation sales at giveaway prices; only during good negotiations. Positive decisions will be made, for the benefit of the taxpayers.

If you could illuminate this House on who the "someone" was who said that to you, maybe I would have a better ability to respond to your question.

Mr Hampton: They're the same officials from Ontario Power Generation who have provided us with briefings in the past. They indicated very clearly that, given what is happening elsewhere in the economy, you would not be able to get full value selling off hydro generating stations.

What the people of Ontario want to ask you is this: in this budget year you have to sell off half of Hydro One or hydro generating stations in order to find some money to invest in health care, what are you going to sell off next year, the LCBO, Highway 400, Highway 401? Don't you recognize that any operation that has to sell off its assets in order to find some operating income in a given year is headed down the wrong track? That's the answer the people want to hear.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Maybe you should respond to them about the reasons why you'd sell the rolling stock at GO Transit and then attempt to lease it back through a tax haven down in the south. You never explained that one fully to the people of Ontario: why you tried to sell the rolling stock of GO and lease it through a tax haven to avoid taxes in Ontario they would have had to pay. That would have been a good one to explain.

This is beginning to sound like your letter. You went to a briefing at OPG and you didn't ask anybody their names? You didn't ask anyone who was briefing you what their name was? How do you know they were from OPG? It could have been another dream you had about meeting with OPG, similar to the letter you sent.

When you're going to ask these questions, you can't say, "They said," and "Someone told me." You've got to get a little more definitive. It's not like going to caucus.

Lastly, OPG has had a regulatory obligation to reduce its market share by decontrolling some of its generation capacity after market opening. This is essential to the creation of a competitive electricity market in Ontario. We have been up front and forward about this. They're selling this asset because we need more competition in the market. That was always the game plan.

Tomorrow, if you could get back to me with whom you met with, I'd be happy—

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

1410

HYDRO ONE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier, who I think is right here. It has to do with the issue my leader raised on the sale of assets. Just so you know the name of the person who told us yesterday, it was Mr Lindsay, in charge of the sale of Hydro One, who said that part of the \$1.8 billion of sale of assets would be Hydro One. He indicated it would be between \$700 million and \$750 million.

It's clear to us, looking at the budget, that in order to balance the budget, you required the sale of Hydro One to get revenue of \$700 million to \$750 million. Without it, there would be a deficit of that amount.

My question is this: we've heard all along that the key reason for the sale of Hydro One was to deal with the debt at Hydro. We had assumed that all the revenue from the Hydro One sale was going to that debt. Can you explain how you can use \$700 million of the sale of Hydro One to reduce your deficit?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): The primary reason for dealing with Hydro One in any way, shape or form is to bring private sector discipline to the entity. Surely he wouldn't stand in this House and, in the events of the last few weeks, try to suggest to anybody that there isn't a need to bring some private sector discipline to that entity.

We've also listened to the people of Ontario, as indeed you and others have asked us to do, and we've done exactly that. The people of Ontario do not want to part with the control of that asset and we are not going to do that.

That having been said, we have also indicated that we are going to go into a public-private partnership in one entity or another, with respect to Hydro One, to bring some private sector discipline to it. The member fully understands and knows that the Provincial Auditor, on the accrual basis of accounting, makes you take into account on your books, the year in which you decide to make such a decision, any revenue that comes in on that side.

He also knows that that revenue will go to pay down Hydro debt and that for the accrual system of accounting, if you happen to make any gain, the difference will be attributed to your bottom line in that fiscal year. He knows all that. I don't know why he's asking the question.

Mr Phillips: I think the people of Ontario would like an explanation. You are selling off one of the major assets of the province of Ontario. Unless you sell off that asset, you will have a deficit of \$700 million. You've indicated to us, because the question has been raised in

the House, that the reason you want to sell Hydro One is, frankly, to deal with a mess that you created.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): That we created?

Mr Phillips: There's the Minister of Finance who created this mess. He doesn't even have to follow his own law, to delay the tax cuts, because of the mess. I say again, Premier, you are going to sell off Hydro One and use \$700 million to \$750 million to reduce the deficit, to balance the books. How can you also say that this money is going to pay down the stranded debt at Hydro? Which is it?

Hon Mr Eves: The honourable member knows very well how the accrual system and the cash-modified systems of accounting differ. He knows exactly what the Provincial Auditor's requirements are. To suggest that anybody on this side of the House created the September 11 problem that had the fallout for jurisdictions—including his brethren in Ottawa, I might add—is absolutely ludicrous, to say the best.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): My question is for the Minister of Tourism and Recreation. We've heard a lot about the recent SuperBuild announcements supporting Toronto's cultural renaissance. Funding cultural projects is one part of the sports-culture-tourism partnership. Minister, what progress are we making in funding sports and recreation infrastructure?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): The government is quite pleased and proud of its capital infrastructure program, marquee'd under the SuperBuild sports, culture and tourism initiatives. This is a \$300-million, multi-year commitment, and we're very pleased to report to the House that to date we've received and assessed about 469 applications. Of those, 265 projects have been approved by the SuperBuild committee. We have forwarded those to the federal government.

In the last three months, we've approved investments in 219 community centres and recreational and tourism facilities across Ontario. Just a couple of examples are \$5.6 million to rehab five recreation centres in Mississauga and \$3.7 million to replace the Sault Ste Marie Memorial Gardens.

In fact, we have about 95 of these applications still sitting at the federal government level, waiting for their approval. We're very proud of our relationship with the federal government, but we're hoping we'll hear the results of the 95 applications that are pending.

Mr Miller: It is heartening that all levels of government are working together in recognizing the importance of investing in our communities.

Minister, I have an application from the Shawanaga First Nation in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka. The project's intention is to refurbish and retrofit the local recreation centre, including providing accessibility for persons with disabilities. What is the government's commitment to this project?

Hon Mr Jackson: Regarding the First Nation application the member opposite is asking about, the province has committed \$47,000 to this matching-funds program. We have heard back from the federal government that they have rejected the application. They have rejected five First Nations projects including Lac La Croix First Nation in Kenora, Anishinaabeg in Kenora, Shawanaga in Parry Sound-Muskoka and Billings and Cobourne Island in Algoma-Manitoulin. These were occupational health and safety applications under the government's program, and unfortunately I have correspondence from the federal government that they are rejecting these applications.

I do want to let all members of the opposition know that tonight at 6 o'clock I will be providing a full briefing for all members of the Liberal and NDP caucuses on each and every one of their individual applications. I encourage them to attend this briefing session so that they have a status report on all their applications.

This is a very good program that reaches all communities in our province.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. I want to ask about your part of yesterday's budget, because your part of yesterday's budget fails our kids. You know, by looking at that budget, that it's \$150 million less than you advertise when it comes to your second set of books. But more important, the teachers and parents are telling us it is far less than they need. School boards would say it's less than half of what they need not to cut important services.

Minister, Cath Done, in your own home district of Waterloo, says she finds horrifying what special-needs kids have to face. They were counting on you.

Our leader and I put together a plan and put it forward to you ahead of the budget. Despite the failure of yesterday, it's never too late to do the right thing. You can provide for these kids, you can have a moratorium on school closings—good schools that need to stay open—and you can help kids who need to catch up with the curriculum. Will you stand up today and tell us what you're really prepared to do on behalf of the kids you helped to let down yesterday?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): In response to the question, I would just remind the member opposite of the tremendous and very significant investment we have made in education in the last two months. In response to the requests of people in this province, we have not only now increased and announced about 557 million new dollars for education, but we have also responded to the requests to review the funding formula.

We have Dr Rozanski, who will be embarking on consultations, supported by an advisory council and an expert panel. His recommendations will allow us to review the funding formula in order to ensure that we are

meeting the needs of students. No government has ever, in such a short period of time, done more for the education of children in this province.

1420

Mr Kennedy: It won't surprise you, Minister, to know there are people who disagree with you: people like Joe King, a parent at Cedarbrae Public School in Waterloo who has a child who can't wait for you to sort through some of your funny numbers and some of the rhetoric you're serving up today; or Sharon Blomfield, a teacher who is struggling, hoping there will be something coming forward from your government to help the special-needs kids she's sacrificing for.

You had a chance to do more, to cancel the tax credit for private schools—\$70 million could have been available. In each of the different books you've put forward, there was more money for kids the year before than there is this year.

