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Thursday 7 November 2002

Jeudi 7 novembre 2002

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 7 November 2002

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 7 novembre 2002

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan): I present the resolution that, in the opinion of this House, the Ernie Eves government should immediately establish minimum standards of care for nursing homes and homes for the aged, including the reintroduction of minimum hours of nursing care and the requirement for a minimum of at least one bath a week.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member has up to 10 minutes to make her presentation.

Mrs McLeod: This is, in all likelihood, the last opportunity I will have to bring forward private member's business to this House. I've chosen to use the opportunity to present this particular resolution because of a growing personal sense of outrage I have at the Harris-Eves government's, in my view, deliberate abandonment of our most vulnerable seniors. I know that in the course of the morning's debate we will hear members of the government say, "This government has made the largest investment in long-term care of any government in history," so I want to put that argument into the context of fact.

The fact is that this government's investment in long-term care is almost entirely to bring in new long-term-care beds. That's fine, but we have to understand that that investment in long-term-care beds was because one of the first actions of this same government was to engage in the shutting down of thousands—thousands—of acute care beds and to shut down fully 40% of the chronic care beds in this province. They wanted to put the chronic care patients into long-term-care beds, and they wanted to do that to save money, because in chronic care you get over \$200 a day to care for patients, while in long-term care it's more like \$100 a day.

This government seems to keep getting caught by surprise. To their surprise, they discovered there wasn't room in the long-term-care facilities for all these chronic care patients who were about to be displaced. There were waiting lists across the province; there were 18,000 people on waiting lists for long-term care. So this government did indeed belatedly recognize that they had to build some new beds. Six years later, some of those

new beds are coming on-stream. We still have waiting lists for long-term care, we still have patients sitting in acute care beds, and we still have people being discharged from hospital without adequate home care.

In the meantime, when our long-term-care facilities did have a vacancy, they were taking patients with higher and higher levels of need for care. But this government did not transfer the chronic care dollars to the long-term-care facilities, so those long-term-care facilities or nursing homes or homes for the aged are caring for these much needier individuals with very minimal dollars. Very little of the new money this government will say it has invested in long-term care has gone to actually improve the care for people in our homes for the aged and nursing homes.

Along with the New Democratic Party, about two years ago, I think, we had a series of hearings across the province on long-term care. We heard story after story from anguished family members who came forward to tell us of their concerns about the lack of quality of life, in fact their fears for the very safety of their loved ones in our nursing homes and our homes for the aged. At one point—it was in Thunder Bay, my home riding—somebody who works in a nursing home, a staff person, came forward at the end of the hearings. She was in tears. She said, "I know how concerned you are. I know we're not doing what we should be able to do to provide care, but you've got to understand how few resources we have to work with."

The staff of our nursing homes and homes for the aged are as distressed as the families of the residents in those homes and as concerned not only for the safety of those residents but indeed for their own safety, as overworked, exhausted, stressed staff try to provide care for these very high need individuals.

The government's response to this was to cut the minimum number of hours of nursing care. There was a regulation that set a minimum; it said every individual should have 2.25 hours of nursing care. This government responded to the concerns for care by cutting out the minimums, because how else could they begin to meet the needs of these individuals with the dollars they were giving? They couldn't be held to account for the enforcement of the regulation and not have to put more money into it. Now we are last in this country—last in this country—in the numbers of hours of nursing care that individuals in nursing homes and homes for the aged receive. In fact, as I understand the independent study that was done, we are probably last in comparison to the United States and in comparison to European countries in

the numbers of hours of nursing care that we provide our residents. We are last in our support for people with behavioural problems, last in our support for people who require rehabilitation.

When the people in the long-term-care facilities were driven to the point of desperation last spring and ran a very strong campaign to make us all aware of the needs in those homes, what was this government's next response? If you'll recall, in that campaign one of the issues was that residents get a minimum of one bath per week, and the minister, quite rightly, responded, "That's what's in the regulations. It's a minimum. That's what's required." But it became a flashpoint, so this government's response was to remove that regulation and to replace it with a regulation that simply says they have to give sufficient care to maintain personal hygiene.

The minister says, "We don't want numerical standards, because if you have a numerical standard, a minimum becomes a maximum." A minimum only becomes a maximum if the funding body, the government, only funds to the level of minimum care. If they provide more dollars, more care can be given; you don't get held to the minimums. But at least you need some basics, some basics for which this government can be held accountable.

The other way that you get minimums becoming maximums is if you ration care and set the maximums, which is what this government has done with home care, but that again is another story.

The minister says, "We want to give people the flexibility to meet the patients' needs. That's why we don't want numerical figures." You only have flexibility if you have enough money to meet the needs. The minister says, "We want to move to outcome measurement instead of numerical standards." How do you measure outcomes for quality of life of people in nursing homes and homes for the aged? You can't look at mortality rates; that's not an applicable figure for this particular population. So do you look at whether or not people are developing bedsores? Do you look at the outbreak of influenza? As an outcome, how would you look at the effect on an individual of the number of hours that somebody sits waiting to have somebody come and feed them? How do you measure the outcome on quality of life of the number of hours that somebody in a nursing home or home for the aged spends in isolation and in silence?

I've two stories that I want to tell in my last three minutes. One is the story of my mother; I've told it in this House before. My mother spent the last three months of her life in a home for the aged, and because it was a municipal home for the aged in my home riding of Thunder Bay it benefits from a 20% top-up; they have a little extra money. This home used that money to provide an occupational therapist for the Alzheimer's unit. That occupational therapist made the last three months of my mother's life the best quality of life that she had had for the last two years, because they found ways in which she could respond.

1010

I believe that there should be minimum standards for bathing and there should be minimum standards of nursing care and we should go beyond those. I believe that we should have a standard that says there should be rehabilitation, there should be occupational therapists and that our seniors deserve no less than what will contribute to their quality of life.

My second story is one that is not as happy. It's the story of my mother-in-law. You have to know that my mother-in-law was a brilliant woman who got a university degree and a scholarship to go to the Sorbonne back in the 1920s when women weren't doing that. She devoted her life as a minister's wife to charitable work in our community. She remained feisty, bright and independent until she succumbed to Alzheimer's disease at the age of 82. My mother-in-law also spent the last months of her life in a nursing home. It didn't happen to have the 20% top-up, it didn't have an occupational therapist, it didn't have enough staff to actually feed the residents of that nursing home—at least, not unless they waited for a long time—and it certainly didn't have the staff to take them for walks or to talk to them. They did their best. The staff in that nursing home did their best. But the best they could do was to try to keep people safe and, indeed, to keep their diapers changed, because that's what maintaining personal hygiene really means in those settings.

I don't think it was enough for my mother-in-law, a person who gave and gave and gave. I don't think it was enough to say that her needs were being met because her personal hygiene was being looked after. I think if my mother-in-law had not been a victim of Alzheimer's and was in that nursing home seeing what was happening to the people around her—I don't think, I know that my mother-in-law would have been outraged, because it was that kind of outrage that she brought to injustice throughout her life. She deserved more. She would have believed that the people who shared that residence with her deserved more. She would have anguished for the staff trying to provide care.

I brought this resolution forward today because I wanted to express in this House what would have been my mother-in-law's outrage in this last opportunity I have to bring forward private member's business. I ask this government to finally take action in concern.

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): It's a pleasure for me to participate in the debate this morning. I'll be supporting the resolution and, at the end of my remarks, will be making some suggestions about how it might have been strengthened, because I believe it could have been.

Let me begin by saying that it is a tragedy—a tragedy—that this government cares so little for the frail and elderly in Ontario long-term-care facilities that they can't even protect them by having in place minimum standards for nursing care and minimum standards for bathing. That is a fact. The government cares so little—so little—for the frail and the elderly in Ontario long-term-care facilities that they have done away with mini-

mum standards for nursing care and minimum standards for bathing.

You see, before this government was elected, under our government there was a minimum standard for nursing care. It was 2.25 hours of hands-on care per resident per day. One of the first things that Jim Wilson, who was then the Minister of Health, did was to do away with that minimum standard. I don't think residents asked for that minimum standard to be abandoned. I don't think families of residents in long-term-care facilities asked for that. I know the unions that represent people who work in nursing homes, like ONA, SEIU and CUPE, certainly didn't ask for the minimum standards to be done away with. I suspect that some of those for-profit long-term-care operators, especially the big corporations, had the government's ear on this one. They didn't want to be bound by any standards, because if they were not bound, maybe they could have less staff and more profit. That's what happened, and it is a shame that the government listened to that lobby instead of protecting families and the residents themselves who are in those facilities.

The real question is, has that lack of a standard had a negative impact on the care of the frail and the elderly? And the answer is, you bet it has—absolutely—and this government has the proof. You see, this government funded a study done by PricewaterhouseCoopers that was released in January 2001, and in that particular study PricewaterhouseCoopers compared the needs and the services provided to long-term-care residents in Ontario facilities to the needs and the services provided to residents in more than seven other jurisdictions: Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, South Dakota, Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands. The results of that work done by PricewaterhouseCoopers, independent of this government, independent of my political party, were shocking.

They discovered, for example, that residents in Ontario long-term-care facilities received less nursing and therapy services than similar jurisdictions with similar populations. Furthermore, Ontario long-term-care residents have some significant differences in terms of their level of depression, cognitive levels and behavioural problems, which indicates a higher need for service levels to meet higher care requirements.

The second shocking thing found was that the proportion of care provided by registered nurses in Ontario is less than in all other jurisdictions. In Ontario, registered nurses are now providing 2.04 hours of care per resident per day. That is less than the minimum standard that was in place. That shows you what happens when you abandon minimum standards. Then some of these homes worked to even lower common denominators.

What they also found was that, in terms of rehabilitation services, only 10% of residents who have the potential for rehabilitation actually receive that rehabilitation. Or with respect to behavioural therapy, despite the fact that 61% of the residents in Ontario long-term-care facilities present with behavioural issues—the highest of all the populations—they receive among the lowest levels

of therapy: only slightly more than 10 minutes per person per day.

Is the question, then, do they receive less care because Ontario residents in long-term-care facilities have better health than the health of the other populations that were studied in other jurisdictions? The answer there is again no, because the rates of depression in Ontario long-term-care facilities were higher than anywhere else except in the Netherlands; Ontario had higher levels of residents having suffered strokes than Saskatchewan and Manitoba; Ontario had among the highest levels of residents with dementia and Alzheimer's disease. In fact, the authors of the study made this particular point with respect to those residents in their care. They said:

"The ... authors note that this finding has 'significant implications for the care and treatment of these individuals' for several reasons. Clearly ... in order to offer adequate care for people with dementias, there must be sufficient numbers of staff. And, in order to ensure safe, appropriate and quality care, staff must be specially trained so they will have the necessary expertise required to meet the needs of these residents. Failure to ensure these fundamentals may inevitably result in a diminished quality of life for residents, excessive acute care hospital" stays "and increased strain on staff in long-term-care facilities."

Why do I make this point? I make the point because this report, paid for by this government, released in the beginning of 2001, clearly shows that the absence of minimum standards of care does have a negative impact on the frail and the elderly living in Ontario long-term-care facilities. It impacts on their health directly. They are at the bottom—the bottom—of the heap in terms of receiving nursing care, rehabilitation etc, and it is wrong—absolutely wrong—that in the province of Ontario our residents in long-term-care facilities should be such a low priority for this government that they are at the bottom in terms of the care they receive in comparison to so many other jurisdictions. This government should be embarrassed about that fact and this government should be doing something about it, but they are not.

You would have thought that the government would have learned something from the PricewaterhouseCoopers report, learned that you need a minimum standard at the outset to at least ensure adequate care. What did this government do instead? On July 31 of this year, this government then did away with the minimum standard of bathing in the province of Ontario. That fact came to light quite by accident at the estimates committee when we dealt with the Ministry of Health on September 10. I was asking questions to the minister with respect to a number of the changes the government had announced on July 31 with respect to their 15% fee increase for residents in long-term-care facilities. One of the things the government had promised in that press release of July 31 was to "amend Ontario's bathing regulation to better meet ... individual needs."

So I asked the minister if the regulation had been passed. He said yes. I said, "Does that now mean three or

four baths a week?" and Mr Clement said the following: "It was decided that that would create more problems than it would solve in terms of minimum standards, so we've actually thrown it back to the sector." Well, they sure have. They've abandoned completely the minimum requirement for bathing and left it to the sector to decide if and when a resident might actually get a bath.

It's interesting if you look at the old regulation, because the old regulation said the following: "The nursing staff shall ensure that residents who are confined to bed or who are incontinent have a complete bath daily or more frequently where necessary to maintain cleanliness and that ambulant residents have a complete bath at least once a week....

"The nursing staff shall ensure that proper and sufficient care of each resident's body is provided to safeguard the resident's health and to maintain personal hygiene."

The government did away with that minimum standard, even though that standard was inadequate, and replaced it with the following:

"The nursing staff shall ensure that proper and sufficient care of each resident's body is provided daily to safeguard the resident's health and to maintain personal hygiene." The word "bath" doesn't even come into the equation. The outcome of this is really clear. When you did away with the minimum standards for nursing care, quality of care for residents went down. That was shown in PricewaterhouseCoopers, and there is no doubt that quality is going to further deteriorate because this government has now done away with the bathing standard.

1020

I want to read a letter that was sent to me by a resident in St Thomas about this serious issue, because she really makes the important point. It was sent to the Honourable Dan Newman and reads as follows:

"I was astounded to read that prior to August 1, the Nursing Homes Act mandated a minimum of one daily bath for bedridden or incontinent residents. My husband is incontinent but only receives one bath a week which is insufficient, unsanitary, disgusting and obviously a violation of the old Nursing Homes Act." And it is, because he was supposed to receive a bath a day. "I have demanded improvements numerous times, repeatedly requesting a minimum of one additional bath per week, but to no avail. The typical response from management is that they'll do what they can when time permits, but they're understaffed and have lots of other things to do etc....

"Now we're faced with new regulations that don't even assure my husband of one bath a week. If you think"—and this is to Minister Newman—"as you are quoted as saying, that: 'Obviously, if someone needs a bath every day, they're going to get it,' then you are sadly misinformed about the state of care in these facilities.

"The old regulations were scrapped because your ministry didn't want LTC facilities taking the 'one bath a

week' standard as a maximum. Well, I assure you that even those lax standards are not being adhered to today, and the new standards will do absolutely nothing to improve the situation. Instead they will result in even fewer baths as they will allow individuals to interpret the regulations however they choose."

She is absolutely right—absolutely right—that this will mean even worse care in terms of bathing for residents in long-term-care facilities.

The other sad reality is that despite the announcement the government made on July 31 that they were going to put \$100 million into nursing homes to improve the quality of care as some form of compensation for a 15% fee hike for these same residents, that money is not going to hire new nurses and new personal care aides.

I want to just quote the minister's letter to residents to put this into context. This went out July 31, and he said, "This investment will add an additional 2,400 nurses and personal care workers to the long-term-care sector, or approximately 3.9 nursing and personal care staff for each 100-bed facility."

Do you know what? On October 16, we raised the case of three for-profit nursing homes in Durham to find out how that money that was supposed to be spent on nurses and personal care aides had in fact been spent. Here's what happened. In one of those homes, a telephone receptionist was hired. In another of the for-profit homes, a part-time social worker and two part-time personal care aides were hired on contract till the end of this December. In the third for-profit home, there were and are no plans to hire new nursing staff at all; they're using all the money to buy diapers, probably so they can let those poor frail and elderly seniors sit even longer in soiled diapers, and that is absolutely wrong.

We raised this question. The minister said the following in response: "The \$100 million in nursing and personal care that was announced on July 31 must be spent on nursing and personal care. That's why we made the decision. There's nothing else that money can be spent on; it must be spent on hiring additional nurses." He is completely out to lunch, because that's not what's happening.

We came back into this House and raised the case of Rainycrest Home for the Aged in Dryden, where every single penny was spent on the operating deficit of that facility. We raised the issue of North Centennial Manor in Kapuskasing using half of the new funding to cover WSIB and long-term disability benefits. Not one new nurse is being hired. Lady Isabelle Nursing Home in Trout Creek is not spending a cent of that on staff. The Extendicare in Haliburton, Versacare in St Catharines and South Centennial Manor in Iroquois Falls are using all their money to cover their operating deficits; not one single penny on new staff. Extendicare in Sudbury is hiring one RPN and that's it.

This minister was not upfront and honest when he told residents that in terms of jacking up their fees by 15% they were going to at least get more care. That is not happening, and that was this government's fault, because

they should have made sure that every single penny went to nurses and personal care aides. They're not doing it, and the quality of care for residents in our long-term-care facilities, which was already at the bottom of the heap in terms of the report that this government commissioned and that was made public, is going to get even worse. That's how much you folks care about residents in long-term-care facilities.

The sad reality is that if the government really wanted to protect the frail and elderly in long-term-care facilities, there are a couple of things the government could do. The first thing the government could do is regulate a minimum standard of care in long-term-care facilities. SEIU last year came forward with a proposal of 3.5 hours of hands-on care per resident per day in long-term-care facilities. New Democrats support that call, because there has to be a minimum standard and it has to be higher than what it was, because clearly the results of PricewaterhouseCoopers show how dramatically the care of Ontario residents has declined since this government cancelled that minimum standard.

Secondly, there has to be a regulation with respect to the minimum standard of bathing. If a resident needs a bath a day, a resident should have a bath a day, and that should be in regulation so that nursing homes have to provide that.

Finally, we need more inspectors in long-term-care facilities to ensure compliance. That is not happening now, and that is why nursing homes are able to get away with what they're able to get away with. This government should be hiring more compliance officers who go in unannounced to ensure that regulations are being met.

I say in conclusion that it is a tragedy, it's a shame, that this government cares so little for seniors that they have abandoned all standards of care, and that is why the quality of life for these residents in these facilities is so poor and so awful.

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): I'm very pleased to address the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan's resolution that our government "should immediately establish minimum standards of care for nursing homes and homes for the aged, including the reintroduction of minimum hours of nursing care and the requirement for a minimum of at least one bath a week" for residents.

Let me say that the Ernie Eves government is committed to meeting the long-term-care needs of Ontario's growing and aging population, and we've taken strong action to address this challenge since we were first elected in 1995. I may add that in my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford we have had a significant increase in the number of long-term-beds. There's one project in particular, Victoria Village, which is a tremendous project. There were 132 long-term-care beds awarded to allow this project, which will be a seniors facility providing many services for our seniors population, to get off the ground. I might add that they're also going to have, as a part of that project, a facility that will allow for seniors to come in from the community to get their

bathing requirements done. A part of this facility will offer that type of service, and that's a very significant feature of this project. Also, there have been beds that have gone to Grove Park Home—62—the IOOF and Woods Park home, throughout the city of Barrie, and also there have been beds granted down in Bradford-West Gwillimbury at the south end of my riding. So there has been significant investment in this area of long-term-care beds, and I'm very pleased that it's happening in my riding.

The fact is, cookie-cutter approaches to health care such as the member opposite is suggesting haven't worked in the past, they don't work today and they won't work in the future. Our government has not and will not engage in this approach, but this is exactly what the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan's resolution would do: place a uniform standard over a diverse province where health care needs vary from region to region and citizen to citizen. This simply won't do, and the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan should know that.