On behalf of Mr King, Ms Blomfield, Ms Done and their children, I want to ask you: will you agree, as you might have at one time as chair of the Waterloo board, for these kids in that very same district who are disappointed today—who have to be, because there is nothing that will help their situation. Some 63 educational assistants stand to be laid off in the Waterloo district alone. Minister, will you stand up today on their behalf and say you will cancel the private school tax credit and put that \$70 million—

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

Hon Mrs Witmer: It's truly unbelievable, when there is an investment by a government of \$557 million in education, that someone would stand up—only a Liberal would speak as you are speaking. It's unbelievable.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Take your seat. The member for Parkdale-High Park, come to order, please. The minister waited patiently while you asked the question. She didn't interrupt you.

Interjection.

The Speaker: To the member for Parkdale-High Park, who isn't even listening now, the minister waited patiently while you put the question; you even went over the minute. It's only fair that you now let her answer the question. Sorry, Minister.

Hon Mrs Witmer: We are providing \$14.2 billion to the educational system in this province. We have responded to the issues that have been brought to our attention. We are reviewing the funding formula. We have provided an increase of 2.9% this year, despite the fact that enrolment growth is only 0.4% and the economy has grown only 1%. A 2.9% increase in funding is very significant.

BRUCE PENINSULA

Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound): My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. On the weekend, the minister was in Grey county

and celebrated our 150th anniversary with us. Unfortunately, he met with a reporter, and in our local paper the minister mentioned there would be no designation for the Bruce Peninsula for northern development. He also mentioned this was nonsense. I would like the minister to explain today to the people in the Bruce Peninsula, from Wiarton to Tobermory, why he would utter these things in the paper and say there would be no designation for the Bruce Peninsula.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): I want to thank the honourable member for his question and for giving me an opportunity to apologize to him and to the people of the Bruce Peninsula, from Wiarton to Tobermory. I of all people should have known better than to say what I said, given that I live up in that part of the world too. Clearly I didn't even know until yesterday, and I can assure you I now know very well, that Mr Murdoch introduced a bill two years ago, because he feels so strongly about this on behalf of his constituents, to include that part of Ontario in the boundaries of northern Ontario.

I will tell the honourable member, though, that the boundaries include only district municipalities. The district of Parry Sound and the municipality of Muskoka were the last ones added to the boundary of northern Ontario. That has been what the province has used to guide it in its decision-making on where these boundaries should be. Counties and regular municipalities are not included in northern Ontario, but district municipalities are. That's been the reasoning to date, but there's no reason the honourable member shouldn't continue to try to change that reasoning.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Say you accept his apology. Say, "I accept his apology."

Mr Murdoch: That was sort of an answer. I appreciate it and I accept the apology from the minister. I'm glad he mentioned the Muskokas; I was maybe going to say something about that, but it was in there and they have been included. They are actually a little more southern than the Bruce Peninsula so I would like him to take another look at this some time. I'm certain he will work with me on that and with the people on the Bruce Peninsula.

Mr Minister, I'm looking for your support, and I hope you can tell us in the House today that you will certainly work with me on this problem.

Hon Mr Wilson: Listen, I'll say to the honourable member, if there was a crow flying by I'd eat it. But the fact of the matter is I apologize to him again and will definitely work with him.

I just want to remind him though that if we were to include those parts of the province that aren't districts, we'd also be taking in places like the city of Ottawa, Cornwall, Perth, Brockville, Midland and Orillia. I'm not sure how much fun he would really be left with for the true north. But I will work with him. He's like a dog with a bone, and if I don't work with him I can't go back home, frankly.

PRIVATE CLINICS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Premier. Premier, your budget yesterday opens the door to even more for-profit delivery of health care and New Democrats believe this will come at the expense of patient care. That is because health care dollars which should go fully and completely into patient care end up being diverted into profits for the providers. Unlike Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals, New Democrats do not support private, for-profit clinics offering MRI or CAT scan services.

Premier, will you stop going down the road of for-profit health care and will you commit to funding health services where every dollar does go into patient care?

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I'm sure the honourable member is aware that about a third of health care dollars being spent today are at for-profit entities that are providing vital and necessary services to the people across this country, but we do it through the universally accessible health care system in the country and the province. We will continue to look for ways to make health care more accessible for everybody regardless of their ability to pay, and if that includes private clinics, it includes private clinics.

Ms Martel: Premier, you know full well that as a result of the budget yesterday your government will now be looking at for-profit clinics to deliver both MRI and CAT scan services. New Democrats are convinced that the opening of those for-profit clinics will come at the expense of patient care. We believe that because we know that when health care dollars go into the public sector they are used directly for patient care. When public health care dollars go into for-profit clinics, some of that money goes into profit, not fully into patient care.

I ask you again, Premier, in light of the budget announcements yesterday, will you stop going down the road to even more for-profit delivery of health care and will you commit to using public health dollars for public services, where every cent does go into patient care?

Hon Mr Eves: First of all, as the honourable member well knows, we made a very significant commitment to health care yesterday by an increase of \$1.7 billion more being spent on health care in this province this year than was spent last year. That's up considerably from the \$17.6 billion being spent when we assumed office in the 1995-96 fiscal year. She also knows that will lead to improved services for all Ontarians.

You told us the same thing when we talked about kidney dialysis and treatment. Now we have private clinics providing kidney dialysis to 23 more communities than we did before. If we can do the same thing for MRIs or any other diagnostic or treatment procedure, more power to us because more Ontarians will be helped.

GOVERNMENT
ACCOUNTING PRACTICES

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): To the Premier: in 1995, Premier, you quite loudly said—and you will remember this statement—you were putting an end to the two sets of books in the province of Ontario. You will know that yesterday your government tabled two sets of books again. Seven years later we still have dramatically different numbers. As a matter of fact, the expenditure estimates here, which are the official documents that, according to the government, give approval to the ministries to spend, have in some cases a \$400-million difference for the Ministry of Health and a \$600-million difference for Management Board.

My question, Premier, is this: you promised in 1995 to get rid of the two sets of books. Here we are now seven years later; we still have two sets of books. Why did you break your promise that you made in 1995?

1430

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): I refer the question to the Minister of Finance. She'll be happy to answer it.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): As the member well knows, we made that commitment, we are indeed moving to meet that commitment. Yesterday's budget announced that we will be doing that at the end of this fiscal year. He may well think it's something where you can snap your fingers and this occurs. It wasn't something they were concerned about when they were in power. Two sets of books? They were quite happy to have them. This government is delivering on the commitment we made.

Mr Phillips: It wasn't I who made this promise; it was Ernie Eves. It wasn't when he became Premier; it was in 1995. He said, "We're going to get rid of this terrible two sets of books." So don't get mad at me; get mad at him. He didn't do it.

Minister, if you look at the expenditures—this is the official document that gives legal authority to spend: Management Board, a \$600-million difference between these two sets of books, both tabled yesterday; and the Ministry of Health, a \$400-million difference. We have these two entirely different sets of books. It was Mr Eves, then Minister of Finance in 1995, who made this promise. It wasn't to be done overnight. It's seven years later; it's still not done.

Why would anybody in Ontario have confidence when you're asking us to vote on two different sets of books: approve this set of books for spending and this set for the budget? Why would the people of Ontario have any confidence in that, Minister?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The people of Ontario have been looking at two sets of books for years and years and years, and you didn't think it was important. Your government didn't do anything about it; the NDP didn't do anything about it. We are—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. Sorry, Minister, take your seat. Come to order. Sorry, Minister. Continue.

Hon Mrs Ecker: It's OK. I answered.

BARBECUE SAFETY

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): My question is for the Minister of Consumer and Business Services. Minister, as weekend weather is improving across our province, more and more Ontarians will be inviting friends over for summer barbecues. In my riding and ridings all across the province, the backyard barbecue is becoming a tradition right across our province. This is also the time of the year when barbecue-related injuries are most likely to happen.

I'm sure you will agree that it is important that we do everything we can to be protected from the obvious dangers that are presented by propane tanks. I know that your ministry has a number of safety programs in place. Minister, could you explain to the members here today some of those programs and what they actually are?

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I appreciate the question from the member. Simcoe North is often referred to as the barbecue capital of Ontario. Actually, by coincidence, I was just recently joined by Norm Miller, the member for Parry Sound-Muskoka, Joe Tascona from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and Bob Wood from London West to highlight a new program called the Start Smart safety program for barbecues as we enter the summer season, done by the Technical Standards and Safety Authority out of the ministry. As part of that fundraiser as well we raised about \$300 for Federated Health, an important charity supporting health causes in the province.

The program encourages us to check for leaks in our gas lines, cleaning spiders and other insects from our burners, and to cover a lot of important ground. No doubt, by placing safety at the front of the grill this program is keeping Ontarians safe and helping us avoid getting in hot water around the barbecue this summer.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Minister, that sounds like a great program and I'm interested that the members opposite wouldn't want to know more about barbecuing accidents. However, sometimes accidents actually do occur and people may not know what steps to take.

Interjections.

Mr Dunlop: Isn't it interesting to hear about the chirping over there from the member from wherever he's from? Every year I read about propane lines and explosions that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Order. The member take his seat. Sorry to interrupt him. Come to order. The member's asking his question.

I apologize. The member for Simcoe North.

Mr Dunlop: It's an excellent question, and I'm really concerned that they don't want to hear the question.

If someone finds himself in a dangerous situation, then the right information and tools can mean the difference between slight inconvenience and serious injury or even death.

What can my constituents and people right across this province do to keep themselves out of dangerous situations while having a friendly family barbecue in our lovely summers here in the province of this beautiful Ontario?

Hon Mr Hudak: It's an excellent question by the member, especially as we head into the summer season.

I think the most important piece of advice is to try to keep a cool head in a hot situation; it will produce the best results. Obviously if there's a serious incident such as a propane tank explosion or any kind of injury from that, then they should contact their local emergency services immediately. For minor accidents, it's very good to keep a fire extinguisher close by in case a rogue hamburger or overzealous sirloin gets out of control, I'd say to the member. But prevention is obviously the best defence against getting trouble around the barbecue.

We have a Start Smart barbecue season brochure we're giving out. They can reach the TSSA directly to ask for this safety tips magazine at 1-800-682-TSSA or at their Web site, www.public-safety-first.com.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, you raised the spectre of September 11 yesterday. Of course September 11 was not primarily an economic moment; it was a violent breach of public security and safety, rendering untold victims of crime. And yet, somehow in the name of September 11, not only did you shelve some economic promises but you've also put on the shelf victims of crime and public safety.

How can you justify, in the wake of September 11, the massive cuts announced yesterday to the operating budgets of the Ministry of the Attorney General and Ministry of Public Safety and Security?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): The tragic events of September 11, the aftermath of those events, hit not only the Ontario economy and our bottom line but economies around the world. We saw significant drops in our revenues, we saw significant drops in our growth, and that put us in the position we talked about with the difficult choices we made to make sure that we were balancing the budget, that we were investing in important priorities like health, like education, like the environment, like making sure we move forward with economic growth and prosperity moves such as further tax cuts. That's what we've moved forward with in this budget. Those are the priorities that we have. We will continue to make the choices that Ontarians want us to make.

Mr Bryant: Look, you're the government that has talked tough about crime for the last seven years. You're the government that merged the Ministry of the Solicitor General with Corrections, put it in Public Safety and

Security, put in Sheriff Bob Runciman and tried to look tough on crime. You're the government that had reams of photo ops with victims of crime. You're the government that cut the justice ministries by nearly \$90 million, and you, Madam Minister, must be held to account.

The Minister of Public Safety and Security couldn't figure out what a sleeper cell was, and now Ontarians are losing sleep because you've cut more than \$70 million from his budget. You came clean on promises made and broken on the economic front. Now will you come clean on promises made and broken to victims past, victims present and victims future?

Hon Mrs Ecker: The Minister of Public Safety will answer that.

Hon Robert W. Runciman (Minister of Public Safety and Security): There have been no cuts to our budget. There have been removals with respect to one-time funding. I could go over those. With integrated justice, there were some expenditures related to correctional institutions and some technology expenditures related to justice initiatives.

I don't believe any jurisdiction in this country has responded in a more activist manner in response to the September 11 incidents than this government of the province of Ontario, the Ernie Eves government.

If you take a look at the record of the Harris and Eves government over the past seven years, no government in this country, and certainly not the federal Liberal government, has dealt in such a positive way in terms of addressing concerns of Canadians and Ontarians with respect to justice issues. We don't only talk tough, we deliver. And we have delivered.

1440

ALTERNATIVE FUEL

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. I was very pleased yesterday, when listening to the budget speech, that this government has focused on new solutions in developments in the biotech sector. If I recall correctly, the section in the budget referred to biodiesel. Certainly this will help the agricultural sector in my riding of Durham. As a member of the alternative fuels committee—and we just filed a report a week or two ago—I commend you on your responsiveness to an important policy area.

Minister, perhaps for the members listening today you can explain how this important decision will affect the innovative practices in the agricultural communities in my riding.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): Let me say that yesterday was truly a good day for agriculture, for the environment and for innovation in Ontario. What happened yesterday was that we gave a tax break to the biodiesel industry. This industry is innovative and environmentally friendly. It's their proposal to use renewable fuels from agricultural products to create biodiesel in the province. Up until this point we have just been purchasing biodiesel from other countries.

What is happening now is that we're going to create our own industry in Ontario. We're going to be able to use excess supply that is out there from soya and dead animal renderings. We're going to take those products and create biodiesel in the province.

The exciting thing about this is that it's good for the environment, it's good for agriculture and it's good for innovation.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for that, Minister. It's great to see a collaborative effort between you, Minister Flaherty and Minister Ecker, working to have innovative tax policies that address our environment and our economy. It's clearly a win-win situation for the people of Ontario. But, more important, it's an important win for my agricultural community.

These kinds of innovative plans that you've encouraged by this tax policy will have greater implications. I'm familiar with the presentation made by Biox, in the industry. I'm very familiar with the president, Tim Haig, and Kevin Norton, the engineer, who made an excellent presentation to the alternative fuels committee.

Minister, can you tell me the outflow of this important decision that you and Minister Ecker have made?

Hon Mrs Johns: I need to correct the record, because the Ministry of Environment and the Minister of Innovation have also been involved in this.

Let me say that as it stands today, Ontario does not produce any biodiesel. In fact, we import about 300,000 litres a year. As a result of this exemption that we received yesterday, we will be able to create that product right here in Ontario.

I was pleased to see the people from Biox here yesterday. They stated that Biox will proceed with establishing a biodiesel fabricating plant in Ontario to export this technology to the world. It's a wonderful opportunity, and everyone came together to ensure that this happened.

I, like you, want to thank the alternative fuels committee and everyone else involved. This truly will help agriculture and the biotechnology industry continue to be a leader in Ontario and a leader across Canada and the world. I know that Ontario will be, as it truly should be, the place where you want to live, work and raise your family.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT FUND

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): My question is to the Minister of Education. Yesterday you introduced the so-called student achievement fund, where you said you would give \$5,000 for every elementary school which meets and/or exceeds the student literacy goal, ie, which passes the standardized tests.

Here's the problem—and, by the way, I find this particularly offensive—if I live in a neighbourhood where the parents bring the monetary advantages and/or academic privileges, the kids are likely to do well and therefore that principal is going to get \$5,000 to throw around. If I live in a neighbourhood where parents and schools are confronted by issues of poverty and learning

problems, that means those kids are likely not to do well in that literacy test, and that means they're not going to get the \$5,000. How can you claim that your Student Achievement Fund is doing anything other than hurting kids who need the help most?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): We'll have in the student achievement fund about \$20 million. I just want the member opposite to know that we will be working in co-operation with our education partners on the design of the program, in order to ensure that there is effective implementation at the school level. I will be certainly providing further details at a later date.

Mr Marchese: I would like the minister to know that she is dividing our kids into winners and losers. I would like the minister to know that yesterday she announced she will give \$5,000 to every elementary school principal whose school meets or exceeds the student literacy goals in grade 3—that's what she announced yesterday. She's dividing our schools and our students into winners and losers. It's based on the assumption that all schools face the same problems, that what works in a school where a majority of the parents are university educated and have lots of money also works in a school where many of the parents may be refugees, recent immigrants, may be coming from poor homes—that they work in the same way.

Minister, why would you wilfully disadvantage those who need your help the most?

Hon Mrs Witmer: During the past few years parents have indicated to us that they want us to focus on the early reading skills of the students in our schools. We have been moving forward with an early reading strategy, we have invested a considerable amount of money, and this is additional money in order to encourage, support and work with the schools in helping them to meet or exceed the goals that have been set.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Some of the bravest, most wonderful people I've met in my term in office have been Ontarians with disabilities. However, they are struggling financially in this province. Last week you and most of your colleagues voted against a bill that would have given them a very slight increase to reflect the cost of living—not retroactive, barely enough to get by.