When it comes to imposing a minimum standard for bathing and nursing in long-term-care facilities, such a concept just wouldn't serve the best interests of residents. That's because Ontario funds more than 60,000 long-term-care beds, and each of those beds is occupied by an individual resident with individual needs. That's why our government supports the flexible approach of personal care plans for each and every long-term-care facility resident in Ontario. Personal care plans mean that the long-term-care facility residents in the province are assessed according to their individual requirements to ensure they receive the personal care that they need. This means even better care for residents and greater peace of mind for families.

1030

As you know, our government changed the regulations concerning personal care in long-term-care facilities to ensure consistency across the board and the province. The new regulation for the Nursing Homes Act, the Homes for the Aged and Rest Homes Act and the Charitable Institutions Act specifies that nursing staff ensure that appropriate care of each resident is provided to safeguard residents' health and maintain personal hygiene. Compliance advisers are making sure this regulation is being followed.

Our government's commitment to even better personal care for residents of Ontario's long-term-care facilities certainly doesn't end there. That's because earlier this year my colleague the Honourable Dan Newman, Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, announced a \$198-million investment to improve the delivery of long-term-care services across Ontario. Of this, \$100 million will go to enhance the delivery of long-term-care nursing and personal care services, as well as programming and support services. That is a significant investment and commitment to the personal needs of our seniors. I am proud to say in this House today that this is the single largest infusion of funds into nursing and personal care services for the long-term-care sector in the history of this province.

This investment didn't happen when the Liberals were in power, and it wasn't made by the NDP. It was our government that made this investment so that the health care professionals on the front lines, the people taking care of our parents and grandparents, will have the resources they need to provide even better long-term care in our province. By making the investments that need to be made today, rather than putting them off like the Liberals and NDP did, we can make sure that quality long-term-care services are there where and when they're needed, no matter where you live in Ontario.

Based on estimates from the nursing home sector, this unprecedented funding could see as many as 2,400 nurses and personal care workers added to the long-term-care sector. That represents 3.9 full-time equivalent staff per 100-bed facility. That means even better long-term-care services for the people of Ontario today, even better long-term care tomorrow and even better long-term care in the years to come.

Our government firmly believes that taxpayer dollars spent through the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should be spent on the actual health and long-term-care services that the people of Ontario need throughout their lives. That's why we made our unprecedented funding announcement, and that's why we changed the legislation to provide even better care for our most vulnerable citizens.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I'm pleased to rise and support my colleague's resolution for minimum hours of nursing care and the requirement for a minimum of at least one bath per week. It's almost a shame that we need to make this resolution, that we've come to this in Ontario in 2002, isn't it?

Here's a little background from cards that we all receive. We all receive thousands of cards from residents on the long-term-care situation. I'll just paraphrase some of it. If you already have a friend or a family member in any of the over 525 long-term-care facilities across Ontario, you will understand why I'm asking for your help. If you don't, the following information will help you: over 60,000 Ontarians living in long-term-care facilities are older, fraailer, sicker and require more care than ever before; 95% require assistance to get dressed; 94% require some assistance to eat; 63% suffer from dementia; 39% are aggressive; 56% have circulatory disease and 49% have a musculoskeletal disability.

Government funding has not kept pace with this increase in resident need. Current funding levels allow for four minutes to assist with getting up, washed, dressed and to the dining room, 10 minutes for assistance with eating, 15 minutes of programming per day and, until recently, one bath per week. Of course, even this was removed recently. These are seniors who have played by the rules, paid taxes all their lives, want to live their last years with dignity and comfort, and are being told no. They're very angry and very hurt. They're very upset, and they don't trust any of us now.

Another thing that is really problematic in our communities that affects long-term care, even for those

residents who finally do get into these facilities—the physician shortage makes it impossible for many to be able to go into these facilities. It's a huge problem across the province. Part of that, of course, is the ridiculous funding for physicians to visit long-term-care facilities: \$17. It's absolutely ridiculous. That is the kind of value we place on our doctors' services in long-term-care facilities. It's very difficult to find doctors, and people are suffering as a result.

This afternoon I will present thousands of cards to the Minister of Health from people who, because of the inadequate care in long-term-care facilities or because of long waiting lists to get into long-term-care facilities, are complaining because of the cutbacks to community care access centres. Their home care has been cut drastically. In my community, Jim Murray, the same hatchetman who cut home care is now cutting our education system, and it's very problematic. We have a lot of challenges in our community because of what this government has done.

I want to talk about some of the cards. They're all typed, but some people have added anecdotes that really touch us when we read them.

From Anna Liburdi: "People deserve and want to remain at home as long as possible because inadequate care is provided in most long-term-care facilities according to seniors. On behalf of my grandson, who will not be able to be kept at home if I get cut, I am protesting cuts to home care."

They went to a meeting and we talked about long-term care and home care. One lady said, "I attended; I heard; I don't like what I heard. You and your party"—talking of course about the government—"and CCACs should be charged with abandonment by the sick, disabled and elderly."

Another woman said, "How would you like to have to have a neighbour come into your home to dress you, clean you up after an accident etc? I do and it is horrid. My caseworker is overworked. I get one hour per week for a bath. The rest of the time I rely on strangers. I am not the only one. Wake up here. We have feelings; we are hurting."

"You are killing us. No care; no meals; no help at all. I hope I die before it gets any worse. At least I will be out of your way. We are dying."

These are handwritten. "People with disabilities living in their own homes, God bless them because you don't"—to the government. It's very sad, but we have to put this on the record.

Here's another one from Betsy Watson: "I hope my husband and I die soon. We were so proud to have good care at home for our handicaps etc. Now with your cuts we are in terrible shape. I hope you never have to endure the shame we do now."

These are linked. When you have waiting lists for long-term care, when you have inadequate care in long-term care, people are at home more. With cutbacks to home care, that is inadequate as well. We are hurting the most vulnerable in our society. We are hurting those who

have built this province for us to enjoy, for our children. Now in the last years of their lives, we have abandoned them. Shame on the government.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It's a pleasure to rise this morning to make a few comments on Ms McLeod's motion. I'm pleased to join my colleagues to respond to the question from the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan regarding a minimum standard for bathing and nursing in Ontario's long-term-care facilities.

With regard to the issue of a minimum standard for bathing and nursing in long-term-care facilities, the fact is that such an approach simply wouldn't serve the best interests of residents in Ontario's long-term-care facilities. That's because long-term-care facility residents are assessed according to their individual needs to ensure they receive the personal care they actually require in that particular home. Compliance advisers ensure the regulations are being followed as well.

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As my colleague stated earlier, in July of this year the Ernie Eves government announced \$100 million to enhance the delivery of nursing and personal care services in long-term-care facilities, as well as programming and support services. I'm proud to say that this announcement brought our long-term-care facility funding levels to an unprecedented \$1.8 billion. This \$1.8 billion represents an increase of more than 50% over the \$1.15 billion that was being spent when our government took office in 1995.

We've been moving ahead with this initiative as part of our commitment to ensure that long-term-care facility services are not only of the highest quality but also readily accessible for current and future residents as well. The July announcement that my colleague the Honourable Dan Newman, Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, made was part of our \$198-million investment to improve the delivery of long-term-care facilities and greatly enhance long-term-care nursing and personal care services in long-term-care facilities across our province. Based on estimates from the nursing home sector, this funding could see as many as 2,400 nurses and personal care workers added to the long-term-care sector. That represents approximately 3.9 full-time equivalent staff per 100-bed facility. As my colleagues have stated earlier, that investment also represents the single largest infusion of money into nursing and personal care services in the long-term-care sector in the province's history.

There's no question that our government's commitment to address the needs and meet the challenges of Ontario's growing and aging population is clear and strong. That's evident because we're putting more money where it's needed most. That's also why we've initiated annual reviews of the long-term-care facilities and developed a province-wide tracking and reporting system to monitor the reviews.

An ongoing professional development and training strategy has been developed for ministry compliance advisers involved in the inspection of long-term-care

facilities. That strategy focuses on best-care practices, competencies, multi-disciplinary team approaches and consistency in interpretation and application of long-term-care facility standards, regulations and legislation.

What's more, we are carrying through on our commitment to conduct a major review of the long-term-care facility compliance management program in partnership with the long-term-care sector. The review covers a number of initiatives that include reviewing standards, analyzing data trends, developing a risk-management framework, training to promote consistency among the compliance advisers and, finally, a review of the legislation and regulations. Once the review is completed, recommendations will be developed which will form the basis for a plan of action.

I want to join my colleagues today to emphasize in this House that our government, the Ernie Eves government, truly appreciates the work of Ontario's long-term-care professionals. And at the heart of long-term care are the nurses, whose skill and dedication makes all the difference to the well-being of the residents. Our government will continue to work with nurses and other professionals, with owners and operators of long-term-care facilities, and with other members of the long-term-care sector to ensure the highest level of service across the spectrum of long-term care in this province.

Our record has been very good to this date. In fact, if you're looking at the long-term-care facilities that we've built across the province, the 20,000 new beds that are currently being developed, along with 13,000 beds that are being developed to a class-A standard, I think it's safe to say that our government has done an excellent job in this area, considering the fact that in the previous 10 years before the government came to power no new long-term-care beds were opened in the province.

That's our record and our commitment, and I appreciate the opportunity today to say a few words and to respond to Mrs McLeod's resolution.

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): It's with great pleasure that I rise to speak on Mrs McLeod's resolution, "That, in the opinion of this House, the Ernie Eves government should immediately establish minimum standards of care for nursing homes and homes for the aged."

I find that, in this day and age, to actually have to be in this House to ask for a resolution to establish minimum standards, is almost as if we're returning to the Dark Ages when it comes to our long-term-care standards. I agree with her comments, and I certainly know that she has a great in-depth understanding of this sector, that the Harris-Eves government has abandoned many aspects of our social services in this province.

I hear over and over again, as everyone hears, that this government's argument is they've put more money into long-term care. Well, they have put more money into long-term beds, but I want the public to understand something that has been stated before in this House, and that is, they first shut down I believe it's 40% of the chronic care beds. These patients of course had to be put

someplace else, so of course they had to be put in long-term-care facilities. Therefore there was a need to put more money into those beds because otherwise these people would have nowhere to go. It's like they start a fire and then they want to get credit for putting it out. That's what their argument always is: "Oh, we're putting money into this." Well, they needed to because there were 18,000 patients, 18,000 people, who had to get into long-term-care beds.

Again, cutting minimum hours of standards for nursing care means that there is no accountability mechanism, so they don't have to answer as to why these hours are not being provided. Because when you continuously ration the dollars to the point that people cannot give the number of hours that are required for care—I have had a number of patients and a number of families come into my office distressed about the quantity of care that their loved ones receive. Why? It's not the caregivers' fault, because they do the best they can. It's the fact that the resources just aren't there to provide the care for these people who need more care.

If people were in hospital, in the chronic care beds, the quantity of care that they would have received, and the hands-on care, of course, would be substantially more. But you see, we are now in a time, because of this government's ideology, that it's all about saving money: "Where can we save money? Does it mean that we can provide one hour less care for people a day? Yes, we'll do that, because after all, these people are elderly." There's the sense that it is only the very well-to-do that seem to benefit from the policies that this government has ongoingly provided to this province.

I applaud my colleague for this resolution. I hope that the government members have the conscience and the social conscience to vote for this resolution because this resolution is needed and it's just in good conscience that the government members should vote for this resolution.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I'm kind of surprised that a government member wouldn't stand up, because it's normally their rotation. But let me first start of all start off by telling you that over the last three or four months, as critic for long-term care for my party, I've had the opportunity to go into many, many long-term-care homes. I've always been impressed with the people that work at these places. Our hats should go off to them for the tremendous amount of work that they do. They're not the problem; the problem is the tremendous underfunding, and that's what it's all about. We in this province traditionally have not paid enough attention, we have not put enough resources into making sure that those people that need all the nursing help that they can get during the last years of their lives get the needs that they're entitled to. That's the real problem.

What's better evidence of that is the fact that the government's own study, the PricewaterhouseCoopers study that they funded of 10 similar jurisdictions to Ontario—they looked at states in the United States, they looked at other province, they looked at countries our

size—by that I mean Ontario's size—in Europe. And what did they find out? I'll quote to you from the report: "In general, there is a greater gap between needed service and service provided in Ontario long-term-care facilities than in other jurisdictions for both nursing and other therapy services." We rank dead last—lower than Mississippi, lower than Louisiana—in the amount of care and in the amount of support we give our nursing homes so they can properly look after the elderly people there, who have contributed so much to this province.

1050

That's really what this is all about. Even with the government's new investment on the operating side, for which I applaud them, we will still rank dead last. The decision we have to make in this province is, with the generally high standard of living we have, where we're rated one of the best countries in the world and we are the best province in the best country in the world, do we really think, in terms of the way we take care of our seniors, that it's good enough to rank dead last when it comes to nursing services and personal care services we provide for our seniors in the homes? That's what it's all about. Let us collectively set out a vision whereby we say that within the next five or 10 years we want to rank among the best jurisdictions in providing for our elderly in this province. That's what it's all about.

Yes, you're putting some money into new beds, and they are needed to some extent; there's a question as to what extent. But then what did the government do? When they got 50,000 petitions from individuals, people who were saying, "You've got to invest more money into nursing and personal care services," they took their own report and twisted it around and basically wanted to put a 15% increase on the people who live there by saying, "Well, you want us to invest more. Here it is. We're going to charge you more." Talk about all the cynical moves one can think of. That's what happened. Now, the government quickly backed away from that after awhile and said, "OK. Well, maybe we'll make a 15% increase over the next three years."

It's all about accountability. I don't want to stand here for a moment and say that the people who provide the daily nursing services and the daily personal care services in the homes aren't doing the best they can, but it's with greater acuity, the fact, according to this report, that there's a 39% higher acuity with our seniors. In other words, they need much greater care than they did five, six, seven years ago. In those days, people were more mobile. They're older now and they need more help in the homes.

What it all boils down to, and what this resolution basically speaks to, is, let us give these people some minimum level of help. Let's make sure that the standards aren't below at least one bath a week. Let us try to raise the amount of nursing and personal care we give to our elderly. I think we owe them that. That's what this is about. The change in regulations, which is all wonderful language saying, "We will hold the operators respon-

sible; we will hold the personal care staff responsible,"" he doesn't do anything. The people who have contributed so much in this province deserve better from us, and the best way we can do it is by making sure they get the best kind of personal care and nursing services possible. This resolution is one step in that direction.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I appreciate the opportunity to be able to make a few comments on the resolution brought forward by the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan regarding standards for bathing and nursing in Ontario's long-term-care facilities.

Having just listened to the member from Kingston and the Islands, if I was scoring that on theatrics, I'd give him a 9 out of 10. If I was scoring it on content and change of direction, he'd get a 1 or a 2 out of 10.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Galt: Oh, I'd give him a little more than a zero. I'd give him a mark or two, because they keep changing direction. You never know where they're going to be next.

I'm very, very proud to be part of a government that has invested record amounts of money in our province's long-term-care sector and one that has improved long-term-care services throughout Ontario like never, never before. We've worked hard, with a clear vision on how to meet the needs of our growing and aging population. We've come a long, long way since we were first elected in 1995.

This stands in stark contrast to the party of the members opposite, which took virtually no action to meet Ontario's long-term-care needs when they were in office. From 1985 to 1995, zeroing in on that period, for 10 years not one single, solitary long-term-care bed was created in Ontario. What did they do? They cut many of the acute care beds, leaving wings of hospitals empty, not having the intestinal fortitude to actually close a wing, but cutting many acute care beds. Not one long-term-care bed was created in Ontario during that period.

Now I see them standing up, holier than thou, saying what they would do if they came to office. They're like a moving target: hard to hit. You never know where they'll be tomorrow; you only know right at the moment where they are, but it's constantly changing. When they were in government, they had the opportunity to govern, but what did they do? They called an election in less than three years, thinking they could jump ahead of a disastrous economy, which they had indeed created.

I just listened to the member from Kingston and the Islands talk about "the best possible care." That's the direction in which we're going. He referred to "lower than Mississippi," but he didn't refer to how that was measured. What was the measure? He did not go into that in any detail at all. He knows that if it was measured in any other way, Ontario would not be in that position.

I did like his comments about liking to be one of the best. I think that's indeed a great idea. But then he went on to talk about accountability. Our government has brought in more bills, more activities, more regulations on accountability, whether it's education or health. What

has the official opposition been doing? What has the member from Kingston and the Islands been doing? They have voted against every bill we've brought in having to do with accountability. They're now talking about accountability, and I think that is just absolutely marvellous. I don't know what position they'll take tomorrow on accountability; they'll probably vote against it. But it was so refreshing to sit on this side of the House and hear somebody in the Liberal Party talking about accountability. It just warmed the cockles of my heart to hear them talk about accountability. It's just beautiful. I hope they keep talking about it, and I hope they do more than talk about it; I hope they'll actually vote, when we bring forward bills about accountability, and I hope they'll actually support them.

The Acting Speaker: Response?

Mrs McLeod: I do thank my colleagues from Nickel Belt, Hamilton Mountain, Sarnia-Lambton and Kingston and the Islands for their support on this resolution.

For the record, to the member from Northumberland, when the Liberals were in government, 50% of the people who were in long-term-care facilities needed residential care, not long-term care, and that's why we invested and created the integrated homemaker program and put half a billion dollars into setting up that homemaker program, the very same home care program that this government has completely eroded.

To the members from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford and Simcoe North, I can only wish that you would throw away the briefing notes the minister has given you, get out into the facilities in your ridings and see what's actually going on. You used all the words the minister uses: "Standards don't work; they don't serve the best interests of the residents. We need to meet individual needs. We're going to have personal care plans." All of that would be wonderful. It's what we would all like. It is not what your government is funding. You are not funding minimum, basic levels of care. When you're challenged on that, you remove the regulations that would in some way have held you accountable.

Minimum standards are not adequate quality of care. I would never argue that for one moment. I would hope that a government that truly cared would go far beyond the minimum in providing enough resources to long-term-care facilities that we really could go beyond minimums, that we could really deal with personal care needs and personal care plans. That's what we should have. It's not what we have now. Minimum standards are at least a way of holding a government that does not care to a very basic minimum standard.

To this government's shame, not only have they withdrawn the minimum standards, but when a political lobby reached such intensity that they were forced to address in some minimal way the care needs of residents in long-term-care facilities, they had the sheer gall to say, "Yes, we'll do something, but we're going to make the seniors pay for it out of their own pockets." For shame.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item number 67. I will place the question to decide this matter at 12 noon.

1100

**REMOVAL OF OCCUPATIONAL
BARRIERS ACT, 2002**

**LOI DE 2002 SUR L'ÉLIMINATION
DES OBSTACLES PROFESSIONNELS**

Mr Ruprecht moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 189, An Act to remove barriers to the practice of occupations, professions and trades in Ontario for persons with appropriate qualifications obtained outside Ontario / Projet de loi 189, Loi visant à éliminer les obstacles à l'exercice de professions et de métiers en Ontario par quiconque a obtenu ailleurs les qualités professionnelles appropriées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): The member for Davenport has 10 minutes for his presentation.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I am pleased to introduce this private member's bill to this Legislature and to recommend its passage to every member. Here is why: our parents and grandparents came to Canada to find a better life. Because they were hard-working, they succeeded. Essentially, we all know that they had access to education, and later on, access to professions. But today this is not the case.