Obviously you believe that the maximum of \$930 a month is adequate. I challenge you to live the words that you're stating. I challenge you to live for one month on \$930—not a penny more, no money borrowed from anyone. Minister, will you accept that challenge if you truly believe that they are making adequate compensation?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I'm interested to receive this

question from my colleague from across the way. Our government has taken action to help individuals with disabilities in the province of Ontario that neither the NDP nor the Liberal government did. When we reformed the welfare system and created Ontario Works, an opportunity for a hand up, not a handout, we allowed people who had disabilities to enter into a specialized program. For the first time we listened to the people who had disabilities in the province of Ontario and gave them a very special program with a number of distinctions apart from welfare. We are the government that introduced the Ontario Disabilities Act, something that neither the Liberals nor the NDP government had the courage to do. If there's any government that understands people with disabilities and works hard to better their lives, it is this government.

1450

Mr Parsons: A deaf, blind individual in a wheelchair needs our help and is entitled to our help for the sake of humanity. You have that responsibility as a leader. What I heard clearly is that you will not accept the challenge, because you know—you really know—that you could not live on \$930 a month.

Minister, show some leadership. These are full Ontario citizens who are unable to buy groceries or pay rent. While your cabinet costs have increased by 117% over the life of this government since 1995, you have given people with disabilities zero, zip, nothing. Ignore the rhetoric. For once, do the right thing. Will you commit to an increase for people on ODSP that will allow them to meet their basic needs—their simple, basic needs?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I find this an interesting line of questioning from my colleague across the way, whose own caucus colleague asked a similar question in this Legislature last week, while at the same time asking for an increase in her personal apartment allowance, speaking in one voice here and in quite another somewhere else.

On this side of the House, we care deeply about making sure we can take action to help people with disabilities in this province. I take that commitment very seriously, and we have undertaken many initiatives.

You asked me if there's more to do. I say yes, there is more to do, and we will indeed do that.

Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs): On a point of order, Speaker: In the spirit of fairness to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, I happened to watch him on Focus Ontario on Saturday. He indicated that he wished we would defer some tax cuts and, if we did, he would eat a small hat. So we have done him the favour of providing that hat.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In fairness, I thought they'd stick with the law. I didn't realize they'd break the law, so I'm going to eat a part of this. I just thought they were going to stick with the law.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): As you know, it is also breaking the rules of the House to bring in props. I'm tempted to ask the Sergeant-at-Arms to bring the

prop down to the Speaker's office and bring his sword and maybe a fork.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: You have to give them credit. When else have you seen the news media here in such great numbers at the end of question period? I hope this is a precedent.

The Speaker: They probably think they're going to get some cake.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Out of the question the member from Scarborough-Agincourt raised in regard to the two sets of books, I sit on the estimates committee, and what I'm to deal with, I understand—do I have to deal with the fact that I have to examine the estimates under these numbers, or should I deal with the numbers coming from the budget? I need your guidance on that.

The Speaker: I'm afraid I can't give you that guidance. It's not a point of order.

PETITIONS

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is shutting down the heart surgery unit at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas the closure of this program will restrict the accessibility to life-saving surgery for children in eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas every year CHEO treats 140 cases of seriously ill children close to home; and

“Whereas centralizing children's heart surgery in Toronto would force patients and their families to travel between 400 to 600 kilometres away from home at a traumatic time; and

“Whereas there is a waiting list for cardiac surgery in Toronto but not at CHEO; and

“Whereas the people of eastern Ontario demand accessible, quality health care for their children;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately override the government's decision to close this life-saving program and ensure that top-quality accessible health care remains available to every child in eastern Ontario.”

I'll be happy to add my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ernie Eves 2002 budget proves he'll say anything to hold on to power and is trying to run away from his own record;

“Whereas Ernie Eves’s budget fails to deliver what Ontario families need, like a moratorium on school closures and a real cap on class sizes in the early years;

“Whereas the private school tax voucher should be cancelled, not delayed, and that money put into public classrooms;

“Whereas the \$2.2-billion corporate tax giveaway should be cancelled, not delayed;

“Whereas Ontario families are looking for real, positive change and only Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party represent that change;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to tell Ernie Eves to put Ontario working families first and cancel the corporate tax” giveaway “and cancel the private school tax voucher.”

I sign my name on this and give it to Jordan.

COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I have a petition here in regard to the very important issue of hydro deregulation. It’s addressed to the Parliament of Ontario and it reads as follows:

“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 generating plants to our homes, and further 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 residential users are waiving their rights to future rebates in exchange for fixed rates over a specified period of time.”

Since I agree, I sign my name to it.

OPTOMETRISTS

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislature.

“Whereas the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario will be considering a private member’s bill that aims to amend the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases; and

“Whereas optometrists are highly trained and equipped with the knowledge and specialized instrumentation needed to effectively diagnose and treat certain eye problems; and

“Whereas extending the authority to prescribe TPAs to optometrists will help relieve the demands on ophthalmologists and physicians who currently have the exclusive domain for prescribing TPAs to optometry patients; and

“Whereas the bill introduced by New Democrat Peter Kormos (MPP—Niagara Centre) will ensure that patients receive prompt, timely, one-stop care where appropriate;

“Therefore I do support the bill proposing an amendment to the Optometry Act to give optometrists the authority to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents for the treatment of certain eye diseases and I urge the government of Ontario to ensure speedy passage of the bill.”

I have affixed my signature as well.

HIGHWAY 522

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

“We, the taxpayers, members of the communities and the people who have to travel on Highway 522 in the district of Parry Sound, want to bring to your attention the poor condition of Highway 522.”

I support this petition and sign my name.

1500

AIR QUALITY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Eves government’s wholly owned Nanticoke generating station is North America’s largest dirty coal-fired electricity producing plant and Ontario’s largest producer of the chemicals and acid gases which contribute to deadly smog and acid rain; and

“Whereas the Nanticoke plant, which has more than doubled its dangerous emissions under the Conservative government, is now the worst air polluter in all of Canada, spewing out over five million kilograms of toxic chemicals each year, including many cancer-causing chemicals and mercury, a potent and dangerous neurotoxin; and

“Whereas at least 13 Ontario municipalities and seven northeastern US states have expressed concerns that Ontario Power Generation’s proposed cleanup plan for Nanticoke is inadequate in protecting the air quality and health and safety of their residents; and

“Whereas the Ontario Medical Association has stated that 1,900 Ontarians die prematurely each year and we pay \$1 billion annually in health-related costs as a result of air pollution; and

“Whereas, because the Conservative government has now lifted the moratorium on the sale of coal-fired power plants and has set a date for deregulation of electricity, the operator of the Nanticoke plant will likely stoke up production to maximize profits, which will only worsen the air quality in cities like Toronto, Hamilton, Welland, Niagara Falls and St Catharines;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ernie Eves government immediately order that the Nanticoke generating

station be converted from dirty coal to cleaner-burning natural gas.”

I affix my signature. I am in complete agreement with this petition.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government is shutting down the heart surgery unit at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas the closure of this program will restrict the accessibility to life-saving surgery for children in eastern Ontario; and

“Whereas every year CHEO treats 140 cases of seriously ill children close to home; and

“Whereas centralizing children's heart surgery in Toronto will force patients and their families to travel 400 to 600 kilometres away from home at a traumatic time; and

“Whereas there is a waiting list for cardiac surgery in Toronto but not at CHEO; and

“Whereas the people of eastern Ontario demand accessible, quality health care for their children;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately override the government's decision to close this life-saving program and to ensure that top-quality, accessible health care remains available to every child in eastern Ontario.”

I do sign this petition also.

ONTARIO BUDGET

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

“Whereas the Ernie Eves 2002 budget proves he'll say anything to hold on to power and is trying to run away from his own record;

“Whereas Ernie Eves's budget fails to deliver what Ontario families need, like a moratorium on school closures and a real cap on class sizes in the early years;

“Whereas the private school tax voucher should be cancelled, not delayed, and that money put into public classrooms;

“Whereas the \$2.2 billion corporate tax giveaway should be cancelled, not delayed;

“Whereas Ontario families are looking for real, positive change and only Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party represent that change;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to tell Ernie Eves to put Ontario working families first, cancel the corporate tax cut and cancel the private school voucher.”

I will affix my signature to this petition.

ALTERNATIVE FUEL

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario government has a tradition of bold environmental initiatives; and

“Whereas the select committee on alternative fuels was given a mandate to investigate and recommend ways of reducing Ontario's dependence on fossil fuels while expanding access to environmentally friendly sustainable energy; and

“Whereas the select committee on alternative fuels has recommended the following:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to implement all of the 141 recommendations of the select committee on alternative fuels made in their final report tabled June 5, 2002. Full details of these recommendations are attached and form part of this petition.

“(1) The Ontario government shall develop an alternative fuel and energy strategy to establish a framework for a coordinated approach to: (a) increase the use of renewable energy and fuel sources in both the immediate and long term; (b) reduce Ontario's reliance upon carbon-based fuel sources; (c) reduce adverse impacts upon the environment; (d) ensure that the relative cost of different energy sources, fiscal implications, energy security, impact on job creation, export development and the provincial economy are all considered; (e) support innovative research and development in the alternative energy fields that yield long-term economic, environmental and social benefits; (f) and ensure that energy conservation and efficiency are improved.

“(2) The Ministry of Environment and Energy shall be the lead in formulating an Ontario alternative fuel/energy strategy. Other pertinent ministries and agencies shall be consulted including: enterprise, opportunity and innovation; agriculture and food; training, colleges, and universities; education; finance; Management Board; municipal affairs and housing; natural resources; native affairs; northern development and mines; transportation; Ontario Power Generation; Hydro One and/or successor companies; Ontario Energy Board; Independent Electricity Market Operator; and Natural Resources Canada. A coordinating branch shall be established within the Ministry of Environment and Energy to deal with alternative fuel/energy policy and programs. An independent technical advisory group reporting to the Minister of Environment and Energy shall be appointed to advise on alternative fuel/energy technologies and levels of assistance to individual technologies.

“(3) An Ontario Energy Research Institute shall be established by March 1, 2003, to advance the manufacture and use of alternative fuel and energy products in Ontario. The institute should have responsibility for oversight of all alternative fuel/energy projects and be a schedule 3 agency reporting to the Ministry of Environment and Energy. It should have an annual budget of \$40 million and a guaranteed minimum 10-year lifespan. Its

functions should include: policy development and implementation, including product specifications and standards in conjunction with the Technical Standards and Safety Authority; development of partnerships with the private sector and post-secondary institutions; testing of technologies at a demonstration site, with a \$10-million funding commitment over three years; development of an educational program, including a comprehensive Web site and alternative fuels/energy component within the elementary and secondary—”

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would the member take his seat, please? The petition, as you know, when it gets stamped—the front page is the petition you read. When I see you flipping pages I know you’ve gone past the petition that was stamped by the House. When you’re flipping page after page, the petition is too long. I’ll give you a little bit of time to wrap it up.

It is a point of order, but that is the rule, and I’ve stated very clearly: you’ve got the front page, and when you’re flipping pages you’re reaching for the addendum. I’ll give you a little bit of leeway, but rest assured that the petition can’t go on that long.

Mr Gilchrist: On the point of order, Mr Speaker: I did in fact clarify with the table the format of this report. The problem is that the wording of the standing orders would seem to preclude longer preambles than perhaps are typically found, although many times we’ve seen petitions go on ad nauseam, in particular on the other side.

The problem with the construction is that we seem to be challenged between the need to present a point and the fact that the rules say there must be a signature on the front page. So any time you’re advancing a more complex position than might be found in one, two or three sentences, you cannot in fact present the body of the petition, and yet people are supposedly signing on to something.

Normally, I would think the construction would be that it’s the last page you would have somebody to sign after they’ve read an entire document. If you sign a contract or do something at your bank, of course you read the whole thing through and you sign it at the end.

The table advised me that under the rules right now it would seem a contradiction that you ask people to sign in advance for what then has to follow. I would ask you to contrast a ruling of your predecessor, Mr Stockwell, when I raised a similar point back in 1997. At the time, there had been considerable abuse of the standing orders. I would think the rule that suggests a brief comment, which has not changed since then, has never had any kind of parameters put around the definition of “brief.”

The petition I am presenting is to endorse 141 different recommendations that form a comprehensive report. To ask somebody to sign off on one or two or three is not appropriate if they want to endorse all 141. I would ask, Mr Speaker, how you could reconcile the need to sign up front with the fact that people have to sign something more comprehensive.

I would be more than happy to reconstruct the petition in such a way that the signature falls at the end. However, the table tells me we have this problem with construction, and I would seek direction from you, Mr Speaker, on how we could resolve this apparent contradiction in the standing orders.

The Speaker: I thank the member very much. The reason the text is on there is so that people actually sign what they are reading. If you had it on one page where they’re signing on other pages, you could have a situation where people could slip things through. That’s why it’s done. We have the standing orders that say it has to be on the same page. That’s what we’re going to live by. If we ever want to change them, we can do that.

Having said that, the one thing where we don’t get political, other than the goings-on, is petitions. The members are given some leeway. If we start getting into situations like that, where members on all sides do it, we potentially could have one petition for one member, and I don’t think we would want that, because that is not what the intention was. I know that some members go a little bit longer and I give some leeway, but we’re not going to allow them to do it. The rules are very clear and we’re going to stick with them.

It has to be signatures on that page, and you’re not going to be able to read addendums. I will say this very clearly: now that we are aware, we are going to watch for people flipping pages. If you do that, then you are out of order and we’re not going to let you continue.

1510

SERVICES DE SANTÉ POUR ENFANTS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): J’ai une pétition avec 134 noms que m’a fait parvenir Fleurette Lalande de Vankleek Hill, une personne qui est concernée par le peu d’attention apportée à la santé de nos enfants de l’est ontarien.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que le gouvernement de l’Ontario est en train de fermer le service de chirurgie cardiaque à l’intention des enfants fonctionnant actuellement à l’hôpital pour les enfants de l’est de l’Ontario;

« Attendu que la fermeture de ce programme restreindrait l’accès des enfants de l’est de l’Ontario à cette chirurgie, qui sauve des vies;

« Attendu que CHEO traite chaque année 140 enfants gravement malades à proximité de leur foyer;

« Attendu que la centralisation des services de chirurgie cardiaque pour les enfants à Toronto obligerait les patients et leurs parents à s’éloigner de 400 kilomètres à 600 kilomètres de leur foyer à un moment difficile;

« Attendu qu’il y a une liste d’attente pour les chirurgies cardiaques à Toronto mais pas » pour l’hôpital pour les enfants de l’est de l’Ontario;

« Attendu qu’une partie du personnel de ce programme de CHEO parle français et que, de ce fait, la population francophone a accès à des conseils médicaux de qualité supérieure en français;

« Attendu que la population de l'est de l'Ontario exige des soins de santé de qualité et accessibles pour ses enfants,

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario d'annuler immédiatement la décision du gouvernement d'abolir ce programme, qui sauve des vies, et de veiller à ce que chaque enfant de l'est de l'Ontario continue d'avoir pleinement accès à des soins de santé de qualité supérieure. »

J'y ajoute ma signature.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This petition deals with the double cohort and it's from the College Student Alliance.

“Whereas by eliminating the fifth year of high school the government of Ontario has created a double cohort of students; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has promised that there will be a space at a university or college for every willing and qualified student; and

“Whereas Ontario's universities and colleges have not received sufficient funding from the government of Ontario to accommodate these double cohort students; and

“Whereas the quality of education at Ontario's universities and colleges has been declining in recent years; and

“Whereas the double cohort students will add an additional strain on an already fragile university and college system;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to: provide full funding for every new student entering Ontario's universities and colleges; provide additional funding to increase quality at Ontario's universities and colleges; provide targeted funding to colleges for skills and innovation; and increase the per student funding to the national average over the next five years.”

I affix my signature to this petition, as I am in full agreement with it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2002 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): I wish to move the following amendment:

I move an amendment to the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on June 17, which I will read as follows:

“That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government” be amended by deleting the words after “that this House” and adding thereto the following: “recognize the fact that Ernie Eves will say

anything to hold on to power, since the budget contradicts everything Ernie Eves has said for the past seven years; does nothing to keep schools open, lower and cap class sizes or support our children with special needs; cynically promises to both keep and sell Hydro One; desperately pledges to both implement and delay corporate tax cuts and miraculously supports and opposes private school tax credits simultaneously. Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government.”

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We will just take one moment if we could, please.

What we are going to do is allow the member to introduce his speech. He will recognize that in his amendment he has referred to the member Ernie Eves. He needs to refer to the member based on his riding or as Premier. He can begin his speech, and we will ask that you work with the table to make some of the changes to that amendment. I would also caution the member that we have said on occasion that you can't say anything regarding another member, and he may want to take a look at the first line in that amendment. Having said that, using a member's personal name is definitely out of order.