Many physicians, engineers, nurses, veterinarians and on and on are getting extra points outside Canada from our immigration department to come to this country because they have a profession, they speak the language and they're very hard-working individuals. Once they arrive on our shores, the reality is different. The doors to professional occupations, the doors to get a great life in this country—to be prepared, to work hard and make a go of things and start anew in a different place, probably with a different language, is tough—are being shut in their faces.

We all know the problems. Every one of you in the government knows the problems as well. Every one of us has been approached by people who have a great education and great possibilities to participate in this country's economic well-being and progress, but the doors are being shut.

Even Premier Harris recognized the problem. In 1995, he said, "We're going to act on access to trades and professions very swiftly."

Then I asked the question to Marilyn Mushinski, who is right here—and I'm very happy—because she was the former Minister of Citizenship. She even said, "Right now the system, according to the report that came out, has not been adequate." That's right from the Minister of Citizenship's mouth.

Then we move from Ms Mushinski over to Isabel Bassett. Isabel Bassett was also a fine Minister of Citizenship. Guess what Ms Bassett said? "The ministry commissioned a study by Price Waterhouse; in fact, the final report was ... submitted April 6, 1998. It concludes

that the existing services do not have credibility and wide acceptance among employers."

She knows the problem. The Premier knows the problem. Every Minister of Citizenship knows the problem. Now of course the new Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities knows the problem. So what are we going to do about this? The new Minister of Citizenship knows the problem as well because he too is being approached. What is he going to do about this? We have a responsibility to those who have come to this country and who want to participate in the economic well-being.

The specific problem is simply this—and I will quote from various reports. Here is a report by the Ministry of Citizenship itself. It says, "We find barriers to be systemic, generally applicable to most occupations and rooted in the practices of self-governing bodies.... Few professions are free of discriminatory practices."

Second, the federal government in a new report, Not Just Numbers: A Canadian Framework for Future Immigration, March 1998, says, "Many" licensing bodies "have used their role as protectors of the health and safety of consumers as a guise"—guess what?—"to protect the interests of their members through exclusionary entrance requirements."

Finally, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal came to this conclusion: "The government has given them"—the licensing bodies—"the power and they are using it to exclude." I can go on and on. This practice is "widespread and generalized evidence of practices, which are discriminatory." This is from Peter Cumming, the Ontario Court judge, law professor at Osgoode Hall.

It is clear: we need to act. You, as members of the government, have a special responsibility to vote for this bill today. You did me great pride three years ago. You said yes to the private member's resolution I proposed three years ago. This House voted unanimously except, of course, one person who has carriage of this bill, and that person was the very Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities who was supposed to know better. Did she show up to vote for it? No. Is she going to come today and vote for it? I would only hope so. Let this message go out loud and clear to her and to the government: I want you to come here. I want you to show your face. I want you to vote for it, because that would mean that this bill will get quick passage and there will be enough money set aside for it to be introduced to some body, either government or private, to check things out and to produce results.

We know the problem. What is the solution? The solution is the following, and I will propose it:

"(1) Individuals should have the opportunity to seek licensure or certification in professions and trades for which they have been trained." That's almost obvious.

"(2) Full information on the licensing/certification standards and appeal processes of licensing and occupational bodies should be available and accessible.

"(3) Any competency assessment or licensure/certification requirements should be based on criteria

relevant to performing adequately in the profession or trade.

“(4) Candidates should be provided with written reasons for denial of an application or appeal for certification or licensure in a trade or profession.” In other words, we want this process to be as transparent as possible.

“(5) Individuals should have access to training opportunities when upgrade training would allow Ontario competency standards to be reached.”

Are we asking the impossible? Certainly not. Any society that prides itself on getting people from countries—Europe and, in fact, even from Third World countries. It’s an exchange. It’s a brain drain on their country because they would like to have a new future and a better way to create a new life in Canada. Yet what do they find? They find the doors are being closed.

We have various agencies that came up with solutions and recommendations. Today is the day when we are put to the test, and the test is very simple: do we really want people from outside of our province—whether it’s Manitoba, Quebec or British Columbia, and whether it is through Third World countries or outside the United States or outside our shores—to really come here and then end up as taxi drivers, when they are physicians, lawyers, nurses, engineers?

We have so many of them. In fact, we now have the government saying, “Let’s do something quickly,” because of the response and the very huge demand that is now being placed on the government to act. So the Minister of Health is finally saying, “Do you know what we’re going to do? We’re going to fast-track the system because we need 1,585 doctors in Ontario.” That’s the need. Many of our residents can’t get to a doctor. Many of our residents, especially outside of Toronto in the smaller towns and smaller centres of Ontario, have no doctors at all, and they have to make do.

1110

We need 1,585 doctors. Do you know what the International Association of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario is telling us? They are saying, “We have over 2,000 doctors right here in Ontario waiting to get into the system, and there is no space.” What an option we have: we need so many doctors, they’re already here and yet there is no way for them to be fast-tracked. The Minister of Health is going to stand up and say, “We’re going to fast-track them.” Yes, but do you know how many? Seven hundred and nine recently applied to the fast-track system. Do you know how many were accepted? Forty-four. If we continue this, obviously the shortage of doctors will increase. There are 3,000 doctors who very quickly will reach age 65. The demand will be even greater.

Finally, Skills for Change, an organization looking into this matter, has made some very good recommendations. I can’t read them all now, but I simply say to this government, look at this bill, support this bill, because the need is great and we need your help.

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): It’s a pleasure today to speak to Bill 189, An Act to remove barriers to the practice of occupations, professions and trades in Ontario for persons with appropriate qualifications obtained outside Ontario. I’m pleased to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 189. I think it is fair to say that the strength of our economy owes a great deal to the skills, dedication and talents of people who have chosen Ontario as a place to live, work and raise a family. Of course that falls back many generations. Prior to Confederation, people emigrated, particularly from Great Britain, to make a life in Ontario. Right up to today, people are arriving, creating jobs, finding employment and helping to build the strongest province in our Confederation and of course the engine that drives the Canadian economy.

We know that Ontario is the prime destination for new Canadians and that about 60% of all immigrants to Canada choose our province. This is in part because of the opportunities and infrastructure available to them. We can look at any sector, from construction to manufacturing to services, and Ontario has benefited from the contributions that different cultures have brought here.

A few months ago, the Conference Board of Canada released a national report called Brain Gain: The Economic Benefits of Recognizing Learning and Learning Credentials in Canada. The study points out that an improved system for recognizing the learning of immigrants would offset the brain drain and benefit our economy.

The provincial government helped sponsor this study. Its results reflect our experiences in Ontario. Our government has always recognized the importance of helping the foreign-trained quickly enter our economy and put their skills and knowledge to work here in our province.

I know, for example, one of our government’s initiatives allows internationally trained journeypersons to write the certificate of qualification exam provided they have the experience and the required number of hours of training.

Our government has also developed a range of innovative tools to assist internationally trained tradespersons access their occupations. These include a skills-based test for automotive service technicians as an alternative to the written certificate of qualification test and projects that include occupation-specific language instruction.

In conjunction with a general guide for internationally trained tradespeople, we have published fact sheets for five trades: automotive service technician, hairstylist, industrial electrician, industrial millwright, construction and maintenance electrician. An additional three fact sheets are being pilot-tested for refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics, tool and die makers and general machinists. Of course we know that in all those areas we have a shortage, not only in our province but right across our country and indeed right across the continent.

Our government remains committed to helping skilled newcomers enter the labour force quickly and contribute to our strong economy. We continue to attract the

world's best and brightest to Ontario by helping internationally trained professionals and tradespeople qualify for employment and gain access faster.

Our government has improved access to education and training opportunities for immigrants. We have posted fact sheets on the Internet so that potential immigrants will be aware of occupational and professional regulations in our province long before they actually arrive here. We continue to work with community partners, occupational regulatory bodies, employers, educational institutions and community agencies to reduce barriers so that immigrants can find suitable jobs.

The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, Mrs. Mushinski, has talked to me about the important contribution her ministry makes, and this bill would limit opportunities for new Ontarians to attain similar achievements as their predecessors. Other provinces are looking to Ontario to see how they can help immigrants in their towns and cities, and I thank the Minister of Citizenship, the Honourable Carl DeFaria, for his strong work in his ministry in helping provide some of this work.

Our government has taken a leadership role and it has continued to lead the way in creating opportunities for new Canadians. I think that's shown very clearly in the fact that almost one million new jobs have been created here in Ontario since 1995. I know that each year the Ministry of Education provides school boards with funding for adult English as a second language, based on program enrolment. For 2001-02, school boards received more than \$42 million for this program.

The newcomer settlement program of the Ministry of Citizenship provides nearly \$4 million to 88 community agencies for settlement services for new immigrants, as well. The Ministry of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation has programs to help immigrant entrepreneurs and investors start businesses and create even more jobs here in our province. This government's approach has been inclusive, to engage the community, employers, workers, occupational and professional regulatory bodies, educators and trainers, all to help create solutions that work better for our province.

While we are consulting, listening and helping to find solutions with the support and input of the community, Bill 189 says the government has all the answers. While I agree with the intent of the bill, and will vote today to support this bill, I agree with my colleagues on this side of the House that further discussion at committee is very necessary.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Mr. Ruprecht's bill this morning and look forward to further debate here.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough-Rouge River): Let me, in my short time, hurriedly express my great appreciation to my colleague Tony Ruprecht for again bringing forward legislation that I had put forward and he had put forward at one time on the same matter. It becomes rather frustrating that this government will talk about it but do nothing. We've had so many ministers who have tried to do something and nothing has been done.

I heard the member over there state that we are moving toward many things like ESL programs. I want to brief him a little better on this. In addition to what we have here with foreign-trained professionals who are well trained and well skilled, who come to our country and our province, this is really a global phenomenon. Many countries today are competing to attract world talent and skills. In fact, just recently the August magazine the Economist—you're quite familiar with it—in their September 5, 2002, edition, had an intriguing study titled "Onward Bound" and asked, "Do developing countries gain or lose when their brightest talents go abroad?" It highlighted the pain that certain nations undergo when their pool of talent migrates to nations such as Canada.

I'm not here to talk about the pain that developing countries suffer when they lose—the brain drain. What we're talking about is the brain gain. They come here and we need to recognize and understand their contributions. Those contributions can be seen. Who can address those contributions? The regulatory bodies, as my colleague talks about in his bill. They need to recognize social and economic responsibilities by expediting the accreditation process and opening up the professional bodies—we know how tight and restricted they are—and he expresses that in his bill. Those regulatory bodies can advocate on behalf of the potential professional programs, such as ESL. The member talked about the ESL programs. They are a great and dire need, because some of these individuals really need that ESL program to assist them in that process. That would help them to support the system, and also by the government.

1120

The member stated that it's governments who have all these wonderful things that they alone can deliver. No, we're talking about other organizations. Government, of course, needs to recognize their responsibilities, not only through positive, constructive, well-funded programs, but also to be a clearing house of information, a leader in institutional building and to be involved in advising potential immigrant applicants with honest expectations of the systems in Ontario and Canada; to play a more effective role in immigration policy, because when people do arrive here, they are not giving that kind of support to access and play a role in their potential.

The private sector, the businesses that benefit most from this professional talent, also need to take a leadership role and become part of the solution with standardized acceptance of accreditation and recognition of foreign degrees and experience, and a willingness to remove visible and latent barriers that exist. By embracing such objectives and working together, all three groups will realize the benefits and potential benefits of foreign-trained professionals.

There's an economic benefit, of course: The under-utilized skills benefit economic growth and fill the current and potential skills shortages. The current cost of non-recognition of immigrant credentials, which is estimated at \$2 billion, would be addressed. These are people working who are being under-utilized, people

who are professionally skilled. The province, the government itself, is not playing a very active role in that.

The social benefits are extremely important. It builds strong family values; it establishes a sound foundation and demonstrates an example for the children; it brings pride and respectability to the family. No fathers or mothers who are quite professionally skilled are at home, very under-utilized. They're encouraging their children that they, themselves, should be seeking education. Some of them would wonder, "What for, Mom? What for, Dad? You are not being utilized with the wonderful skills that you have." It's the government's responsibility. The social benefits are being undermined here. It allows the family to refocus the strong benefits of education and skills.

I'd hope that this government will endorse and embrace this policy, this legislation, and vote for it.

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): This nation has prided itself, probably since the time of Clifford Sifton, as being a nation of immigrants. In fact, Canada has welcomed per capita probably more people from other countries than any other nation on earth.

The big immigration years are not the ones we're seeing now. In fact, the big immigration years were during the population and settling of the west with the hundreds of thousands of people who were recruited in the Ukraine, from northern and eastern Europe, to populate the provinces, what were then the Northwest Territories. But we in Canada have not kept up with that noble tradition. Even though we continue to this day to take some 200,000 immigrants in Canada per year, those numbers do not reflect anywhere near the numbers that were taken when Canada's population was much smaller.

The number of immigrants coming into Canada has never come close to the 1% that most social observers say can safely and quickly be absorbed into the larger Canadian population. In fact, we should be doing more to help immigrants come to this country than we have done. I say that as a person who worked in the immigration department myself for some 21 years. In those 21 years, I saw people come from all over the world to make Canada their home: people who often came with very little more than a gleam in their eye and a hope for their children; people who prospered; people who were able to make significant contributions.

There have been many changes, though, even in my lifetime, even within the lifetime of people in this room. And how the immigration system has changed. Not only has it changed with respect to where the people are coming from—they are no longer primarily coming from Europe and the United States, the two previous source countries going back to the 1960s and 1970s, but they are now literally coming from every one of the 180 nations of this world. They are coming here speaking many languages; they are coming here with many creeds and religions.

Those immigration patterns have changed in other ways too. They've changed in the way that Canada recruits people. Now we have what is called a point

system grid that allows people to come to this country. In the past, it was easy for people who could be sponsored or nominated by relatives to come here with virtually no problem, provided they had a blood relative. But today the primary sources of immigration are those who can apply and make the required number of points under the systems of either Canada or Quebec. The federal reliance on the family class has shifted remarkably in the last number of years. There is now a whole new emphasis on skills and abilities. One has to have the skills and abilities and the number of points in order to simply pass and be allowed forward. But the government of Ontario has not shifted with that whole new emphasis on skills and abilities. We act as a government in this province no different from the governments in the 1950s and 1960s who simply saw an incoming mass of people who were sponsored by relatives, the relatives who would look after them, find them jobs in the construction trade or on the farms or wherever they were destined. That has not changed.

Quite literally, the immigrants who are coming to this country, particularly to this province, are frustrated, because their skills and abilities for which they were chosen on the new grid systems are not being recognized. Literally as well, although you see the numbers of some 200,000 to 225,000 immigrating to this country every year, you do not see those who are emigrating. You do not see the ones who have given up in frustration and have gone back to their former countries, or who have gone on to a third country, like the United States or Great Britain, where their skills and abilities are being recognized. We talk about taking the best and the brightest. We do not use them. Literally tens of thousands of people leave in frustration after months and sometimes years of being unrecognized. We are all the poorer for it.

We are going to support this bill, but we support it not as an end but as a stop-gap measure. It allows for accreditation of immigrants; it allows for written reasons if those persons are refused accreditation; it allows for accrediting agencies to ensure that training will be given to new immigrants and people so that they can be allowed to compete in the Canadian market; and it allows an appeal process.

The major failure of this bill, if there is a failure, I think is twofold. The first is that it puts back on to the shoulders of the new Ontarian, the new immigrant to this country, that they must go to the courts to seek redress. That is an expensive process for anyone. That is an expensive process to someone who is established here, but it is doubly and almost impossibly expensive to someone who has come here, sometimes without the necessary monies—not everyone comes to this country rich—to then have to go out and hire a lawyer. It must be shameful, if the person was a lawyer before, having to go out and hire another lawyer to go to court because they are not properly accredited, to spend all of that money and time, particularly to sometimes wait a year or two years in a backlog court system, to get redress. We do not think that putting people through the

court system, as this bill suggests, is a good thing. Something else needs to be done.

That takes me to the second, and that is a bill that was before this House back in 1999 by Tony Silipo, who was then a member of this House. He was suggesting a credentials assessment agency that could handle this kind of grievance rather than sending it through the courts. We think this bill would have been better with a credentials assessment agency. If the bill is passed today and is sent to committee, that is precisely the kind of amendment we would attempt to put to strengthen the bill in the short term.

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But in the long term this government, the government of this province, has to do far more. The government has to be a player, and we are not a player, in this worldwide movement of people. We talk about needing doctors, we talk about needing engineers, we talk about needing nurse practitioners, but Ontario does nothing to get them.

As far back as 1867, Mr Speaker, the province of Ontario has had authority to do something about this. With your permission, I would just like to read something that, with the new Constitution and the Charter of Rights, people have forgotten about, and that is the British North America Act, which is still extant and which gives the provinces all the authority they need to do exactly what should be done.

Section 95 deals with agriculture and immigration, and it reads as follows:

“In each province the Legislature may make laws in relation to agriculture in the province, and to immigration into the province; and it is hereby declared that the Parliament of Canada may from time to time make laws in relation to agriculture in all or any of the provinces, and to immigration into all or any of the provinces; and any law of the Legislature of a province relative to agriculture or to immigration shall have effect in and for the province as long and as far only as it is not repugnant to any act of the Parliament of Canada.”

What that means is that Ontario can do something similar to what Quebec has done. They have developed their own grid system. They have their own immigration officers who are abroad and who are in the province of Quebec to assist new immigrants, to choose new immigrants, to assess new immigrants, to assess credentials. I would suggest that we go no further than to our sister province of Quebec to see a province that actually recruits and recognizes people they choose and bring in.

We do not do that. Ontario should be there. Granted, it may be a little bit expensive, but Ontario would have a golden opportunity to go out into the field and choose people we need. We could choose the 1,500 doctors we need. We could choose the nurse practitioners and the engineers. We could choose the people who are in demand in this province. And we could recognize their credentials before they arrive here, not when they arrive here, not a year after they arrive here, not when they’ve given up in frustration and gone home, but while they are

waiting to get their papers, their immigrant visa, to come to Canada.

Surely that makes much more sense, to say, “Ontario wants you and when you come with that doctor’s certificate you will be recognized,” or, “When you come with your certificate you will be required to do an additional year in school, and do you understand that will be the requirement?” People will then be able to make a rational choice whether they want to come to Ontario or to Quebec or to British Columbia. But certainly in Ontario, which takes more than half of all the immigrants to this country, we should be the leaders; we should be choosing the people and we should be helping those people to understand what it is to immigrate to this province.

It takes most immigrants about a year in the process from the day they apply for an immigrant visa until that visa is given to them. In some parts of the world, unfortunately, it may take two or three, in some it is less than a year, but a year is a fairly standard average. In that year, while medicals are being done, while stage B is being done, which is criminality and terrorists, while we’re looking at all that stuff and all those tests are being done, this is an opportunity for the government of Ontario. If we do what is allowed in the Constitution of this country, it is an opportunity for us to assess the credentials of those very same people who are coming here. It is an opportunity for us to say, “Yes, your credentials are valid,” or, “You will be required to do some additional study, which you can start while you’re there.” The time is not going to be wasted for these very valuable new citizens.

We have to give them that reasonable expectation. It is absolutely false and wrong on our part as a government to invite people into this country and then not recognize them and force them either into jobs they don’t want—to uproot them from countries and they come with false expectations. It is our responsibility. It is our responsibility to be realistic, and part of that goes to this government’s responsibility to help to choose the immigrants.

Of all the provinces and territories in Canada, it is only Ontario that has not signed the immigration accord, and that is why we get less money for things like helping new immigrants. We get less money than the province of Quebec per capita, because they have signed the accord and because they have a grid system. We get less money than Manitoba on a per capita basis, less money than Prince Edward Island on a per capita basis.

We need to be players. It is not enough simply to pass this bill. It is up to the government or any new government after the next election to seize the opportunity for our citizens. We need to help those citizens, but we also need to help Ontario. It is incumbent upon us, all members of this House, to do that which will help the economy of this province. The economy of this province is reliant upon new people coming into Ontario. As this province ages, as the people get older, as the baby boomers work their way through the system, as I am doing now here today, as we work our way through the

system, increasingly we will require immigration to this province to maintain the standards that we have set. There are not enough children to even replace the boomers today, and we are going to increasingly have to rely on people from other countries who see this country and this province for the truly magnificent opportunity it is. We will need them. They will need us. We need to work together.

It is an honour to stand here today and to speak about this bill. We in the New Democratic Party will be supporting this bill here in the Legislature today, but we put all of you and ourselves as well on notice that more needs to be done. We need to be a player, we need to be a part, we need to help, and we are intent on doing that so that the people who are here in this gallery today—and I see many upstairs in here—will know that their credentials are recognized, that we welcome them as new Canadians, that we welcome them into the fabric of this society, that they have an important role to play with us and for us, and that this bill will be a part of it and in the future we'll do much more.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: We'd just like to remind those in the galleries that we really appreciate your being here with us this morning, but we cannot have any participation, and that includes applause and other such displays of—how should we say it?

Interjection: Emotion.

The Acting Speaker: Emotion—yes, that's a good one.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I'm particularly pleased to have this opportunity to join this debate on Bill 189, not just because as an immigrant or a member of the Scarborough community for the last 35 years, but also as a member of this government, I believe that ensuring Ontario has a highly skilled workforce that's needed to attract jobs and investment is an absolute top priority for our government.

We know, for example, that access to jobs for internationally trained immigrants is a key to a strong economy. I don't think there's any question that this province has gone from being one of the worst economies seven years ago to now, seven years later, being the first economy and the best economy. We absolutely understand that a highly skilled workforce that is diverse contributes greatly to that.

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We are working to ensure recognition of prior education, skills and training to help skilled newcomers enter the labour force quickly and contribute to the economy. An important part of this goal is to ensure that Ontario attracts the world's best and brightest. We want the world to see our province as the prime destination point for people looking for opportunity. Certainly that was one of the reasons why I immigrated to this great land over 35 years ago.

Our goal is to build partnerships to make Ontario the best place to live, work and raise a family, as you've already heard from my colleague Mr Dunlop. The gov-

ernment cannot accomplish this goal alone; we know that. It's important that we work together and gather the best advice and input from external agencies—some of whose representatives I know are here today—and organizations that have first-hand knowledge of their industries. I would suggest that in my own riding of Scarborough Centre we have those industries, Berg Chilling, for example, which truly understand that their workforce must represent and reflect the community they serve.

Our approach to achieving this goal is to continue to develop long-term partnerships that will promote the recognition of the qualifications of internationally trained professionals and tradespeople and ensure their participation in our economy as quickly as possible. However, we must also maintain high standards of quality and safety—this should not be understated—promoted by occupational regulatory bodies that Ontarians have come to expect and deserve.

There's no easy solution to this situation. No one group or organization can have all the answers to help people who have learned in different educational systems or trained under different regulatory regimes match their skills to Ontario needs. There can be no one-size-fits-all solution. We also recognize that no one organization can do it alone.

That's why we have built strong partnerships, based on respect and understanding, with occupational regulatory bodies, educational institutions, employers, community agencies serving immigrants, other government agencies and other governments as well. This approach has resulted in significant achievements to help the internationally trained quickly put their skills and training to work in Ontario.

Our government has allocated \$15.5 million to support innovative bridge training projects to help the internationally trained learn what they need to know to be licensed to work in industries that are facing strategic skills shortages. We help internationally trained professionals apply their skills and knowledge in Ontario as quickly as possible. We know that this approach is working. Bridge training has already been launched for nurses and pharmacists in Ontario.

I would like to go on, but I know I have a couple of other colleagues who wish to address this. So I'll stop now, other than to say that in principle we support Mr Ruprecht's bill. But we need to get more new Ontarians into the economy, into jobs for which they have international training, and we need a more fulsome discussion in order to achieve that.

Mr Dalton McGuinty (Leader of the Opposition): It gives me a great deal of pleasure to participate in this debate. I want to begin by congratulating my colleague Tony Ruprecht for the initiative he has taken in introducing this bill. You should know that this is hardly a one-off from Mr Ruprecht. Earlier, he had introduced a resolution which received all-party support.

I take it from the government members' comments just a few moments ago that there is support for this bill, and I am very, very pleased to hear that.

Fundamentally, what we're talking about here is something that goes to the core of certainly what we choose to stand for as Liberals: opportunity. In fact, there are three aspects of opportunity here. First of all, there is the opportunity for individuals who have been trained in other parts of the world to come here and to work at their highest level of training. We think that is a very worthwhile pursuit on the part of our province and our collective within this Legislature. We are facing—and this has been out there for quite some time now—some serious labour shortages in a variety of sectors. There are some 900,000 Ontarians today who can't get access, for example, to a family doctor.

We have a shared sense of responsibility here to ensure that all those new Canadians coming here—who have been trained, by the way, at the expense of taxpayers living in other jurisdictions. We are so focused sometimes on the brain drain that we do so at the expense of our perspective in terms of looking at the brain gain followed by the brain waste. We've got all kinds of people who have come here from different parts of the world who received training at the expense of taxpayers in other jurisdictions. This is a gift, and we're not capitalizing on this. We're not leveraging this tremendous asset.

With respect to our responsibility when it comes to opportunity for the individuals involved, it's important that they be able to work at their highest level and get that sense of satisfaction that comes when you put your head down on the pillow at night, knowing that you're making a contribution to your economy, you're a productive member of society and you're able to raise your family. I think that's important for new Canadians to be able to do.

With respect to opportunity for Ontarians, and families in particular, I just made reference to the fact that there are so many Ontarians, so many families who can't get a family doctor. We are depriving them of the opportunity to get a family doctor or some other kind of skilled worker and professional. We owe it to Ontario families to ensure that these people, our new Canadians, are being admitted to our trades and professions at the earliest possible opportunity.

The third aspect of opportunity here that is often overlooked is that this represents a wonderful opportunity to further strengthen our economy. In the knowledge economy, the most valuable commodity is the skilled worker. We have skilled workers arriving on our shores and we are not doing everything that we should be doing to capitalize on that potential economic productivity. So what we're talking about here is a win-win-win. It's a win for the new Canadians, to ensure that they can work at their highest capacity; it's a win for Ontario families, who can access the services that would be offered by these new Canadians; and it's a win for our economy, because these skills add significantly to our level of productivity.

We've had kind of an unwritten rule, and it's time to move beyond this. The unwritten rule was: "Come to

Canada. It is a land of opportunity and you will enjoy success here solely on the basis of hard work." But what we really said between the lines was: "The kids are going to find opportunity and you, the adults, are going to have to sit this one out." Well, in a just-in-time world we can't afford to do that any more. We need everybody at their best right away.

I have a son in first-year biology. He's thinking of becoming a doctor. Wonderful. I hope he makes it. But we're going to have to wait some 12 to 14 years for him. We can't wait 12 or 14 years for young people who are in first-year university today. On the other hand, we can get some of our skilled professionals—if I can stick with medicine, for instance—up to Ontario standards in, I don't know, some six to 18 months. So again, it's important that we recognize that things have changed. We owe it not only to our new Canadians but we owe it to ourselves to bring them up to speed as quickly as we can.

I urge government members to support this bill. I get the sense that they're about to do that. I want to conclude once again by thanking my caucus colleague Tony Ruprecht for his initiative and foresight in this matter.

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Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Brampton): I am very pleased to be able to speak on Bill 189 with respect to the practice of occupations, professions and trades in Ontario. Certainly people who are qualified to be in these professions should be there. That goes without saying. Certainly I think this government has done a lot of work in this area in terms of creating more opportunities, having an economy in place that provides these opportunities.

That's what Ontario is about. It's the engine of this country in terms of getting those jobs out there. That's why there are opportunities. Let's recognize what's been done to create these opportunities. The bottom line is, we have to get people in those positions.

In 2001, almost 11,000 newcomers said they intended to work in the engineering profession. Our government has assumed a leadership role and for the first time in Canada is supporting a bridge training project, a project that has been designed for internationally trained engineers that will provide paid work experience, a key prerequisite for a professional licensing. Once implemented, this program will help about 150 internationally trained engineers each year. There are more programs and more consultation going on with respect to this issue.

I'm going to yield my time right now to the Minister of Citizenship. It's such an important issue and I think he's done a great job in this area. I fully support the bill, but we have to make sure it fits the needs of this province.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): As my leader, Dalton McGuinty, did, I also wanted to compliment my colleague Tony Ruprecht, who's been absolutely relentless on this issue.

I just say that our economy, as my leader pointed out, depends on our ability to attract people to move from

other countries to Ontario. Two years ago, the Ministry of Finance did a study that not many people are aware of that showed in three different “scenarios,” as they called them, that without immigration our population in Ontario declines. We won’t need to build any more houses because we’ll have enough houses. Without immigration—

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Mr Guzzo may choose to criticize in front of these people, but I’m just saying that the Ministry of Finance study shows that without immigration our population will decline and our economy will suffer dramatically. We need to have immigrants coming to this province and we need to continue to have skilled immigrants wanting to move to Ontario.

I remember meeting with the Speaker of the Michigan state legislature, who said their economic office role used to be to attract business to come to Michigan. Three years ago, they changed the role from attracting business to attracting workers to come to Michigan. That’s the single biggest inhibitor of economic growth in the state of Michigan. I said to the Speaker, “We’re very fortunate here in Ontario. We’re able to attract talented people from around the world to come to Ontario.”

But that won’t continue unless we take steps. I happen to think we need to take steps and make some investment in the areas of settlement services and English as a second language so people feel at home and welcome here. Believe me, if we don’t do that, our economy will suffer dramatically. But this particular one of making sure people who have acquired their skills and talents in other countries are able to use them here in Ontario is a cornerstone.

Eleven years ago, a major study was done on this, pointing out all the barriers, and virtually nothing’s happened in 11 years. I sat with a person from Kitchener who has a self-help group involving 51 foreign-trained physicians who cannot practise in Kitchener. The member will know Kitchener has a doctor shortage, and 51 foreign-trained physicians live in Kitchener and cannot practise. So 11 years after this huge study was done showing all of the barriers, we still find very little action has taken place, and it’s wrong. We’re making a huge mistake.

I often talk to the consular corps here, consul generals from around the world, and they will tell you that talented people are hesitating to come to Canada and Ontario because when they get here—and they know their friends have come here—they’re not able to practise the experience and talent they’ve got because we have these, in many cases, artificial barriers.

We can talk all we want about the tiny steps we’ve taken, but the proof is in what’s happened to all of these people who still can’t practise, whether it be doctors—51 foreign-trained physicians in Kitchener alone. We just absolutely have to take substantial steps. I argue it on the basis of economics, as my leader did. I happen to be our finance critic, so that’s the area my leader asked me to comment on. Our economy depends fundamentally on

our ability to continue to attract people from around the world to want to come to Canada and Ontario.

Without this step, believe me, other countries are now aggressively searching out talented people to move there. I talked to the Consul General of India who tells me that computer people in India are being attracted to California in large numbers. We have to make sure those people think, believe and know that Ontario is a place where they are at home and welcome. I compliment my relentless friend Dr Tony Ruprecht who has fought this issue for years and years, and I support his bill.

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I have about a minute to speak on this. I want to welcome my friends who are here in the gallery, people I have worked with in the diverse communities of Ontario for many years. I want to tell you today that even though Bill 189 is too late and too flawed, I will be supporting this bill in principle because our government in fact has been acting on this issue.

The reason the bill is too late is that the Liberal government was here in 1985-87 and did nothing about this issue. The NDP government was here in 1990-95 and did nothing about this issue. There were foreign-trained professionals in Ontario in 1987 and in 1990-95, and those people did nothing while in government. It’s flawed because section 2 would, for example, force the Ontario government to allow a lawyer who is licensed in Timbuktu to practise in Ontario automatically. Even though the legal system may be excellent in Timbuktu, it may not be—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Response.

Mr Ruprecht: I would like to thank my colleagues for their support, and I also want to thank the government benches for their support. But I’m astounded, and do you know why? We’ve heard these promises before. We’ve had the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, we’ve had every Minister of Citizenship from Ms Mushinski to Isabel Bassett, and now this minister comes up and says to us, “This bill is too late. Oh my God, this bill is too late.” Where have you been, Minister? This is not too late.

What are you going to say to Dr Golubka, who is here right now. He’s been here three years. Is this bill too late for him? He has practised in the Ukraine for 15 years. Is this bill too late? What about Dr Martinez, a veterinarian? He came from Israel. He practised there and in Europe. Is this bill too late for him? How about Ms Biese, who is here as a physiotherapist from Germany? She’s been here for three years and can’t practise. Is this bill too late for her? How about Ifad Karim, an engineer with 18 years’ experience, in Canada six years and unable to practise. Is this bill too late for him?

It’s too late for you if you don’t get up and do something about it. So you know what I would recommend? If you are unable to do anything, move aside and let a McGuinty government take over and do something about it. That’s what you should be doing. It’s too late for you, my friend.

It’s quite obvious what is happening here. You can see already that they want to support this bill but want to hide

their faces at the same time and do nothing about it. They wish this bill would die, but this bill is not going to die; it's never going to die. Do you know why? Because more immigrants are coming; more immigrants are pushing the door down. You're holding the door shut and I'm asking you, open the door now, and if you can't do it, move aside and let a McGuinty government take over so we will do what we promised to do. In fact, our leader has said that if, in one year after we take over, this isn't done there will be hell to pay. We made that promise, we'll keep that promise and we're asking you to step aside.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): I will now deal with ballot item 67. Mrs McLeod has moved private member's notice of motion 18.

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 nays have it.

We will vote after dealing with ballot item number 68.

REMOVAL OF OCCUPATIONAL BARRIERS ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR L'ÉLIMINATION DES OBSTACLES PROFESSIONNELS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Ruprecht has moved second reading of Bill 189.

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

Applause.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: All these congratulatory comments of course are accepted, but at the same time I'd like to move that we place this bill before the public accounts committee.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Ruprecht has asked that this bill be referred to the public accounts committee. Agreed? Agreed.

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): We'll now deal with ballot item number 67. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1201 to 1206.

The Acting Speaker: Would all those in favour please stand and remain standing until your name is called?

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	McGuinty, Dalton
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Dombrowsky, Leona	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	Parsons, Ernie

Boyer, Claudette	Gerretsen, John	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hastings, John	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Prue, Michael
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Ramsay, David
Cleary, John C.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Levac, David	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Marland, Margaret	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Martel, Shelley	Sorbara, Greg
Crozier, Bruce	Martin, Tony	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until your name is called.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Kells, Morley	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tsubouchi, David H.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Turnbull, David
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	McDonald, AL	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 44; the nays are 42.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

The House recessed from 1210 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Today I am very pleased to produce a series that was created by the Windsor Star, our local newspaper. It is a series about mental health. What I'll be doing with this series, which they kindly reproduced because of the significant demand, is distribute it to every member in this House. Moreover, we'll be sending a copy of this series to every agency that deals with mental health issues in Ontario. The series was produced by Veronique Mandal, assisted by Marty Beneteau. It is a tremendous record of the issues in mental health that individuals and families must deal with.

I just want to give you a little bit of information about it. It was a six-month investigation. It dealt with several issues in the mental health area including: "Fortresses of Fear"—as they were described; "the Killing of Percy Demers"—a wonderful doctor who died in our area; "Whose Life is it Anyway?"; "The Insanity Defence"; "The Doctor is Out"; "Mapping the Brain"; and, finally, "Hope for the Future". There were seven parts to this. If

people would just take the time to read, it would be a tremendous education for all of us, even those who may not follow this issue every day. It will be helpful to governments of all levels to understand the significance of this disease creates and the impact it has on our families in this province.

Thank you for the opportunity. Please, members in this House, look forward to receiving your copy of this. Please call us. Visit our Web page, if you can't get a series or a copy. Please contact papatello.on.ca or daltonmcguinty.com to access any of us, and we'll certainly see that we get you the series.

JERMAIN AND KEVIN EBANKS

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to speak of the deep sense of personal sadness I felt when attending the funeral of Jermain Ebanks and Kevin Ebanks in my riding of Scarborough Centre this past Tuesday. This is the kind of event that an MPP wishes she did not ever have to attend, but I wanted to be there to show my solidarity with the Ebanks family and the larger community. We are all shocked at the terrible news of the violent deaths of two young members of the Scarborough community. Jermain was only 17; his brother Kevin was 21. Both had their lives ahead of them. Both as an MPP and as a mother, I want to reiterate publicly my personal condolences to Mr and Mrs Ebanks. I recognize that words can never express the sorrow we all feel at this enormous loss, but we must bear in mind that despite this tragedy we live, for the most part, in a caring and loving community. A genuine sense of community and solidarity was present at the funeral. People attended to pay their respects, support the family and call for an end to violence in our city.

At this point I understand that the culprits have yet to be apprehended. I would like to speak to the larger community and ask that anyone with information come forward to the authorities.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): I want to address my remarks directly to the Premier, because everybody saw it coming except the government. The storm, unfortunately, did not miss us. Skyrocketing hydro bills are affecting everyone: seniors, farmers, small, medium and large businesses, tenants—many tenants are being hit twice, very hard.

Let me give you some correspondence that I have received from seniors in my particular area. These are seniors who are living on one pension, in a small house. Their last bill was \$378, up from \$199. They want to know from me, they want to know from you, Premier, from your government, how they are going to manage this exorbitant bill on a monthly basis. They are not the only ones. There are so many others who come to us with the same situation. We have businesses. I have a couple,

a husband and wife, who have a small business. They have a small restaurant. From \$800 to \$2,300—they want to know from me, how many more spaghetti plates they have to sell to make up the increase from this government. So they are asking for a solution, some action, and they want action now.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): A small business, Dominic's Resto-Bar, down in the very north end of Thorold, is a well-established, successful and very popular restaurant with patrons from across the Niagara region. In fact, they employ 45 staff. But Heather Fasullo, who owns Dominic's Resto-Bar tells me that her hydro bill for the last two months was \$6,400, up from \$2,400 last year—a \$4,000 increase. She explains to me with great regret that the only way she can contain that cost is by laying off staff. She can't raise the prices of food; the market simply isn't there. In fact, if staff layoffs won't suffice, she's even contemplating shutting down that business.

Dominic's Resto-Bar and other small businesses like it don't need a rebate that will help them for but one month. What about the other 11 months of the year? They don't need a freeze on rates that are already sky-high and unaffordable. Dominic's Resto-Bar and other small businesses like it, like individual residential payers across Niagara and this province, need a restoration of regulated public hydro, the very sort of policy that New Democrats have been fighting for in their opposition to the Tory-Liberal agenda of privatizing and deregulating hydro with its sky-high hydro rates.