We will give you some time, allow you to do your speech, and during that period of time you can move an amendment at any point in time.

The leader of the official opposition.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): It's below you, Dalton.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): No lectures from over there. No lectures from that government.

The Speaker: Order. Minister, come to order, please. The leader of the official opposition has a very important speech to make. There are members who do a lot of things. We just remain cool. The leader of the official opposition has the floor.

Mr McGuinty: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to begin today by expressing my profound sympathy to the members opposite. Going through an identity crisis is not pleasant; those of us who went through an identity crisis in high school can attest to that. And yesterday's budget—let's be perfectly clear—is an identity crisis put down on paper for the whole world to see.

This government knows what it wants to be; it just doesn't have the courage to admit it. It wants to be the same bunch that has spent seven years slashing and burning and laying waste to the institutions that Ontario families rely on. The problem is that Mr Eves knows full well that Ontario voters aren't going to put up with that same bunch any longer.

Yesterday's budget is the government's way of pretending to be something it's not while pretending to be, well, a little bit more like us. The way they see it, they only have to keep up this pretence for a year or so, and then after the election they can take off those uncomfortable disguises and get back to doing what they do best. The people of Ontario are not going to be fooled by this particularly cynical strategy. The working families of Ontario are not going to be fooled.

Before the budget, we set a simple test for this government to pass. It was a way for the Premier to show that he really had changed, that he really does care about Ontario's working families. We challenged the government to cancel any sale of Hydro One either in whole or in part; we urged the government to spend \$300 million on an interim education program to help kids now; and we pressed the government to cancel the \$2-billion corporate tax giveaway and the \$500-million tax credit for private schools. Clearly this government has failed these basic tests.

You have to read the document pretty carefully—this is clearly something this government is not particularly proud of—but the fact is they are counting on nearly a billion dollars from a partial sale of Hydro One. Without that money, this crack fiscal management team across the way will be running a deficit. The last thing this government wants with an election looming is a deficit, so what do they do? Well, they sell something. They sell something big, and they sell something big, fast. They did that in the case of Highway 407, to the continuing regret of both users and Ontario taxpayers, and now they're going to do it with Hydro One. Once again we're going to have a Tory triumph of politics over principle.

1520

There still hasn't been a business case produced to justify selling any part of Hydro One, nor is there a public policy rationale for doing so. But my friends opposite need some cash to fund their coming election promises, and that, in and of itself, is more than sufficient reason from their perspective. Again I say the people of Ontario will not be fooled by this cynical strategy.

Funding for education fell well short of what is needed, meaning that because of the disastrous funding formula, kids will continue to pay the price and schools will continue to close.

On the corporate tax cut and private school tax credit, those aren't going to happen until next year. That's right. They seem to admit that these things are a bad idea. They know how bad it would look to spend a half-billion dollars on private schools when public schools are in crisis. They know the people of Ontario have had it up to here with the idea of \$2 billion for large corporations while health care and education are reeling from seven years of attacks and mismanagement.

We don't need further corporate tax cuts. Ontario's tax rates are perfectly competitive with most US states, and in fact you'll find that very evidence on page 81 of yesterday's budget. The government knows perfectly well that the people of Ontario want other things done with their money; they have other priorities. But are they cancelling these things: the private school tax credit, the corporate tax cut? Are they saying, "You're right, those are bad ideas; we won't do them"? No. They lack the courage, the principles, the conviction and the integrity to do that. They're just putting them off for a while, hoping that people will forget about them until after they're safely re-elected. Well, we won't forget about them, and the people of Ontario will not be fooled.

The next election is going to offer Ontarians a very clear choice, and this government doesn't like that. The choice will be between a Liberal Party that will fight for working families and the Ernie Eves government, which only ever thinks about working families when they're looking for votes. The choice will be between a Liberal Party that has a clear policy on Hydro One—it's not for sale—and the Ernie Eves government, which has changed its policy so many times, it can't remember where it first began. The choice will be between a Liberal Party that understands we must invest in public education and the Ernie Eves government, which would rather give money to private schools. The choice will be between a Liberal Party that knows it is wrong to go ahead with a \$2-billion corporate tax cut and the Ernie Eves government, which also knows that but is determined to do it anyway.

This government knows that, faced with a choice like that, the people of Ontario will show them the door, and that's what is behind yesterday's budget.

Yesterday's budget is all about holding on to power, nothing more and nothing less. It's about paying lip service to decency in the hope that people will somehow think you're decent. It's about saying whatever you think you need to say in order to get elected. What it really is is a complete abandonment, a complete jettisoning of any principle, any conviction, any integrity that might have existed in Ernie Eves at one time when he served as finance minister in the province of Ontario. He has abandoned that because he's come to understand in a painfully clear way that Ontarians are not with him; they're with us. They want us to put health care, education and the protection of our environment first.

It comes down to trust, and Mr Eves has clearly shown that he is not to be trusted. Even his friends on Bay Street feel that way today. For six consecutive budgets our Premier, who was then Finance Minister, made it perfectly clear that cutting taxes was the one issue on which he would never, ever budge. His government even passed a law, the Taxpayer Protection Act, which we supported. But now that he's feeling a little heat, he's prepared to break that law—his own law. A "technical amendment," they're calling it, which will allow them to break their own taxpayer protection law.

You've got to admire the excuse being offered for this, though. The Premier offers that September 11 is to blame for delaying the tax cuts. But if memory serves us all well, and I'm sure that it serves us all well here, this government was using September 11 as an excuse to accelerate corporate tax cuts just a few short months ago. I think that's what they call "trying to have it both ways."

For seven years, in six consecutive budgets, Mr Eves preached the virtues of tax cuts and the Taxpayer Protection Act. Mr Eves told us that tax cuts were always good, even when they compromised health care, education and the protection of our environment. He told us that tax cuts, once promised, were a sacred trust; they had to be delivered and they could never, ever be delayed. Mr Eves staked his fiscal reputation on the Taxpayer Protection

Act. If there was one law passed by this government that Mr Eves and the Tories would never tamper with, let alone break, it was the Taxpayer Protection Act.

These matters—tax cuts and the Taxpayer Protection Act—were, it was clearly understood by all, matters of fundamental principle, matters of firm conviction and matters that went to the very core of what Ernie Eves stood for. After all, the tax cuts were in his budgets, and he himself introduced the Taxpayer Protection Act. But as they say, that was then and this is now. It turns out that Mr Eves's principles and his convictions, the very core of his political soul, have all too easily given way to political convenience.

I have rarely paid a tribute to Mr Eves's predecessor. I have on numerous occasions, and the Hansard is chock full of this, criticized Mr Harris for the direction he was taking the province in. But one thing I will say for Mr Eves's predecessor: at least we knew what he stood for and where he was coming from. He spoke from conviction and out of a sense of principle. We didn't agree with his direction, but at least he had one. This Premier and this government and this cabinet and these members are prepared to say absolutely anything in order to hang on to power.

The people of Ontario, I say again, will not be fooled. They will see through this pretence. They'll see past the truckloads of their own money being thrown at them during an election campaign, and they'll say, "You know what? It's time for a real alternative." Because while my friends opposite are suddenly preaching the virtues of public health care and education, we have been fighting for these things for years, and we've been fighting against the cuts brought in by this government in budgets delivered by the man who is now Premier.

We are called upon to believe that for some seven years, Mr Eves was a conscientious objector within his own government. He simply never had the opportunity as Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance to approach the media and tell them that secretly he has been a passionate champion of public education, medicare and a champion of safe and clean drinking water. Apparently he never had the opportunity during the course of the past seven years to speak out on those issues.

1530

I am very proud to say that we on this side of the House stand on principle. We stand on matters of fundamental conviction. We stand for something, and we have been unwavering in our commitments to health care, education and the environment. Let's take a moment—I'm sure my friends opposite would be interested in learning more about this—to take a look at the differences.

In health care, my friends clearly are very proud of the money they're spending, particularly for hospitals. There's no question that hospitals need the money, there's no question that hospitals are reeling from this government's mismanagement and there's no question that they're going to be happy to get at least some additional funds. But let's keep this in perspective. This

government is only spending money to repair the damage it has done after seven long years of Ernie Eves's cuts. This budget has now just brought hospital funding levels back up to what they were in 1995. That may be good news in the back-to-the-future world Mr Eves lives in, but in the real world it's just back to square one, except with fewer doctors, fewer nurses and fewer hospital beds.

What's more, this budget lacks any vision for improving and reinvigorating health care for the next century. Ontarians are now on to political leadership when it comes to the matter of health care. They understand that the solution will lie not only in introducing more money into the system but in changing the very system itself. All this government has done, because it lacks any vision with respect to health care, as it does with respect to anything else, is throw some money at health care. Where are the plans for wellness promotion? Where are the ideas for illness prevention? Where is primary care reform? After this government's relentless pursuit of primary care reform in Ontario, we now understand that only 2% of family doctors have actually signed on to this government's plan.

We learned today—in fact, I just received this information when I was scrummed a few moments ago outside these doors—that this government has now abandoned its plans to achieve an 80% signup rate by 2003. They've abandoned that. They've given up any pretense of trying to achieve that. There is no new and expanded role for nurse practitioners and there is no expansion of community-based health care. In short, there is no vision. It's just some money the Tories probably will grab back a year after the next election, given half the chance.

My party appreciates the importance of our hospitals, but we also understand that there's more to health care than hospitals alone. In fact, the best way we can ease the crisis in our hospitals is to improve primary care. I can tell you that we on this side are committed to delivering primary care reform, not just making speeches about it. We're going to set up family health centres in communities across this province. The ministers opposite have expressed some passing interest in another one of our plans, and I beg to inform them that some several months ago now we put out our plan for family health centres. I beg their indulgence and I will tell them a bit more about that right now, since they missed the original announcement. We're going to shore up our hospitals, but we will also improve primary care, taking pressure off emergency rooms and improving care for our families. We're going to do these things because, and this is very important, we really believe in public health care, as opposed to Ernie Eves, who believes in cutting that care to make room for corporate tax cuts.

In education, we have the usual mix in the budget of too little, too late, and misplaced priorities. One example: the government's student achievement fund has the laudable goal—I will give them that—of encouraging schools to improve student results. But it only promises to reward schools that are already doing well, while doing nothing to help schools that are struggling because

of this government's relentless attack on public education.

I want you to contrast that with our system of lighthouse schools, which gives money to successful schools so they can use that money precisely to share the secrets of their success with other schools. The idea is to make success contagious so every school and every child succeeds, so that we succeed as families, as communities and as a province.

I know where the Tories got their ideas. George Bush has been talking about that for quite some time. I think it's an important opportunity for Ontarians to gain a good understanding of the difference between their approach and our approach. They will reward successful schools. We will provide money to successful schools on condition that they use that money to share their best practices so we could lift up all schools inside the system.

Something else we will do: we are going to cap class sizes in the lower grades. This government has allowed classes to swell to a point where kids are falling through the cracks. My government would put a stop to school closures while the funding formula is under review. That's the same formula—

Interjection: Dream on.

Mr McGuinty: The member opposite says, "Dream on." Apparently, they have no interest whatsoever in keeping schools under threat open.

Perhaps members of the government ought to reconsider their position with respect to school closures. I've travelled to many communities in Ontario, but particularly in smaller settings in rural communities—communities are very concerned about the impact of the loss of a school. It may be that in my hometown of Ottawa or in our larger urban centres like Toronto, if we close down a school downtown, the next one might be a mile away. If you close down a school in a rural community, the next school might be a 45-minute to one-hour bus ride away. When you lose a neighbourhood school, particularly in a rural centre, you're losing the heart and soul of that community.

The members opposite may not feel it's important to try our very best to keep our rural schools open, but we happen to believe that is a very important priority for us. Maybe if this government really valued public education as the path to success, as we do, it would truly make it a priority, as we have. If they did, they would worry less about competing with Alabama for the lowest corporate tax rate in North America and worry a lot more about the kids who can't keep up with their badly thought-out curriculum.

We are going to streamline special education to clear up the backlog of kids needing critical assessment. For me—and I've said this countless times—this notion of 39,000 Ontario children on a waiting list, some waiting for up to one year to receive their first special education assessment, is not only a financial problem, it's a moral problem.

What the government doesn't get is that at the beginning of the 21st century, as we try to compete in a

highly competitive, knowledge-based global economy, it is absolutely essential that all of our children be able to achieve their greatest potential. So we can't say to 39,000 kids, "Too bad. We haven't got the necessary resources. Just wait in line." That is reprehensible. This government fails to understand that.

Interjection.

Mr McGuinty: They continue to say opposite, "Well, where is your shadow budget?" I'll tell you one thing, and I've told this to the members opposite several times over: cancel your corporate tax cuts; there's \$2.2 billion. Cancel the private school tax credit; there's another half-billion dollars for you. It's not that this government lacks the means to support public education, medicare and the protection of our environment; they simply lack the will.

On the education file, we've also put forward a very good anti-bullying proposal which we are encouraging the government to adopt. We must do for bullying in this province what we have done together for drinking and driving. We have made it socially unacceptable.

We're also going to expand programs like co-op education, in which kids get practical work experience as part of their high school program.

1540

Last but not least, as I just mentioned, we would scrap the private school tax credit. We're not going to postpone it; we're not going to dance around trying to make as many people as possible happy. We're going to scrap it, because we've got better uses for that money inside our public schools.

As with public health care, we view public education as something to be invested in. My friends opposite have never, ever understood this. They begrudge every dollar they have to spend on health care or education. What they don't seem to get is that both these vital public institutions are critical to a healthy economy.

Public health care gives our businesses an enormous competitive advantage. Public education produces a skilled workforce, which is absolutely imperative in today's competitive, knowledge-based global economy. I'm talking here about a win-win. You invest in health care and education because it's the right thing to do and because it stimulates the economy. This way, our families can succeed, our people can get the best jobs, our province can attract investment and our economy can and will prosper.

If Mr Eves had understood that during six consecutive budgets as finance minister, he wouldn't have to resort to buying his way out of a deficit by selling part of Hydro One.

We were relieved to hear that the government would be spending some money on the environment. After all, as finance minister—

Inteerjection.

Mr McGuinty: I didn't really want to do this, but since the minister has called upon me to revisit the extensive flip-flopping Mr Eves has gone through when it comes to the position on the sell-off of Hydro One, I will

have to do that. Let's go through that together, as a matter of important public education.

During the course of the leadership pursuit, Mr Eves, as he then was, told us he was for the sell-off of Hydro One. After he became Premier, he confirmed that he was for the sell-off of Hydro One. But when we had our by-elections and things were tight and Mr Eves was up against it, he told us through headlines that appeared in the daily papers on that day of the by-elections that he was against the sale of Hydro One. So it was on the table, then it was off the table.

Shortly after that he told us it was back on the table. Then last week there were headlines that said it was once again off the table. But now it's in the budget, which tells us it's kind of half on and half off the table.

We're talking here about the Olga Korbut and Nadia Comaneci of flip-flops when it comes to the Hydro One issue. But I appreciate being given the opportunity by the members opposite to revisit that painful legacy.

Back to the issue of the Minister of the Environment: as I said, we're pleased there is going to be further investment on that front. After all, as finance minister, Mr Eves hacked away at the Ministry of the Environment, cutting the budget in half and firing some 750 workers, including countless water inspectors and enforcement officers.

It's important to remember as well that Finance Minister Eves made those cuts in the face of clear warnings that to proceed would be to place the health of Ontarians at risk.

So now, two years after the Walkerton tragedy, two years after seven people lost their lives as a result of drinking deadly water, two years after 2,300 people were sickened by drinking water, Ernie Eves is telling us he wants to make things right.

It's too late. I don't believe him and you can't trust him. Just last week, two years after Walkerton—two years after seven died, two years after 2,300 got sick, two years after a number of children developed kidney problems that will last them for the rest of their lives—we learned that this government, seven years after farming out water testing, seven years after saying, "We are no longer going to test water through the province of Ontario; we're going to turn that over to the private sector," seven years after they got out of the water testing business, that they have not yet begun to police those people who test our water. So when Mr Eves tells us, "Hey, look, secretly I've always been a champion of safe and clean drinking water; just watch me move," I say his record more than speaks for itself. I don't believe him. I don't trust him. It's a sad thing to say, but I don't think Ontario families can trust Mr Eves to protect their drinking water.

In water safety, as in education and health care, this government's priority is to cut in order to make room for corporate tax breaks, and the pretense of change that they made in yesterday's budget isn't going to fool anyone. In this speech I've laid out the differences between us on this side of the House and the members opposite.