VETERANS

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): Today I rise before the House to pay respect to all the brave men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in an effort to secure our independence. They lived, they loved and they lost.

I am standing here today to say thank you to all the veterans who are with us today and to the soldiers who were lost in the wars of years gone by. We have not forgotten. Today I wish to reflect on and remember the efforts of those who fought for our freedom.

I look around the House today, and I see many a red poppy on the suits of the MPPs of this great province of Ontario. I can only imagine what the author of Flanders Fields, Mr John McCrae, must have seen when he decided to write that poem.

As the son of a lieutenant colonel, he saw first-hand the brutality that war brought upon those fighting. He, himself, lost many a good friend and fellow soldier to war. Mr McCrae never wanted this terrible hardship to be forgotten. Canadians have participated in major wars. Let us not forget our valiant efforts in battle at Vimy Ridge and Dieppe.

Furthermore, Canadian women played a vital role during the Second World War, with over 45,000 contributing directly to the war effort.

My dad served in the military for 25 years, and my grandfather served in World War II as a motorcycle

dispatcher. Thank you to all who risked their lives so we might live in a country of freedom and opportunity. I am proud to be a Canadian.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): If there was any doubt in Premier Eves's mind as to whether soaring hydro costs are hurting people in my riding, let me clear up that confusion today. Hydro bills, which are double what they were this time last year, are leaving many people, particularly those on fixed incomes, with increasingly desperate choices to make.

Perhaps the saddest story came from a widowed constituent who told my office that with her rent and her hydro bill she had nothing left to buy food for the rest of the month. This is unacceptable. The government must step in.

Then we have the impact this is having on our vital public services. In the first six months of this fiscal year, Thunder Bay Regional Hospital has already paid an amount equal to their total bill last year. Will Mr Eves pay for those increased costs or will hospital services have to suffer?

The bill for the Thunder Bay Catholic school board has almost doubled. Lakehead University's projections are that their bill will increase by \$600,000. What about the many small businesses in my riding struggling to stay open under these increased costs?

In the municipality of Greenstone, the costs for their daycare went up by 44% for September. Roy Sinclair, the CAO of Greenstone, told me earlier this week that their new hydro bill had just arrived and, frankly, he was too scared to open it.

Premier, your energy policy is an unmitigated disaster. The people of Ontario, including my constituents, are now paying for the mess you've gotten us into. Use the record profits from OPG for a rebate now and eliminate the GST on your debt retirement charge—we should never have been paying it.

I encourage all my constituents to sign the petition we are presently circulating, a petition which is available in all municipal offices throughout my riding. Premier Eves and this government cannot be allowed to wait any longer to provide relief to those desperately in need of help. It is our job to make sure he gets that message.

1340

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): Yesterday students from my riding and from ridings all across the province took part in the Learning Partnership's Take Our Kids To Work Day job-shadowing experience.

I had the wonderful opportunity of visiting with 20 grade 9 students from Kernahan Park high school yesterday who participated in a tour of the new provincial casino site currently under construction in Niagara Falls.

Students were taken around the perimeter of the casino site and were informed of the many construction skilled trades opportunities that were created with the announcement of the new casino. It is an \$800-million project, equivalent to the construction of three Air Canada Centres.

Although, for safety reasons, students were not permitted to visit the site directly, on the top floor of the Hilton hotel overlooking the construction site, students were provided with an overview of the different aspects of construction underway.

When speaking to these students yesterday, I stressed how important and valuable construction trade skills and skills in the tourism industry are to today's labour market, especially in Niagara. There are many exciting careers to be experienced in skilled trades, and I believe yesterday's event provided students with some options to consider for their plans for the future.

Many thanks to their teacher Larry Downes from Kernahan Park high school, as well as Barry Reynolds, general superintendent for PCL, the builders of the new casino, and Judy Reid from the business education council for their involvement in yesterday's excellent and worthwhile event.

MINISTER OF NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT AND MINES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has committed another blunder. This time he has insulted all northerners by calling them fat. Let me quote from the Manitoulin Recorder: "Mr Wilson said that after all the dinners and functions he had attended in the past seven months he was also beginning to look like a northerner as well. 'I have gained 20 pounds,' he said."

For a member of this Legislature to suggest all northerners are overweight is unbelievable. From the supposed minister for northern Ontario, such an insult is unforgivable. This type of regional stereotyping or whatever you want to call it is just plain wrong in this day and age.

Minister Wilson should know better. Public servants in the north and across the province are already ill at ease with this hot-headed minister, who said only a few weeks ago that he would fire all employees of his ministry who are not card-carrying Tories. We question the judgment and the ability of this minister.

The fact is that Minister Wilson has failed the north. He has done nothing to address the inequity of the northern health travel grant. He has done nothing to stop the carnage along Highway 69. He has done nothing to protect jobs at the ONTC.

Worst of all, Jim Wilson, as former energy minister, along with Ernie Eves, has completely bungled Hydro, leading to skyrocketing bills. Another apology is not in order from this minister. His resignation is.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): I rise today to pay tribute to the Canadian war veterans who fought so bravely and gave so much to preserve our freedoms.

Remembrance Day, celebrated on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, is of special significance whether we are immigrants or 10th-generation Canadians.

Canada and the world we know today would not be possible without the courage, valour and sacrifice of our veterans. The two world wars truly shaped Canada, yet today too few students and adults are being taught about our proud military history. A poll conducted this past April found that 57% of Canadians could identify In Flanders Fields as Canada's most famous war poem, but only one third, or 36%, could identify Vimy Ridge as the battle that captured a key ridge on the western front.

Teaching Canadian history must include in-depth analysis of our military's role in the great wars. The sacrifices made should not be forgotten or simply brushed aside. On Remembrance Day, all Canadians pause to reflect and we remember those young soldiers numbering in the tens of thousands who never returned home. On behalf of the veterans in my riding, I would like to urge all parents and students to join in our local Remembrance Day services this Sunday in the Malton Arena. In Brampton, Remembrance Day services will be held on both Sunday and Monday at Brampton city hall.

On Remembrance Day, let us all personally remember and thank those who gave so much to preserve the freedoms we all enjoy today.

VISITORS

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to acknowledge in the west gallery today, led by Patrick Fry-Smith, vice-president of Local 201, Hamilton Central Ambulance Communications Centre, all of the members who have joined us today to educate the members of this House and others about the concerns they have about dispatch in Hamilton. So I'm glad that they're here and I hope everyone is listening carefully.

As well, I know the members on the other side will recognize on their side of the gallery a good friend of mine, Mr Ron Johnson, a former member and MPP for Brantford.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I thank the member. Mr Johnson was a member for Brantford in the 36th Parliament. We welcome our colleague.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): On behalf of the members of the Legislature and myself, I'd like to thank our pages for their help over these past few weeks. It has been a pleasure to know you. It is their last day. I would

like to wish each and every one of you success in all your future endeavours.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): I beg leave to present the report on the Ontario innovation trust fund from the standing committee on public accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations. I'm handing it to Matthew here.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr Gerretsen: There are three recommendations in the report that specifically state that any act respecting the accountability of public sector organizations should apply to the Ontario innovation trust fund and that the Provincial Auditor should be appointed as the trust auditor. The last recommendation states that should the government continue with the creation of trusts, it should ensure that the proper accountability mechanisms to the Legislature form part of the trust agreement and that the accounting should meet PSAB accounting rules. I might note that there's a dissenting opinion which specifically states that the innovation trust should also be subject to the PSAB rules of public accounting.

With that, I move adoption of the report and adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker: Mr Gerretsen has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the National Assembly of Quebec. They're in Toronto to attend the 13th general assembly of the Ontario-Quebec Parliamentary Association. Please join me in welcoming our honoured special guests. Hopefully we will set up the next hockey game with them.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): To my friends from Quebec, we're looking for our trophy back.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I move that until December 12, 2002, the standing committee on general government, the standing committee on finance and economic affairs and the standing committee on justice and social policy be authorized to meet at times in

addition to their regularly scheduled meeting times at the call of the Chair for the purpose of considering government bills.

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

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent to do a statement on Wife Assault Prevention Month.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Deferred votes first.

The Speaker: We would like to do the deferred votes first.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Mr Speaker, may I seek unanimous consent to do votes first?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am seeking unanimous consent for the proposition that the deferred votes for third reading of Bill 60, victim empowerment, and Bill 148, emergency measures, notwithstanding that they were ordered deferred as recorded votes, be voice votes.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent? Agreed? Agreed.

DEFERRED VOTES

VICTIM EMPOWERMENT ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR L'HABILITATION DES VICTIMES

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 60, An Act to give victims a greater role at parole hearings, to hold offenders accountable for their actions, to provide for inmate grooming standards, and to make other amendments to the Ministry of Correctional Services Act / Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à accroître le rôle des victimes aux audiences de libération conditionnelle et à responsabiliser les délinquants à l'égard de leurs actes, prévoyant des normes relatives à la toilette des détenus et apportant d'autres modifications à la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels.

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

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

EMERGENCY READINESS ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR L'ÉTAT DE PRÉPARATION AUX SITUATIONS D'URGENCE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 148, An Act to provide for declarations of death in certain circumstances and to amend the Emergency Plans Act / Projet de loi 148, Loi prévoyant la déclaration de décès dans certaines circonstances et modifiant la Loi sur les mesures d'urgence.

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

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

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent for the division bells to ring once for the purpose of calling the members in once for the purpose of voting on Bills 175 and 179, and that the bells ring again to call the members again for the division on Bill 181, and that the bells ring again to call the members again for the division on Bill 187.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

SUSTAINABLE WATER AND SEWAGE SYSTEMS ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA DURABILITÉ DES RÉSEAUX D'EAU ET D'ÉGOUTS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 175, An Act respecting the cost of water and waste water services / Projet de loi 175, Loi concernant le coût des services d'approvisionnement en eau et des services relatifs aux eaux usées.

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

The division bells rang from 1353 to 1358.

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

Ayes

Arrott, Ted	Gill, Raminder	Molinari, Tina R.
Baird, John R.	Guzzo, Garry J.	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Hodgson, Chris	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Jackson, Cameron	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Johnson, Bert	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Kells, Morley	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Klees, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Marland, Margaret	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlauer, Wayne
Flaherty, Jim	Maves, Bart	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Mazzilli, Frank	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	McDonald, AL	Young, David

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 40.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 4, 2002, this bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on general government.

GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR L'EFFICIENCE DU GOUVERNEMENT

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 179, An Act to promote government efficiency and to improve services to taxpayers by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting one new Act / Projet de loi 179, Loi visant à favoriser l'efficience du gouvernement et à améliorer les services aux contribuables en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant une nouvelle loi.

Interjection: Same vote.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Same vote? Same vote.

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 48; the nays are 40.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 28, 2002, the bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

LEGAL AID SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES D'AIDE JURIDIQUE

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 181, An Act to amend the Legal Aid Services Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 181, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur les services d'aide juridique.

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

The division bells rang from 1402 to 1407.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.
Baird, John R.	Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn
Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Beaubien, Marcel	Hodgson, Chris	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Patten, Richard
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Peters, Steve
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Phillips, Gerry
Cunningham, Dianne	Kells, Morley	Pupatello, Sandra
DeFaria, Carl	Klees, Frank	Ramsay, David
Dunlop, Garfield	Marland, Margaret	Runciman, Robert W.
Ecker, Janet	Martiniuk, Gerry	Ruprecht, Tony
Elliott, Brenda	Maves, Bart	Sampson, Rob
Flaherty, Jim	Mazzilli, Frank	Sergio, Mario
Galt, Doug	McDonald, AL	Smitherman, George

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Curling, Alvin	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	McLeod, Lyn
Bisson, Gilles	Duncan, Dwight	McMeekin, Ted
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Boyer, Claudette	Gravelle, Michael	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Hampton, Howard	Phillips, Gerry
Brown, Michael A.	Hoy, Pat	Prue, Michael
Bryant, Michael	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Ramsay, David
Charley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Sergio, Mario
Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Marchese, Rosario	
Crozier, Bruce	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 40.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 21, 2002, this bill is ordered referred to the standing committee on justice and social policy.

AGRICULTURAL EMPLOYEES PROTECTION ACT, 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LA PROTECTION DES EMPLOYÉS AGRICOLES

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of Bill 187, An Act to protect the rights of agricultural employees / Projet de loi 187, Loi visant à protéger les droits des employés agricoles.

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

The division bells rang from 1410 to 1415.

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

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Elliott, Brenda	McLeod, Lyn
Arnott, Ted	Flaherty, Jim	McMeekin, Ted
Baird, John R.	Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.
Barrett, Toby	Gerretsen, John	Mushinski, Marilyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Gilchrist, Steve	Newman, Dan
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gill, Raminder	O'Toole, John
Boyer, Claudette	Guzzo, Garry J.	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bradley, James J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Patten, Richard
Brown, Michael A.	Hastings, John	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Hodgson, Chris	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Hoy, Pat	Pupatello, Sandra
Chudleigh, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Ramsay, David
Clark, Brad	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Clement, Tony	Johns, Helen	Ruprecht, Tony
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Conway, Sean G.	Kells, Morley	Sergio, Mario
Cordiano, Joseph	Kenneedy, Gerard	Smitherman, George
Crozier, Bruce	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Cunningham, Dianne	Kwinter, Monte	Stockwell, Chris
Tascona, Joseph N.	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Tascona, Joseph N.
Curling, Alvin	Levac, David	Tsubouchi, David H.
DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Turnbull, David
Turnbull, David	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Di Cocco, Caroline	Maves, Bart	Witmer, Elizabeth
Duncan, Dwight	Dunlop, Garfield	Wood, Bob
Ecker, Janet	Young, David	Young, David
Maves, Bart	Mazzilli, Frank	
Mazzailli, Frank	McDonald, AL	

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

Nays

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

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 78; the nays are 8.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 30, 2002, this bill is ordered for third reading.

VISITORS

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to call to the attention of members of the House our guests from Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Wainfleet and Dunnville, and one of the prized institutions in Niagara, Lakeshore Catholic High School.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask this House to join me in congratulating Kalaneet Malikk, and also welcoming her father, Israel Malik, and her sister, Seegalleet Malik, both visiting today from Pelham.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have unanimous consent for a statement on wife assault month and a statement on Remembrance Day.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Yes. We have consent that we limit those statements to five minutes per statement per party.

Mr Kormos: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Per issue.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Five minutes on each issue. Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

The minister, to begin.

1420

WIFE ASSAULT PREVENTION MONTH

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): November is Wife Assault Prevention Month in Ontario. Wife Assault Prevention Month is an opportunity to remind all of us that wife assault is a crime and that we must work together to stop the violence.

Our government is committed to helping end domestic violence. It is a commitment that is ongoing and unequivocal. We've made good progress in many areas. We are proud of the accomplishments of our agencies and committed individuals across nine ministries and thousands of committees who work together to prevent wife assault.

On September 5, 2002, we announced \$21.4 million, to be spent over three years, as another important step forward in the government's strategy to address domestic violence. This brings our commitment for this year to \$160 million. Funding to combat violence against women has increased by 70% since 1995.

As minister, I'm continuing to meet with provincial associations, experts and local agencies to get their best advice on the most effective way to implement specific domestic violence measures. What works? Where can we make improvements? What are your local priorities? We remain convinced that our continuing collaboration and our commitment to protection and prosecution, support for victims, prevention and education will help stop domestic violence.

While our government continues to improve supports and services for the victims of domestic violence, ministries, agencies and lawmakers alone cannot solve this problem. It is a challenge that we must all think of and tackle as a community. Because ending domestic violence is everyone's responsibility, this year we are highlighting the valuable role every Ontarian can play.

We are fortunate that there are Ontarians who are taking the initiative and making a difference when and where they can. We have three special guests with us today who are making their own contribution in different ways, and I would like to tell you their stories.

Ontario Provincial Police Sergeant David Rektor has worked as a volunteer, providing couples with valuable information about domestic violence at marriage preparation courses. In addition to his unique police perspective, he has what he calls a "real world" personal perspective, having lived through a relative's experience with abuse. By working with young couples, Sergeant Rektor is helping to stop domestic violence before it starts.

Rifka Khalilieh, representing the Body Shop Canada: since 1994, the Body Shop has promoted the STOP Violence Against Women campaign. I think most of us have noticed it and been part of it. Each year, they sponsor a series of events involving local dignitaries at every Body Shop location. With the help of customers and campaign partners, the Body Shop Canada has raised more than \$1 million for violence prevention and recovery programs. I'll introduce them all at the end.

Mona Walrond is a teacher who joined a team at the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario to create Anti-Violence Against Women. This resource educates women teachers about what constitutes violence, how to identify potential abusers, understand the impact on children and benefit from community resources.

I would like to ask Sergeant Rektor, Rifka Khalilieh and Mona Walrond to please stand and be recognized and thanked by the members of this Legislative Assembly. It's our pleasure and our honour, of course, to be able to bring individuals like our three guests today to this Legislative Assembly and to thank them so much for their initiative and their role modelling in their own communities and throughout this great province.

I know that women and children of our province should not have to fear for their safety or their lives. I

encourage all Ontarians to play a part in making every home and every community across our great province safe places for all of our families. Wife Assault Prevention Month is a reminder that we have more to do together.

These three great citizens are to be commended. They have our pride and our honour.

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): On behalf of the Liberal caucus and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, we also thank our special guests for their efforts in addressing domestic violence, and to all the people across this province who are battling this tragedy, we thank you.

Despite all our efforts in this country and province to address the tragedy of wife assault, the number of men accused of killing their wife or ex-wife rose by 33%, with most of the increase occurring in Ontario.

Sadly, nearly one quarter of women who have experienced wife assault never told anyone about the abuse. Some 75% of women who experience wife assault do not go to the police.

It is estimated that 80% of children of abused mothers have directly witnessed the abuse. I can tell you, as a child psychologist, that this leaves scars that are very difficult to erase. Serious behavioural problems are 17 times higher for boys and 10 times higher for girls who have witnessed abuse.

Without access to affordable housing, without access to immediate counselling and support, many women feel there is no choice but to stay within an abusive household.

I want to speak about the important role of second-stage housing and how that plays an important role in preventing such tragedies. We have 27 such housing programs across the province. Shelters can only house women and children for up to six to eight weeks.

Second-stage housing provides what is really important after that initial shock, and that is consistent, secure and safe housing for a year or longer. It is very important to have this consistency when you're counselling women and children. In fact, if you have counselling dollars without this consistent housing, the counselling is ineffective. Kids need to feel physically safe first before they can trust another adult.

Before 1995 the province funded second-stage housing, along with very important counselling services. In 1995 the provincial funding was completely cut and downloaded to municipalities. Fundraising and special project monies are what keep most of these programs alive. Four of them are alive through federal support.

Earlier this week, representatives and former residents from Phoenix second-stage housing in Hamilton and from the Nekanaan second-stage housing in the city of York came to Queen's Park with a message, and that was, "Please reinstate provincial funding to second-stage housing."

A very brave young woman, Tanya, relayed her story this week. It's a success story. God knows, we've relayed enough tragedies in here and will continue to do so—it is

our responsibility—but it is important to show that good programming can do a lot to turn a person's life around. Tanya says:

"One year ago I left an extremely abusive relationship. I ended up at Inasmuch House,"—a shelter—"like many other women in my situation, looking for a way out. As my eighth week was approaching I still had not found an apartment, between work, my daughter, and trying to figure out why I could not let go of him. When my counsellor approached me ... " and she approached Phoenix Place second-stage housing.