From day one we have been on the side of working families and the things they have to be able to count on: public education; health care; a clean environment, including safe drinking water. The members opposite are trying to hop on to our train at the last minute, but they bought themselves a return ticket, and after the next election they're going to be returning to their old ways.

We have spelled out a clear, innovative, strong plan for improving health care and education, including family health centres and smaller class sizes. This government has thrown money at the crises they themselves created in our schools, in our hospitals, but their plan is as clear as their direction, which is to say it is completely muddled.

We represent the radical centre, with a clear direction, innovative ideas and a strong plan for our families and for our futures. If they have shifted at all, albeit temporarily, it has been to the mushy middle. There is no direction, there are no ideas and there is no plan coming from the members opposite. They are trying to be all things to all people. Why, their own budget sings the praises of corporate tax cuts on one page and then puts them off for a year on the next page. Their own finance minister told a news conference that tax cuts create jobs, but there won't be tax cuts this year because, I don't know, maybe she's against jobs this week. It's rather confusing, isn't it?

I say to the members opposite, folks, you either believe in something or you don't. I will admit that my colleagues and I are a little flattered by some of this. While he hasn't done a very good job of it, Mr Eves clearly has decided that the only way he's going to get re-elected is by trying to create the impression that he's a Liberal. Well, to paraphrase Lloyd Bentsen: I know Liberals; I stand today with Liberals; I am a Liberal. And I say to Mr Eves, "You, sir, are no Liberal."

The people of Ontario will not be fooled. The working families of Ontario will not be fooled. They know who is on their side; they know who has been there all along. We have been unremitting and relentless in our defence of those things that Ontario's working families have to be able to count on, and I'm proud to say we did that when it was not popular to do so.

This government now would have us believe it can change its stripes in mid-stride. They would have us believe that suddenly they're going to become champions of health care, education and safe and clean drinking water. People are now asking themselves, "Which one is the real Ernie Eves? Is the guy here who authored six consecutive budgets by himself, nonetheless, Mr Eves? Is it the guy who put tax cuts before health care, education and the environment? Is that the real Mr Ernie Eves? Or is this other fellow, who's prepared to rip up the Taxpayer Protection Act, who's prepared to abrogate his promises to go ahead with tax cuts, the guy who claims that secretly he's been a champion of safe and clean drinking water, the real Mr Eves?"

1550

I have undying faith in Ontario voters. They will see this as easily as you and I see through clear glass. They know who's on their side. They know who's always been on their side. I say once again with tremendous pride that if Ontario families are looking for a party that will go to the wall and do so in times when it's popular and when it's unpopular and will defend health care, education and the environment, including their drinking water, they can always count on the Ontario Liberals.

I understand I've been called upon to revise the initial amendment I put forward, and I do so happily. I wish to move an amendment to the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on June 17, 2002, which I will read as follows:

"That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be amended by deleting the words after "That this House" and adding thereto the following: "recognize the fact that the budget contradicts everything this government has said for the past seven years, does nothing to keep schools open, lower and cap class sizes or support our children with special needs, cynically promises to both keep and sell Hydro One, desperately pledges to both implement and delay corporate tax cuts and miraculously supports and opposes private school tax credits simultaneously. Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government."

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr McGuinty has moved an amendment to the motion moved by the Minister of Finance on June 17, 2002, which reads as follows:

"That this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government" be amended by deleting the words after "That this House" and adding thereto the following: "recognize the fact that the budget contradicts everything this government has said for the past seven years, does nothing to keep schools open, lower and cap class sizes or support our children with special needs, cynically promises to both keep and sell Hydro One, desperately pledges to both implement and delay corporate tax cuts and miraculously supports and opposes private school tax credits simultaneously. Therefore, this House has lost confidence in this government."

Further debate?

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): I move adjournment of the debate.

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

HERITAGE HUNTING
AND FISHING ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA CHASSE
ET LA PÊCHE PATRIMONIALES

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Ouellette, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 135, An Act to recognize Ontario's recreational hunting and fishing heritage and to establish the Fish and Wildlife Heritage Commission / Loi visant à reconnaître le patrimoine de la chasse et de la pêche sportives en Ontario et à créer la Commission du patrimoine chasse et pêche.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

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

BUILDING CODE STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE CODE DU BÂTIMENT

Mr Baird, on behalf of Mr Hodgson, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to improve public safety and to increase efficiency in building code enforcement / Loi de 2001 modifiant des lois en ce qui concerne le code du bâtiment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Is it the pleasure of the House that motion carry?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

I have received a communication from the chief government whip stating that this vote will be deferred until June 19.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of Environment and Energy, Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1556.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

ERRATUM

No.	Page	Column	Line(s)
21A	1004	2	45

Should read:

over there. I presume we're not going to use you as the consultant.

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

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Clerk Assistant / Greffière adjointe: Deborah Deller

Clerks at the Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

CONTENTS

Tuesday 18 June 2002

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

Investigation into child abuse	
Mr Cleary.....	1043
Fundraising	
Mr Kormos	1043
House of Blessing	
Mr Johnson	1043
Post-secondary education funding	
Mrs Bountrogianni.....	1044
Outstanding Young Farmer program	
Mr Stewart	1044
Health care	
Mrs Pupatello.....	1044
St Luke Catholic School	
Mrs Marland	1045
Taxation	
Mr Duncan	1045
Air cadets	
Mr Maves.....	1045

FIRST READINGS

City of Ottawa Act (Remembrance Day), 2002, Bill Pr3, Mr Guzzo	
Agreed to	1046
Royal Ottawa Health Care Group/ Services de Santé Royal Ottawa Act, 2002, Bill Pr7, Mr Patten	
Agreed to	1046

THIRD READINGS

Heritage Hunting and Fishing Act, 2002, Bill 135, Mr Ouellette	
Agreed to	1064
Building Code Statute Law Amendment Act, 2002, Bill 124, Mr Hodgson	
Vote deferred	1064

ORAL QUESTIONS

Government's record	
Mr McGuinty	1046, 1047
Mr Eves	1046, 1047
Sales and rentals revenue	
Mr Hampton	1047
Mr Eves	1047
Ontario Power Generation	
Mr Hampton	1048
Mr Stockwell	1048

Hydro One

Mr Phillips.....	1049
Mr Eves	1049

Sports and recreation funding

Mr Miller	1049
Mr Jackson	1049

Education funding

Mr Kennedy	1050
Mrs Witmer	1050

Bruce Peninsula

Mr Murdoch	1050
Mr Wilson	1051

Private clinics

Ms Martel.....	1051
Mr Eves	1051

Government accounting practices

Mr Phillips.....	1052
Mrs Ecker	1052

Barbecue safety

Mr Dunlop.....	1052
Mr Hudak	1052

Public safety

Mr Bryant.....	1053
Mrs Ecker	1053
Mr Runciman	1053

Alternative fuel

Mr O'Toole	1053
Mrs Johns	1053

Student achievement fund

Mr Marchese	1054
Mrs Witmer	1054

Ontario disability support program

Mr Parsons	1054
Mrs Elliott	1054

PETITIONS

Children's health services

Mr Patten	1055
Mrs Boyer	1057

Ontario budget

Mr Levac	1055
Mrs Dombrowsky.....	1057

Competitive electricity market

Mr Ruprecht	1056
-------------------	------

Optometrists

Mr Kormos	1056
-----------------	------

Highway 522

Mr Miller	1056
-----------------	------

Air quality

Mr Bradley	1056
------------------	------

Alternative fuel

Mr Gilchrist.....	1057
-------------------	------

Post-secondary education funding

Mr Bartolucci	1059
---------------------	------

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

2002 Ontario budget, government notice of motion number 13	
Mr McGuinty	1059
Debate adjourned	1064

OTHER BUSINESS

Visitors

Mr Caplan	1045
-----------------	------

Annual Report, Office of the

Integrity Commissioner

The Speaker	1045
-------------------	------

Annual Report,

Lobbyists Registration Office

The Speaker	1046
-------------------	------

Erratum	1064
----------------------	-------------

TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Mardi 18 juin 2002

TROISIÈME LECTURE

Loi de 2002 sur la chasse

et la pêche patrimoniales,

projet de loi 135, M. Ouellette

Adoptée	1064
---------------	------

Loi de 2002 modifiant des lois en ce

qui concerne le code du bâtiment,

projet de loi 124, M. Hodgson

Vote différé	1064
--------------------	------

PÉTITIONS

Services de santé pour enfants

M. Lalonde.....	1058
-----------------	------