"When I first moved to Phoenix Place I remember feeling scared, confused, lost and lonely, on top of my hysteria and confusion of the abuse. I hated Phoenix Place for what it represented. I really did not want to be here but I had to be here to make things better for my daughter and I...."

"Now that it is time to leave my perspective of Phoenix Place has changed. I am no longer scared, confused or lonely and most of all I am no longer being abused. I also no longer hate Phoenix Place for what it represents." She sees it now as "a place where my daughter and I were able to heal, to learn to be ourselves and most of all move forward and that is what we have done. I wish to thank the staff and coordinators of Phoenix Place...."

Tanya wants this second chance for every woman across the province who may need it. In 2001, Phoenix Place in Hamilton had 69 women and 77 children apply for housing. Unfortunately, they were only able to house eight women and five children. Since its opening, some 513 women with 567 children have requested housing. Only 60 women and their children were housed.

The irony here is that we end up at the municipal level housing these women and children at expensive hotels, at a far greater rate than we would if we had enough second-stage housing.

I think the most important part of second-stage housing for the children is that secure, consistent house where they know they are safe, where eventually they will trust a counsellor and trust that they will be safe in their future.

On behalf of the women and children at risk across this province, I plead with you, Minister, to consider reinstating funding to second-stage housing. I know I speak for all of us on this side of the House and probably for most of us on the other side of the House when I ask you to do so.

1430

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): Bonita Blunt, a 39-year-old mother of two children, was found dead on Sunday of multiple stab wounds and a slashed throat. Her estranged husband has been charged with first-degree murder. This is another woman to add to the long, sad list of women murdered by their spouses or ex-spouses in this province. On behalf of the New Democratic Party, and I'm sure all members in this House, our hearts go out to the family of Bonita Blunt today.

The biggest security threat to Ontario today is the terror women experience at the hands of their spouses or ex-spouses. What is this government doing to protect these women? I just received a press release that shows the government is actually planning to close one of Thunder Bay's shelters for abused women, a decision Thunder Bay's police chief says is so wrong-headed that it defies logic. The chief cited "an ever-increasing demand for beds at the shelter." Thunder Bay city council—I don't know if you know about this, Minister, but you should look into it—passed a resolution opposing the shelter closing. I understand there has been some discussion of putting some beds in some of the other shelters, squeezing them in there. Please look into that, as you, I'm sure, would agree that this is extremely wrong-headed.

I also want to talk about the victims' justice fund. Advocates are telling us and telling you that you've used most of the money for the bricks and mortar instead of victim counselling. Advocates are asking, if there is any money left, where is the accountability and is it going to be used for the actual housing or counselling for these victims? It isn't being used for that right now.

The Conservatives set up a fatality review committee, and that's good. I'm glad you're doing that. What we want to ask is, where is the money and what are you doing for the women living in danger? When is this government going to respond to the Hadley inquest? When is the government going to bring back second-stage housing in this province? It would go a long way to helping women and children, which it used to do, in transition when they're fleeing violent situations?

As you know, a Statistics Canada report on homicide rates in Canada revealed that, in one year, spousal homicides across Canada jumped to 69 from 52, with virtually all of that increase taking place in Ontario. That is a 25% increase. It's an unacceptable number. This woman I mentioned today, Bonita Blunt, is now added to those numbers.

You have been warned by women on the front lines. We bring this up time and time again. The coalition of 165 groups came to Queen's Park to warn the Conservatives of what they called a crisis now in domestic abuse. They wanted all-party support for the provincial government to fund emergency measures to address this terrible violence against women.

You've been warned by the Provincial Auditor. One year ago, he reported women and children were being turned away from overcrowded women's shelters in eight out of nine Ontario regions. In the year 2000, 1,000 women and children had been turned away from a single women's shelter and forced to go to a homeless shelter. There are lengthy waiting lists for these key services.

Two inquests into spousal homicides provided you with the blueprint for action. It should be immediately implemented.

I know you have focused on policing and the courts, but as you well know, that is not the only solution to domestic violence.

Finally, I want you to table in this House all of the information that shows your government has actually increased funding for violence against women to 70%. I know that isn't accurate and I would like you to table that documentation.

Finally, on behalf of the New Democratic Party, I too want to thank and congratulate the people who are here today, for their services and contributions to eradicating violence against women in this province, and indeed all the front-line workers who are working so hard to stop this violence.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon Carl DeFaria (Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors): I'd like to make a statement on Remembrance Day. On Monday, November 11, at 11 am, Canadians will pause for a moment of silence. We will pause to honour the thousands of Canadians, men and women, who risked their lives and all those who lost their lives to defend freedom and democracy.

In times of war and on peacekeeping missions around the world, our troops have served Canada with courage and resolve. Canadians have risked and given their lives so that future generations could enjoy the blessings of peace and democracy. Those of us who have known only peacetime cannot begin to imagine the terror and horror of war, but our veterans do. During this remembrance week, we pay homage to those who fell. We also honour our veterans who faced danger and survived to carry on.

Our government's commitment to preserving this vital part of our history is real. Today, the Ontario government announced two initiatives: a \$1-million contribution to the construction of the Juno Beach Centre, situated on the Normandy coast. As our Premier has stated, "This centre will be a place where generations of families can come to learn, remember and reflect." As well, our government has committed to create a war memorial, a cenotaph on the grounds of Queen's Park. In making these announcements, our Premier has noted, "These two memorials will help preserve the stories of men and women who showed us what courage, service and greatness is."

Our veterans' experience is a living legacy, a vital part of our national consciousness. They are keeping our history alive. That is why the Ontario government continues to support the outstanding work of the Dominion Institute and the Memory Project. Through the Memory Project, veterans share their wartime and peacekeeping experiences with Ontario students. Since the project was launched in 1999, more than 550 veterans have joined the speakers bureau. Their stories have been shared with more than 45,000 high school students and with immigrants who are learning English as a second language. This work is crucial. Through it, our young people experience the realities of war not found in textbooks, and newcomers to Canada gain a deeper knowledge of their adopted homeland and the meaning of citizenship.

During the First World War, a Canadian doctor, John McCrae, wrote the poem "In Flanders Fields" while on

the battlefield. That poem's stark image of red poppies growing between the soldiers' graves became an enduring symbol of remembrance, the same symbol we wear today.

Canadians are keenly aware that our safety and security are not to be taken for granted. In the year following September 11, 2001, Canada committed 3,000 personnel to support the international coalition against terrorism. Just like their counterparts before them, they are putting themselves in danger to defend freedom and democracy, the values that are core to our way of life. Perhaps that is why you will see even more people wearing poppies this year.

On the 11th day of the 11th month, Canadians, now more than ever, will pause to remember and be thankful to the Canadian men and women, past and present, who served our country with brave resolve. They deserve our deepest gratitude. We'll never forget that they put their lives on the line to fight for freedom. I urge all members to take part in the Remembrance Week ceremonies taking place in our respective communities.

1440

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): In a legislative body which by its very nature is partisan and often confrontational, there is an occasion when partisanship is set aside and consensus is easily reached. That occasion is the last sessional day before Remembrance Day, when members of the Legislative Assembly pause together to remember those Canadians who made the supreme sacrifice, the sacrifice of their lives, in a war fought to defend freedom and democracy.

Over the years there have been moving tributes paid to those whose memory we honour as a nation on November 11—tributes delivered with eloquence, passion and emotion by those who served in our armed forces in times of war. Far better than we who did not experience military service on a personal basis, some members of the Legislative Assembly, themselves veterans of conflicts around the world, shared with us and with those who have access to the deliberations of this House the horrors of war and the immense sacrifices made by those who fought in defence of our way of life.

What is often forgotten as we march alongside veterans of the wars is that so many of these men and women were very young when they entered the service of their country in the war effort overseas and far too many did not return home to their loved ones or have the opportunity to live lives filled with all the experiences that are available to those of us who are beneficiaries of their sacrifice.

One of the most moving moments at cenotaphs across our country is the laying of the wreath by the Silver Cross mother, who has seen her loved one or loved ones depart for wars in foreign lands and not return. One wonders what memories pass through their minds as they move, often haltingly and almost always with assistance, toward the war memorial in their community to lay this wreath which carries so much significance.

War is all too often glorified and, indeed, mischaracterized in popular movies. The depiction of events

bears little resemblance to the realities of the battlefield, for in reality our veterans will tell us that the days were grim, the conflict so very often hard and the damage inflicted, both on the body and on the mind, often irreparable.

While it is the dead we honour at Remembrance Day services, our thoughts are also with those who returned from action sometimes scarred both physically and psychologically by the ravages of war. The tears that appear in the eyes of veterans whose memories recall all too vividly the loss of friends, the destruction of homes and the ugly wounds of conflict are understood by all of us.

As the lines of marching veterans thin from age, infirmity and death, we who remain must assume a special obligation to remember. In his poem "In Flanders Fields," John McCrae refers to the passing of the torch to those who succeed our fallen comrades. Most assuredly we must all, young and old, take up the challenge of those who made the supreme sacrifice on our behalf.

While the focus on remembrance and reflection is, as it should be, on November 11, it is essential that we who enjoy the benefits of democracy for which our veterans fought and died honour them throughout the year. The Royal Canadian Legion and other veterans' organizations across our land need our support more than ever to maintain their efforts to preserve Remembrance Day as an occasion for all Canadians to remember the sacrifices made in World War I, World War II, the Korean War and other conflicts in which our armed forces have been involved. They need our support as well to ensure our veterans are treated with dignity, respect, generosity and compassion in their senior years as battle scars on the body and mind begin to take their toll on their lives.

It is said that in communities in the Netherlands, France and other countries where Canadians liberated people from their oppressors, to this very day the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who had the yoke of occupation lifted by our Canadian forces remember and pay tribute to our fellow Canadians for the sacrifices made so very long ago.

When we see members of the Royal Canadian Legion, when we see those who served so that we might enjoy the democratic freedoms that are ours today, when we see these individuals often shivering in the cold winds of November, poppy box in hand, let us stop to say thank you and let us join in two minutes of silent remembrance on November 11. Those who are no longer with us and those who return from war should expect no less from all of us.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I'm honoured to be able to speak on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus in this tribute to Canadian women and men who, over the course of a century-plus, have made the supreme sacrifice.

This coming weekend, every one of this New Democratic Party caucus, like every other member of the Legislature, will be joining their communities at war memorials and cenotaphs indeed across this province.

Howard Hampton will be travelling up to Kenora-Rainy River where he will be visiting small town after small town in that huge riding as he participates in this tribute to courageous, brave and idealistic Canadian women and men. As we visit those cenotaphs and war memorials, especially in those small towns—be it the communities that Howard Hampton, Shelley Martel or Tony Martin will visit in the north, or like Port Robinson or Pelham last weekend for me down in Niagara region—and we see the lists of the fallen, it seems somehow that it was small-town Ontario, small-town Canada and rural Ontario that gave disproportionately when it was called upon to deliver up their young men and women to fight in the First World War, the Second World War and, yes, the Korean War—to call it anything other than a war is to do a great disservice to those veterans of the war in Korea—and, yes, Canadians who served in the war in Vietnam and who, for the largest part since then, have served with incredible self-restraint on behalf of this country as it participates in international peacekeeping exercises.

As we reflect upon those who have served over the course of so many years, let's understand that our Second World War vets now are approaching their eighth decade. They're well into their late 70s and early 80s, the youngest of them. Our Korean War veterans are approaching their 70s. That means that the responsibility for recalling those great sacrifices, be it in small-town Ontario or at the great cenotaph in front of old city hall here in Toronto, falls increasingly on to the shoulders of not just their children but indeed their grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Let's recall the heroic role of Canadians. Let's recall as well that, at the time of World War II, this was a country of but nine provinces and a population of approximately 10 million people. Yet Canadians distinguished themselves certainly in the First World War. Many have commented that the Canadian identity was forged in some of the great battles where Canadians provided leadership in the First World War and that the Canadian role in the liberation of Europe, the defeat of fascism and Nazism, has become a hallmark characteristic of the Canadian character as a nation.

We celebrate not only those who served in the armed forces but those as well who served in the merchant marine. We must recall as well, although they weren't members of a state-sanctioned, organized and authorized force, those idealistic young Canadians who fought as part of the Mackenzie-Papineau brigade—the Mac-Paps—who went to Spain to confront fascism in its seminal stages and laid their lives down there too.

The sacrifices are historic, but they're also current. Why, it's within the very recent past, well within the painful memories of so many family members and friends, that two young Ontario men—my colleague Marilyn Churley attended one of their funerals; he was one of her constituents—were killed, regrettably and tragically, by friendly fire.

We salute these brave Canadians. We accept the responsibility to perpetuate their memory, to recall their

courage, to recall their sacrifice and to commit ourselves to never having to send young people to war again.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Would all of the members and our friends in the gallery please rise for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker: I thank all of the members.

1450

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO DEREGULATION

Mr Michael Bryant (St Paul's): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Two weeks ago today, one of your predecessors, Mr Wilson, gave a speech in Espanola at the Pinewood Motor Inn. It was recorded in the Manitoulin Recorder. In that speech, he predicted a spring election, and he was asked why. This is what he said, Minister, "I don't think he"—the Premier—"wants to go to the polls when electricity rates go up again next summer." Is this this government's cynical electrical election strategy?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): No.

Mr Bryant: Well, this indictment of the minister certainly throws a wet blanket on your big announcement tomorrow, doesn't it? Whatever credibility and hope you might have had in trying to provide rate relief is starting to look a lot more like a quick-fix Band-Aid, isn't it? And this from the same energy minister who designed the electricity competition marketplace. That is hydro-pocry at its highest, isn't it?

My question to you is, will you admit that whatever you announce tomorrow in your incredibly needed rate relief package, as long as Ernie Eves is the Premier, electricity prices will continue to rise?

Hon Mr Baird: I think what this province needs is rhetoric relief from the member opposite.

Mr Bryant: The non-confidence votes from this government continue to pile up. First, former Minister—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Don't be yelling, "Question." It's hard for the members. They don't know if I'm yelling it or you're yelling it. We do both sides, and it's unfair to do that. Please don't do that.

I apologize. You may start over.

Mr Bryant: Minister, the votes of non-confidence from cabinet members and caucus continue to pile up. You have former Minister Jackson. You have a sitting parliamentary assistant, Mr Mazzilli. You have a sitting cabinet minister, Mr Clark. You now have the former energy minister, Mr Wilson. All of them have expressed a lack of confidence in your energy policy.

So my question to you is, if your cabinet members and your caucus do not have confidence in your electricity

policy, how on earth could Ontario voters have any confidence in you?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member should refer to the members by their ridings or by their positions.

The Speaker: I'm sure the member knows that and will do that in the future.

Hon Mr Baird: It's easy for people in the Liberal Party to have confidence in their party's policy, because if they don't like it they can just use the one they espoused yesterday.

I would indicate to the member opposite, as I have earlier in this place, that the Premier is concerned and I'm concerned about the effect that families, farmers and small business people face when they look at their electricity bill on their kitchen table and their concern for the future. The Premier has asked me to look at the issue of rate relief and the issue of what we might do to address the legitimate concerns that working families in the province have, and I'll be doing that and reporting to the people of Ontario in short order.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Bryant: Again to the Minister of Energy, late-breaking news today: the Independent Market Operator came out with its decision in response to the application made by local utilities for "immediate and urgent adverse financial impacts on local distribution companies."

They turned to the IMO for relief because of a botched marketplace, and the IMO has rendered its decision, and it is to turn down the application of the local distributors. That means that local utilities, many of them wholly owned by municipalities, might have their assets seized by lenders because they are on the verge of bankruptcy. What are you going to do to fix your botched electricity marketplace?

Hon Mr Baird: We've certainly been actively working with the Electricity Distributors Association. I met with the IMO and others to discuss what can be a reasonable position with respect to their getting payment and the differential between when they collect bills. I think the announcement we'll make in short order will help address that.

It is passing strange—I look at the utility in my own home constituency of Ottawa-Carleton. If they're having financial trouble, maybe they should look to their shareholder, which this year is taking \$28 million out of the system, before the member opposite rises with his rhetoric.

Mr Bryant: It's not rhetoric; it's a decision from the IMO. It has turned down an effort by the local distributors to get some assistance, because you built a marketplace that isn't working. You built a marketplace when you were told again and again that price spikes would leave them on the edge of financial ruin. The answer from the government before the market opened in May was, "No, no, no, there won't be any price spikes. Don't worry."

What happened is that you built a shiny red convertible without a top and you sent it into the Arctic tundra, and now consumers and distributors are finding it a mite uncomfortable.

This is a serious matter. These utilities are saying they are on the verge of bankruptcy, and the IMO is giving them no relief. It is only the government that designed the market that is going to be able to fix this problem.

Are you going to include in your announcement tomorrow relief for this very critical problem, which has the marketplace on its knees?

Hon Mr Baird: As I mentioned to the member opposite, we've been looking at solutions with the Independent Market Operator. Do generators need to be paid in the short order that they're paid now? My answer would be no. Can the local distribution companies and their shareholders take part of the responsibility? I think the answer is yes. Can we facilitate and help in that role? I think the answer is clearly yes, and we're working toward that objective.

I do find it passing strange when we look at some of the local distribution companies. Take Toronto Hydro. You have the shareholder there, who took tens and tens of millions of dollars out of the company, who this year will take out \$60 million in addition to that as profit. The shareholder who takes out this money doesn't want to help them with any financial relief, and somehow it's this government's responsibility? I don't think so.

Mr Bryant: You raised Toronto, Minister. More bad news and another wet blanket on your electricity policy: it was revealed in published reports that a greater Toronto hockey league official predicted that hockey registration fees for the minor leagues could jump by more than 100 bucks per player next year. Not only are you boarding Toronto consumers with high prices, not only are you slashing them with a bonus hydro bill, but now you are hitting them where it really hurts: in the hockey rink, attacking our national sport. I say to you, a match penalty for government misconduct and incompetence.

What do you say to Ontario families who have to say to their sons and daughters, "Sorry, kids, you can't play hockey this year; the hydro bills are too high"?

Hon Mr Baird: If fearmongering were against the rules, the member opposite would be in the penalty box. We're looking at the whole issue with respect to providing rate relief for the hot months that we've seen, as was envisaged when we started electricity reform. We're also looking at what stability we might provide, and we'll be able to report back to the people of Ontario in short order.

In the member opposite's constituency, they've been paying stable rates for electricity at 4.3 cents. I do underline that as well.

1500

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, deregulation has meant skyrocketing hydro bills for homeowners, small businesses, farmers, schools, hospitals—

the list is almost endless. But you still don't seem to get it. Media reports suggest that you will offer people a \$45 rebate cheque and some technical changes. If that's all you have to offer, Minister, let me give you some advice: you'll be run out of town.

Minister, why are you offering a dim-bulb suggestion when we need a megawatt solution?

Hon Mr Baird: I would say very directly to the leader of the third party, this Legislative Assembly provides him with a few million dollars for research, and he should spend more than 50 cents on the Toronto Star to do his research for question period.

Mr Hampton: The fact remains, Minister, that you and the Liberals still think you can make hydro deregulation and privatization work. You and the Liberals still believe that if you offer some rebates just before the run into an election campaign, you can fool people.

New Democrats know that if you look across North America, deregulated, privatized hydro isn't working very well anywhere. That is certainly the case in the United States. So why are you and the Liberals offering a pathetic bribe when hydro consumers know they'll get zapped again and again if you don't cancel hydro deregulation?

Hon Mr Baird: I'm more than pleased to be accountable for those of us on this side of the House in question period, but don't ask me to be accountable for the policies of the Liberal Party—

Interjection: Or lack thereof.

Hon Mr Baird: —or lack thereof. Trying to pin down the Liberals on a policy position is like stapling Jell-O to the wall.

I will say to the member opposite, I do admire the fact that he has been consistent in his policies, his values and his beliefs with respect to electricity and with respect to deregulation and opening a competitive marketplace in the province of Ontario. The Premier of Ontario strongly shares the concerns that working families, that farmers, that small business operators have in the province, not just with the bills that are on their kitchen table but as well with respect to what the future holds. He's asking me to report to him and to my cabinet colleagues and to the people of Ontario on this issue, and we will, in very short order, because we appreciate that concern.

Mr Hampton: Minister, let me give you an example of what's really happening out there. Leonardo Capone of Hamilton is out more than \$400 on his hydro bill. What will your pathetic little rebate do for him—buy him some candles and a flashlight? You and the Liberals continue to believe that if you just throw some rebate money around, what has become a financial catastrophe across this province can be made to disappear.

Minister, don't listen to the Liberals. Don't listen to the private sector hydro lobbyists out there. Cancel deregulation now. Do the right thing.

Hon Mr Baird: I certainly share the concerns that the gentleman he raises has with respect to his electricity costs. We will be reporting in short order.

The member opposite is riding around the province in his bus, encouraging public power at cost, but we haven't had public power at cost.

I'll tell him another story. It's about the baby born in the province of Ontario this morning who has a \$3,000 bill with respect to Ontario Hydro's massive debt. I'll tell you another story: about the family in his own constituency who's having to pay off \$10,000 of debt that he and previous governments racked up. Where is the social justice in the province of Ontario in racking up debts in the names of our children and our children's children? There is no social justice in that.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Hampton: Minister, yesterday the Premier suggested that the Ontario Energy Board had directed local utilities not to cut people's hydro off. He was wrong about that, just like your government was wrong about hydro deregulation and privatization in the first place. But today, a woman who watched the Premier sent us a fax. She's a mother from Burlington. Her daughter, who has MS and who has to look after two small children, had her gas cut off. The reason? Because she had to use the money that would have covered the gas to pay the skyrocketing hydro bill.

I say to you, Minister, when it is four and five below at night, no one should have their gas or their hydro cut off. It is time to pass my private member's bill No Freezing in the Dark. Will you agree today to pass it?

Hon Mr Baird: In the province of Ontario, with respect to natural gas, when the member opposite was in government, there were no changes brought about to that. However, I do recognize and acknowledge that the high electricity prices that some have faced have caused real concern to many in Ontario. With respect to social assistance recipients, there are vehicles at their disposal to be able to receive some emergency assistance. I understand that is being looked into. I know the utility in question, in this geographic area, would look at that issue, and I understand they are doing so.

I do commend the member opposite. He raised this issue last Thursday in the House. I spoke to my Premier on Tuesday and directed Hydro One not to cut people's electricity off in the fall. It was interesting, I say to the leader of the third party, to see the Leader of the Opposition becoming a Howard-come-lately to the issue just yesterday.

Mr Hampton: Minister, I'm going to send you the letter that this woman sent us, and I want you to have a look at it.

What is revealing is that yesterday the Premier stood up and tried to tell people that this wouldn't happen, that this couldn't happen. And this speaks to the larger issue: you and the Premier go around the province suggesting that all this is going to be fixed with a rebate and maybe a directive here, but the people of the province know that is not the case.

Yes, you need to pass my private member's bill so that between October 1 and May 1 no one will have their gas or hydro cut off. But you also need to go a step further

and deal with the long-term problem. Cancel hydro deregulation and privatization because it only makes the situation worse. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Baird: The short answer to the question is no.

With respect to the other issue, having electricity cut off, I share the concern that the member opposite has brought to the House. A lot of folks across the province of Ontario are experiencing higher-than-anticipated electricity costs, and they're concerned about what the colder months will bring.

I'm from Ottawa in eastern Ontario, where we went through the ice storm, where we had literally hundreds of thousands of people in eastern Ontario without electricity. The reality is, there can be some incredibly serious consequences to that. The Premier has directed me to the local distribution company, with which we are the shareholder in the province of Ontario; that we don't think, given the circumstances of this year, it's responsible as a corporate citizen. I would expect that the interests of people come before the interests of profit and shareholders with respect to electricity, at this difficult time with rising electricity rates.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Energy. I'm going to give you some examples of some of the impact that the Harris-Eves mismanagement of hydro has had on some of our public institutions.

The Toronto Transit Commission had to budget an additional \$7.3 million because of a new contract they signed to deal with their hydro. The Toronto District School Board has to find an additional \$2.5 million in their budget to deal with increased hydro. The Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has to find an additional \$900,000 in their budget to deal with increased hydro costs. The Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board has to find an additional \$700,000 to deal with their budget. Hamilton Health Sciences Corp has to find an additional \$2.2 million. The list goes on and on.

Clearly, this is the result of the mismanagement of hydro. Will you today commit to reimburse the money for these institutions so they can balance their budgets and not have to make further cuts?

1510

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Some in the province of Ontario entered into fixed-rate contracts and these institutions, of which the honourable member speaks, were on the spot market. Whether it's school boards or hospitals, by and large these are large financially sophisticated institutions. We could also speak of homes for those people with developmental disabilities and shelters for battered women. We could speak of other social service agencies that are perhaps in even greater need. I think it's important for those on spot market prices. When we look at relief with respect to the

electricity bills people have received, we mustn't forget their needs and we mustn't forget that as we look forward to the future.

Mr Agostino: I understand what the minister's saying. The pain is to everyone in this province. You've spread the pain. Every institution is suffering. We know that. The reality is, you've got school boards that are facing deficits. This means more teacher layoffs, less classroom supplies, less textbooks. You've got hospitals facing deficits, which means less nurses, less MRIs, less surgeries. The reality, as a result of the incompetence of your government in dealing with this hydro file and this hydro situation, is that school boards and hospitals are already in deficit.

Understand, Minister, you've told them to balance their budgets. This is money they did not budget for. This money is beyond what they had budgeted. That means each one of these institutions we're talking about must now make further cuts. There's only one place it can come from—front-line services and programs, teachers, nurses, health care, surgeries, textbooks, computers. That is the reality.

I ask you again, will you commit today to reimburse and refund these public institutions the additional non-budgeted money they're forced to pay because of your government's mismanagement so they don't have to make further cuts to their programs?

Hon Mr Baird: We're certainly mindful in the review that we're going forward with the needs of the public sector and the broader public sector with respect to electricity prices. We're very mindful of that.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): My question is to the Minister of Finance. I remain concerned about Ontario's investment in public infrastructure. In fact, we're hearing that our existing infrastructure will not be able to sustain existing population growth. For instance, in the riding of Durham, and in fact Durham region, population growth is in excess of 15%. I appreciate the investments under SuperBuild in such things as the library in Clarington, the second ice pad in Port Perry and the University of Ontario Institute of Technology, Ontario's newest university, as well as Lakeridge Health Bowmanville. There are challenges ahead and I wonder if you could address this in your response to me today.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'd like to thank the member for Durham for an excellent question. We recognize quite clearly that part of a strategy for growth, prosperity and economic growth in our province has to include investments in our public infrastructure, in our highways, roads, bridges, post-secondary institutions and so much more. That's why, through SuperBuild, the government agency that oversees and coordinates these investments, Ontario and our partners have invested more than \$13 billion in 3,000 projects. By the end of the year 2004, Ontario and our partners will have invested \$20

billion in capital improvements, the largest investment of its kind in the province's history and a very important support for economic prosperity.

Mr O'Toole: Thank you very much for your commitment to this very worthwhile investment in Ontario's future.

These investments aren't just for Durham, as you've outlined. But I represent the riding of Durham and I've heard from Clarington council of their concerns. That's why I'm addressing them today. Minister, I'm asking for your help with respect to specific projects within Durham because that's the area I represent, but I know you're making the same commitment for all of Ontario. I'm also concerned at the lack of federal presence in some of these projects.

Hon Mrs Ecker: Again, I'd like to thank the member from Durham because these strategic investments have impacted all the way across the province, not only Durham region, but I'm pleased as a member from Durham region to talk about the investments we have made there: for example, the \$60-million investment in establishing the new University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Durham region that the Durham MPPs have worked so hard to do.

The Liberal finance critic loves to make fun of Highway 407, and yet if it wasn't for the partnership we put in place, we wouldn't have the 407 in the Durham region. The Liberals didn't care to do it. This government made it happen for consumers and commuters in our region. We also have money for the transit fleet renewal in Oshawa, Pickering and Ajax; money for the Don Beer arena in Pickering, for example; the restructuring of the Whitby hospital site from Lakebridge Health—

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

HYDRO RATES

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. I have in my hand a letter written by Hydro One Networks. In this letter it states, "We have been directed by the Ontario Energy Board to recover an additional \$12.9M in low voltage costs from our retail customers using the distribution system." This letter says it's beginning October 1; in other words, another retroactive charge. "Customers will see an increase in their delivery charges...." Farms are going to be dinged for an addition \$8.19 a month or another \$100 a year. You're supposed to be the voice for agriculture in this province, and at the cabinet table. Where were you during these public hearings when the OEB allowed this to happen?

Hydro One is your company. The OEB is your watchdog. The announcement in the brochure states that the open market promises to deliver many new benefits. Madam Minister, I'd like to know what kind of new benefit this is you're putting on the backs of the farmers of this province. Why are you continuing to pick the pockets of farmers in Ontario?

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): I refer this to the Minister of Energy.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): The Minister of Agriculture is an incredibly strong voice for farmers in this government. She got her bill through. Despite the fighting and the delay tactics of the Liberals, she finally got her bill through. Half of the Liberals had left the room when she did it. I am sure in ridings like Prince Edward county and Tweed and Napanee the area farmers are going to be asking questions about where those Liberal members were.

With respect to the question the member has asked, I believe the Ontario Energy Board can be more responsive to rural Ontario. That's why we're conducting an entire overhaul and review of the agency.

Mr Peters: I'm going back to the Minister of Agriculture, because her silence tells it all right now. What kind of voice is that for agriculture, when she passes and sloughs it off to the Minister of Energy?

Minister, you should know what's happening on the farms. Do you know what electricity bills are looking like for Ontario farms right now? Last week I brought to the attention of this House a number of farm bills and the difficulties farmers are facing. Bills on many farms have doubled in this province. We're not talking about hundreds of dollars; we're talking about thousands and thousands of dollars. You should know that farmers have been hit by two years of drought, and you turn your back on the farmers of Ontario right now. You know commodity prices are down and we're reeling from high electricity prices, and now you're zinging the farmers again when it comes to the distribution of hydro in this province.

Do you know what farmers are telling me, Minister? Your transition cheques, the transition cheques you're so proud of right now, are going right back into government coffers because they've received those transition cheques and they're out spending those transition cheques to pay their hydro bills. The \$8 a month is an additional tax, on the backs of farmers. Minister, don't be silent. Why don't you stand up and stop this? Stand up and tell us why—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid the member's time is up. Minister of Energy.

Hon Mr Baird: The Minister of Agriculture visited my constituency this past August and she heard about the concerns that people in the rural part of Ottawa had with the redistribution of wards that Brendan McGuinty and Bob Chiarelli were ramming down their throats, and she certainly brought that concern to the minister of rural affairs. When this issue was brought up in the Ontario Legislature, the Liberal members on that side screamed that there were no rural areas in Ottawa. What there are not a lot of, in rural parts of Ottawa, are rural Liberals. That sort of attitude is why we won't see many in the future, in my judgment.

We're concerned about the rural ratepayers. Whenever I have spoken about working families and small

businesses, I have made it a point in this place to underline the needs of farm operators in the—

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

1520

TEACHERS' STRIKE

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford): My question is for the Minister of Education. As you well know, the union took the secondary teachers in the Simcoe Muskoka district school board out on strike earlier this week, affecting 7,000 students and their families. I've heard from many of these families who are concerned that this strike will threaten the entire school year for many students. Can you tell me what actions will be taken to protect the school year and not jeopardize students' chances for success?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): I'd like to respond to the question from the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I would agree that it is truly regrettable when there are disputes between school boards and their employees. I would certainly urge both sides to resolve the dispute as quickly as possible.

Having said that, I know that many of the teachers, of course having utmost regard and consideration for the students, prior to the strike assigned homework to students in order that they could continue with their studies at home. I would also like to say to the member that there is a body in place that is carefully monitoring the situation, and that is the Education Relations Commission, in order to ensure this strike does not jeopardize the school year for these students.

Mr Tascona: Many students and parents are anxious for a resolution because they don't want to see the school year lost. Can you please tell me how this government determines when it is necessary to take action to restore stability in the students' school year?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I really appreciate the concern that has been expressed for the students by the member from Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford. I would say that the following options are available: (1) parties can resume mediated talks; (2) parties can reach a joint agreement to voluntary binding arbitration; and (3) I talked about the Education Relations Commission, and they actually have a mandate to advise the Lieutenant Governor in Council when they think the school year is in jeopardy. When the Lieutenant Governor receives that advice, the government has generally received all-party consent for speedy back-to-work legislation. Traditionally, the ERC has offered advice around the three-week period, so I can tell the member that there is careful monitoring of the school year to make sure the students' year is not in jeopardy.

HYDRO RATES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): My question is for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. On November 4, in answer to a

question regarding individuals on the Ontario disability support program having to make a choice between paying their hydro bill and buying food, you said the following: "We have provisions in place to deal with extraordinary costs, including costs to keep electricity running."

I have 45 individuals on a list in my constituency office who are receiving ODSP and who are about to have their hydro cut off. What I would like to know is, since the front-line workers, in Hamilton at least, haven't heard about your new program, I'd like you to stand in your place and read out the phone number that people on the disability program are supposed to call so their hydro doesn't get cut off. What's that phone number, Minister?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): That question is to be answered by the Minister of Energy.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister of Energy.

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): For those on fixed incomes with disabilities, the concerns they have around the hydro bill that's on their kitchen table are legitimate concerns. Their fear and concern for the future is something we're looking at.

Mr Christopherson: Brenda said they'd take care of it. Who do they call?

Hon Mr Baird: If the member opposite would like to listen to the answer, he might hear something.

The member opposite said they're facing cut-off. It is a cold month. We have frigid temperatures in November. I'll tell you that this government, with the concerns about electricity, where we're the shareholder—I have directed at the Premier's direction that our firm, Hydro One, is not to make disconnections during this cold weather. If the member opposite is looking for a phone number where people can call, they should phone the shareholder at the city of Hamilton and say that they should do the corporately responsible thing: put people before profits and before shareholder interests.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This question was obviously for the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. She should stop hiding. She was the one who made the comment originally. We're urging all 192,000 people on ODSP in this province to phone your Queen's Park office, Minister. Let me give that number. It's 416-325-5225. We want them to know about your offer to pay their sky-high deregulated hydro bills and ensure that none of them get cut off. That number again is 416-325-5225.

People living on ODSP are already living below the poverty level. They certainly can't cover any new expenses. Will you confirm today that you will cover the full cost of your higher hydro bills, increased for 192,000 people receiving ODSP? Then will you ditch deregulation for a non-profit electricity system that doesn't rip people off? While you're at it, will you raise ODSP rates to a livable level?

Hon Mr Baird: The member opposite's leader, some three weeks ago, asked me if I would support his private member's bill on this issue. It took his leader two weeks to get it to me. I hope he would allow me at least one week to respond to that. If it took him two weeks to write it, give me at least a week to consider it, do our homework and be able to respond.

We share the concerns of those on fixed incomes, particularly those with disabilities on the Ontario disability support program. Certainly that is high on our list of concerns and in our discussions with respect to the electricity issue and rate relief. But this government can be very proud of the work we've done for disabilities. We have an unprecedented increase in the budget for people with developmental disabilities, with which this minister, Brenda Elliott, has continued to follow through, building on the successes that I and Janet Ecker had. That's in addition to new programs for autism, increases in a range of services and supports—

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

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Your government has a consistent record of refusing to fund even minimum levels of care for our most vulnerable seniors. You rationed home care by establishing hours of service that an individual could receive, even though their needs may be much greater than that. In homes for the aged and nursing homes, you withdrew regulations providing a minimum number of hours of nursing care, and you even withdrew the regulation providing for a minimum of one bath per week.

This morning in the House, by a majority vote supported by some of your government backbenchers, the following motion was passed: "That ... the government should immediately establish minimum standards of care for nursing homes and homes for the aged, including the re-introduction of minimum hours of nursing care and the requirement for a minimum of at least one bath a week." That's the democratic will of the 103 people who are elected. When are you going to live up to that democratic will and the resolution that was passed here this morning? When are you going to put these minimum standards in effect so that our seniors who live in homes can live out their remaining days in dignity and self-respect?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I refer the question to the associate minister.

Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): The resolution today wasn't whether long-term care is a priority for this government, because long-term care is indeed a priority for this government. We've demonstrated that. It wasn't a resolution on whether members as private members care passionately about long-term care, because all members

of this Legislative Assembly care about long-term care and about the 61,000 residents in the long-term-care facilities in this province.

Members voted today as private members during private members' hour on a resolution brought forward by the Liberal Party. Today's vote was a resolution by the Dalton McGuinty Liberals to turn the clock back on the residents of Ontario's long-term-care facilities. The new regulations that have been brought forward by the Ernie Eves government require that each and every resident in Ontario's long-term-care facilities be assessed with a personal care plan to meet their differing nursing and personal care needs across the province. The resolution today would turn the clock back on those 61,000 people.

1530

Mr Gerretsen: Let me say, it's passing strange that the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, who in estimates stated that he was the minister and it was his budget and he was going to be solely responsible for answering the questions, wouldn't answer the question just now.

You well know that the study you funded which came out last year, the PricewaterhouseCoopers study of 10 jurisdictions similar to Ontario in Europe, Canada and the United States, clearly shows that we in Ontario, as a government, spend less money on nursing care, personal care and therapy care than any other jurisdiction. Whereas we should be leading the parade, we're at the back of the parade. That's no way to treat our seniors.

Today, a private member's resolution was brought forward, not by the Liberal Party but by the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan. The will of this House is: re-establish minimum standards of care for our seniors. That's the elected will of this House as expressed by this resolution. When are you going to implement the will of the House, and that is to re-establish the minimum standards so that there can be some guarantees—

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

Hon Mr Newman: The resolution that was brought forward today talked about municipal homes for the aged and it talked about nursing homes. They forgot the 9,015 who live in charitable homes in this province. They left over 9,000 people out of the resolution.

Let's hear what Karen Sullivan, the executive director of the Ontario Long Term Care Association, has to say about this. She says in her letter to me today:

"I am writing to express our concern over the motion passed in the Legislature this morning calling for minimum standards of care in long-term-care homes."

"In Ontario today we have over 60,000 residents seeking care in over 500 long-term-care homes. Each resident has a different level of need and the combination of needs is different in each home. The current funding system attempts to match resources to an actual measurement of those resident care needs. Adopting a minimum standards approach would remove measured resident need as the basis for care funding and move us

even further away from the reality of a resident-focused system."

HEALTHY LIVING

Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): My question is also to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, in my great riding of Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, and all across Ontario, the number one concern I hear from residents is the future of health care. My constituents, like all Ontarians, want the best health care system in the world. I know that the Ernie Eves government is meeting their demands and I'm proud of the government's record on health care. Not only do my great constituents want to know what we are doing at Queen's Park, but they also are interested in finding out how they can help the health care system.

There's an old saying that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. I think the best way in which we will assist our health care system is by living a healthy lifestyle. Minister, please tell this House what our government is doing to assist all Ontarians in living a healthy lifestyle that will benefit not only the health care system but, more important to my constituents, themselves.

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I would like to thank the honourable member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale and take the occasion to advise the House on another component of the Ernie Eves government's plan for wellness, officially launched last week: HealthyOntario.com. HealthyOntario.com is a consumer health Web portal that provides easy, one-stop access to information on hundreds of health conditions, hundreds of drugs, hundreds of services. It is our government's goal that HealthyOntario.com be the first choice Web site for Ontarians, where they can go for information to find trusted health information and services and for advice for healthier living.

You should know that Ontarians rely on the Internet as their source of choice for health information after their doctor. Ontarians from across our province have told us they want their government to place more emphasis on giving them the tools they need to stay healthy. Through the introduction of HealthyOntario.com, we are meeting that challenge.

Mr Gill: Thank you, Minister, for your response. As you may be aware, my wife works in the health care field. One of the things she is always promoting is a healthy lifestyle. I know she is in favour of any tools that will help her practice, help her patients live better and longer. I'm sure she'll be delighted with this latest initiative from the Ernie Eves government.

Minister, we politicians, as well as members of the press gallery, are sometimes guilty of being too busy to exercise and eat properly. I was wondering if HealthyOntario.com contains information on how we can address this problem. Also, could the Minister of Health shed

more light on what more one can find on HealthyOntario.com?

Hon Mr Clement: Let me start by saying that HealthyOntario.com is not a difficult site on which to find information. You don't have to be Web-savvy. We've made it easy to find the information one is searching for by providing a search engine and an alphabetical listing of all topics. I would like to inform this House that certainly there are sections on healthy diets and exercise programs.

What else can they find on HealthyOntario.com? They can find listings for hospitals and doctors in their area. They can find information about diseases, viruses and symptoms. They can find information about how to quit smoking, which would benefit certain members of this House, and the benefits that result from butting out.

On October 29, the day we launched HealthyOntario.com, there were over 90,000 hits on the site that day alone. So I urge everyone within listening distance of me to check out HealthyOntario.com. It is fun, it is informative, and it will promote healthy living and make health care work for you—HealthyOntario.com.

HYDRO RATES

DÉRÉGLEMENTATION DE L'ÉLECTRICITÉ

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): My question is for the Minister of Energy. This past week I heard from some of the nursing homes in my riding. They tell me they will not be able to pay their bills if your government continues to sit by and do nothing on this hydro fiasco.

The last hydro bill of the St Joseph Nursing Home in Rockland showed an increase of over \$3,000. The September bill of the Centre Roger-Séguin in Clarence showed an increase of \$3,500. And listen to this one: the July hydro bill for Maxville Manor was \$8,700, and their September bill was over \$15,200, an increase of over \$6,500.

Minister, these nursing homes cannot afford these increases. Our seniors need your help. I ask you to ensure that our seniors do not freeze this winter. Will these nursing homes have to start dipping into the daily \$4.49 food allowance of their residents to pay for your government's hydro fiasco? Tell me, Minister, will your answer to our seniors be, "Heat or eat? Le chauffage ou les trois repas?"

L'hon John R. Baird (ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones) : Je suis très conscient des besoins de la communauté, des agences et des personnes qui donnent les services aux personnes âgées dans notre province.

J'espère que le député de Glengarry-Prescott-Russell parlera du travail que le gouvernement est en train de faire et les réponses que nous sommes en train de donner au peuple de l'Ontario. J'espère qu'il parlera de la rebate qui était mise en place pour aider les groupes dont il parle. J'espère qu'il parlera de la priorité que le premier

ministre, Ernie Eves, et moi donnons à cette politique très importante.

Mr Lalonde: Minister, that is not enough.

Here are a few more hydro problems. The July bill of Marché St Albert was \$482. They just received their October bill, which you promised would be lower, and it was \$1,381. M. Malouf in Rockland has a small pizzeria. His July bill was \$939, and his September bill was \$1,873. These two small businesses, along with many others, are threatening to close because of your government's hydro fiasco.

Here are other cases. Many of those who are on a fixed payment plan have just received their final bill. M^{me} Longtin of St Isidore, an 85-year-old lady, was crying on the phone. Her budget payment was \$106 per month and her final bill was \$513, an increase of \$372. A single lady bought a house last year in Bourget and kept the same fixed payment as the previous family of six. Guess what, Minister? Her final bill this year was \$1,074.

Minister, your government created this mess and every day you promise to fix it. I ask you, when can they expect the good news? Tell me today what you plan to do for them and when they can expect this hydro fiasco—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Minister.

L'hon M. Baird: Aussitôt que possible.

1540

EARLY YEARS CHALLENGE FUND

Mr Wayne Wettkaufer (Kitchener Centre): I feel like I should be asking this question of the Minister of Energy, but I'm really asking it of the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. Minister, as you're aware, I have a large immigrant population in my riding. We receive probably the third-largest number, in terms of actual numbers, of immigrants from around the world, behind only Vancouver and Toronto. Many of these immigrants are young. Many of them have young families, young children. As a government, we announced the Early Years challenge fund several years back. You were going to make another announcement yesterday or the day before, and I'm not sure if you did or not.

Interjections.

Mr Wettkaufer: I was a little busy. I didn't get to hear it.

Anyway, Minister, I'd like to know, for the benefit of these young families in my riding, what we can do to help them apply for the projects. What do they need?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): I thank my colleague from Kitchener Centre for the question. I know that children's interests are very much his interests.

Yes, indeed, we did go out the door and announce the second round of the challenge fund, which is a program that supports community efforts to do more for children and families in Ontario. This is one of the programs that came from the Early Years Study. It's an opportunity to do more programs that come directly from the

community's needs. Our vision is that communities are able to provide care for children in special programs that are unique. This is the second round of proposals, as I said.

For organizations that wish to apply, we would encourage them to contact their local community, family and children's services regional office. They will get the details there. If they wish, they may visit the ministry Web site at www.gov.on.ca/CSS. There's an application form there. We would invite all those interested to apply.

Mr Wettkaufer: Minister, the families are going to want to apply for some money to help the local children. A number of the organizations will be there to do so. I know there have been some organizations in my riding that have already received something. I know that success breeds success. My riding is often touted as one to be proud of because we have been very self-sufficient, but nevertheless there are those who need help.

I would like to be able to share some information with those organizations that need help, who will be able to look to those organizations that have been successful in receiving funding. Could you give us a list of those that have received funding and been successful so that I could share that with the other organizations that are making applications?

Hon Mrs Elliott: The success of this particular program has been that it's been a combination of efforts, of organizations, governments and local businesses working together. The deadline for application is January 15.

To my colleague from Kitchener Centre, he might like to know that there are some very successful projects underway. For instance, the Catholic Family Counselling Centre is developing a program to increase children's success in school and help them integrate with their peers, particularly in a multicultural community. The House of Friendship of Kitchener operates a community centre that provides parenting programs with an outreach component for low-income families and new Canadians. Lutherwood Community Opportunities Development Association supports families with a home visiting program. The Centre for Research and Education in Human Services creates a system of data interpretation from the Early Years projects across Ontario, which gives us information about particular areas of interest that we as a government need to turn our attention to.

HYDRO RATES

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question to the Minister of Energy. This spring the NDP warned you that private, for-profit power was going to drive up electricity rates, and the former energy minister called that a fantasy. I want to give you some examples of what's happening in my riding.

Benoit St Amour of Val Therese paid \$75.05 for hydro last year in October. His bill this October is \$408.13, a 543% increase.

Bill Hedderson of Levack has seen his September bill rise 36.3% in comparison to his September bill last year.

He says, "Think of the impact this will have on home power costs, the education and the health sectors, not to mention our business community and the subsequent stress on the economy and job stability."

Cindy Bond of Capreol has seen her family's September hydro bill rise 62% in comparison to last September's bill.

High hydro bills are not a fantasy for these families. Admit your mistake. When are you going to cancel hydro deregulation and privatization?

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, minister responsible for francophone affairs): We're concerned about the reality that many people face right across the province with respect to their concern about their current hydro bill and the outlook for the future. The Premier has asked me to look into it, and we'll be reporting back in short order.

The member opposite is a charter member of the hydro hotheads club. I have here the hydro hotheads card. It says they support reliable and affordable public power at cost. We haven't seen public power at cost in decades in Ontario. What we've seen is public power at cost plus \$38 billion. Now, I know \$38 billion isn't a lot to the member opposite and her band of socialist friends. When they were in government, they increased debt more than that in five years.

I say to the member opposite that there is no social justice to that family in her constituency by borrowing \$3,000 for every child in Ontario or \$10,000 for every—

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

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I say to the minister, you're darned right you've never seen public power at the cost you're charging for your private, deregulated hydroelectricity here in Ontario. Howard Hampton warned you about deregulation and privatization, and he's telling you now that your rebate program ain't going to cut it. You'd have to send out rebate cheques once a month to even make a dent in the huge new costs.

Clova Corbin, a single mom up in Richmond Hill: her electricity costs have more than tripled, from 100 bucks to 320 bucks. Mary Ward, a mom with two kids on a fixed income: her rate has nearly doubled, from 140 bucks to \$278.

Minister, save us all from your privatization-deregulation misery. Don't just rebate, don't just cap; cancel. Cancel your for-profit, deregulated hydro scheme and adopt the NDP plan for non-profit, public power today—www.publicpower.ca. Will you do that?

Hon Mr Baird: In a very real sense, I want to underline the concern that Premier Ernie Eves has, that I have, and that our entire cabinet and caucus have with respect to the high hydro rates people in Ontario are facing. The Premier has asked me to report back in short order, and I've certainly committed to do that.

The member opposite is another charter member of the hydro hotheads club. Some would say he's the hottest of them all. I wasn't sure what a hothead was, so I got out a

few dictionaries. The first dictionary I checked said it's "a quick-tempered or impetuous person." The next one said, "a violent person; a hasty or impetuous person," as in "the rant of a hothead." The next one said that a hothead is "a belligerent grouch." But the last one was "a reckless, impetuous, irresponsible person." The member opposite is in the right club.

AMBULANCE SERVICES

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Health. Today ambulance dispatchers came to Queen's Park from all over the province of Ontario. They're describing a very serious problem that confronts all of Ontario, and I can be specific and say the Hamilton-Brantford-Simcoe-Niagara region, and that is the problem with ambulance dispatch service. The problem that has been identified by an independent outside agency is, first of all, that you have a large turnover of staff due to the fact that they are very much underpaid and that there's so much stress because there are too few staff; second, that the equipment they use is antiquated, outdated and not appropriate for use at the dispatch centre; and the third is that the training provided by the Ministry of Health is inadequate. Minister, will you now assure this House that you will act on all recommendations of that particular independent agency and that you will solve all the problems associated with this problem?

1550

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): I'd be happy to inform this House once again that on August 20, 2002, this government announced \$32.5 million toward enhancing emergency health services; \$29.2 million of that would help maintain and improve ambulance response times and \$3.3 million was going toward enhancing ambulance dispatch centres. This means 66 new dispatch positions across the province, more rapid and efficient responses to ambulance requests and much-needed renovations of ambulance dispatch centres. That'll be implemented over the fall and winter so the honourable member can keep tabs on that situation.

I can tell you that we are also scheduling some major operational and technological improvements for all CACCs, and this plan of action had the following quote from the Niagara region public safety officer: "It's good that they're putting money and trying to fix dispatch problems"—

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

Mr Bradley: All the assurances that you are giving are not stopping the fact that there are people who are actually dying because the dispatch is not appropriate for people who are trying to get the services of ambulances. This is not the fault of the dispatchers, because the dispatchers are in a situation where they're very much overworked. Sometimes there's one person on when there are supposed to be four persons on. They're using,

as we say, the most antiquated equipment, which is not satisfactory in that office.

In the regional municipality of Niagara, they are so desperate that they have said they're prepared to take over the service, as Toronto has taken over the ambulance service, and they're prepared to operate it if you will provide the funding. Will you now acquiesce to the requests of the people of Niagara that this service be repatriated to Niagara, given to the regional municipality of Niagara, along with the necessary funding to make it a service that will ensure that there are no more people dying because ambulances are not getting to them on time, and are not having their health deteriorate for the same reason?

Hon Mr Clement: I respectfully take issue with the honourable member when he states in his comments that deaths can be attributed to this situation. That is a serious allegation and, as he knows, there are coroners who would be in a better position to decide that issue rather than he or I in the House.

I can tell you specifically with regard to the Niagara and Hamilton CACC that, in the meantime, as we wait for the regional government to put together their best suggestions to us, all open positions have been filled at the Niagara and Hamilton CACC, a communications training officer and technical officer has been added to the dispatch centre, we've developed a more effective training and quality assurance program, and the Niagara emergency medical staff are training new CACC employees for familiarization with Niagara region. That, combined with the recent negotiated settlement with OPSEU employees, which provides for a substantial wage increase for these dispatchers, I think is a plan well worth celebrating.

BILL 207

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We could begin petitions, if I could quickly give a ruling.

Yesterday, the Member for Mississauga Centre introduced Bill 207, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide an exemption from tax for amateur youth sports.

After the bill received first reading, the House leader for the official opposition, the member for Windsor-St Clair, rose on a point of order to question the orderliness of the bill with respect to standing order 56, which states, "Any bill, resolution, motion or address, the passage of which would impose a tax or specifically direct the allocation of public funds, shall not be passed by the House unless recommended by a message from the Lieutenant Governor, and shall be proposed only by a minister of the Crown."

I undertook to review the bill and have since done so.

The simple purpose of the bill is to provide for an alleviation of the provincial sales tax that would normally be payable upon the purchase of a specified class of tangible personal property. This is conceptually similar to the tax credit proposed by the member for Etobicoke

North—then Etobicoke-Rexdale—in his Bill 24 of the second session of the 36th Parliament, which Speaker Stockwell ruled on in 1998.

In that instance, it was found that, although the proposal, if passed, would impose a burden on the consolidated revenue fund, this would only occur indirectly. I find the same in the current case and therefore find Bill 207 to be in order.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):

This is a petition that has been signed by people from Port Colborne, Fergus, Orangeville, St Marys, Sarnia, Petrolia, London, King City, Forest and Newmarket. It deals with the long-term-care situation. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors, the most vulnerable living in long-term-care" facilities "by 15% over three years, or \$3.02 per diem in the first year and \$2 in the second year and \$2 in the third year effective September 1, 2002; and

"Whereas this increase will cost seniors and our most vulnerable more than \$200 a month after three years; and

"Whereas this increase is above the rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario for 2002; and

"Whereas, according to the government's own funded study, Ontario will still rank last amongst comparable jurisdictions in the amount of time provided to a resident for nursing and personal care; and

"Whereas the long-term-care funding partnership has been based on government accepting the responsibility to fund the care and services that residents need; and

"Whereas the government needs to increase long-term-care operating funding by \$750 million over the next three years to raise the level of service for Ontario's long-term-care residents to those in Saskatchewan in 1999; and

"Whereas this province has been built by seniors who should be able to live out their lives with dignity, respect and in comfort in this province;

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

"Demand that Premier Eves reduce the 15% increase over three years in accommodation costs to no more than the cost-of-living increase annually and that the provincial government provide adequate funding for nursing and personal care to a level that is at least at the average standard for nursing and personal care in those 10 jurisdictions included in the government's own study."

I agree with the petition, have signed it accordingly and hand it to Matthew.

CUSTODIAL CARE

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I'm pleased that the minister is here to hear it directly.

"The regional council of Niagara have presented to the social services minister the following recommended changes to the legislation:

"(1) That the province of Ontario amend the Child and Family Services Act to recognize custodial care by extended family members as a legitimate intervention and that the related funding to support these care arrangements be made available;

"(2) That the temporary care allowance rate pursuant to the Ontario Works Act be altered to reflect established rates for similar care by foster parents;

"(3) That the regional municipality of Niagara along with the Niagara Family and Children's Services train their respective staff on the program options available to extended family members wishing to care for children;

"(4) That the region of Niagara along with Family and Children's Services advocate for the recommended changes with the Ministry of Community and Social Services as well as relevant associations, such as the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies;

"(5) That other consolidated municipal services managers be informed of this issue through circulation of this committee report;

"(6) That the province of Ontario be encouraged to consider a legislative change to permit open adoptions;

"(7) That the regional chair correspond with the Minister of Community and Social Services to advise the minister of these recommendations;

"We, the undersigned support these recommended changes to the legislation."

I've affixed my signature as well, and page Kalaneet Malik will deliver this to the Clerk's table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr Cameron Jackson (Burlington): I'd like to present a petition to the Parliament of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas the province has stated its commitment to ensuring affordable hydro rates for the citizens of Ontario;

"Whereas the province's recent move to deregulate hydro rates and place them within the competitive context of the open market has resulted in significant increases in hydro rates, including retroactive ones, for Ontarians;

"Whereas some local utilities are projecting future costs and pegging it for consumers, resulting in unnecessarily high hydro rates;

"Whereas these hydro rate increases, above and beyond what citizens have paid before deregulation, present a great burden to many young families, seniors and those on fixed incomes;

"Whereas the province still owns Ontario Power Generation that produces most of electricity and it has stated that a review of hydro rates and its regulating agency, the Ontario Energy Board, is necessary;

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

"That the province be directed to immediately freeze hydro rates to last year's levels immediately during its current review of the Ontario Energy Board's mandate, that the province work with the federal government to eliminate the GST on Hydro One's debt retirement charges, and that the province ensure stronger consumer protection for all citizens of Ontario against such hydro rate increases."

It has my signature attached to it, and I'm very pleased to ask Hin-Hey, our page, to deliver it to the Clerk's desk.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I'm afraid that, pursuant to standing order 30(b), I'm now required to call orders of the day, it being 4 o'clock.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

KEEPING THE PROMISE
FOR A STRONG ECONOMY ACT
(BUDGET MEASURES), 2002
LOI DE 2002 SUR LE RESPECT
DE L'ENGAGEMENT D'ASSURER
UNE ÉCONOMIE SAINTE
(MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Hon Mrs Ecker moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 198, An Act to implement Budget measures and other initiatives of the Government / Projet de loi 198, Loi mettant en oeuvre certaines mesures budgétaires et d'autres initiatives du gouvernement.

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'll be sharing my time with the member for Simcoe North and the member for Nipissing.

I'd like to outline for the members of the House some of the key measures in Bill 198, the Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act. If passed, this bill will put into place a number of key commitments that were made in our 2002 budget in June, commitments that will support this government's agenda for continued growth and prosperity. These commitments include measures to improve investor confidence; to protect consumers in the auto insurance field; to reduce red tape; to support the province's cities, towns and rural areas; and to improve the effectiveness of many other statutes. In short, the measures in this bill are designed collectively to continue to meet our goals and agenda for continued growth and prosperity.

I'd like to start with the investor confidence piece that's in the legislation, because as we said in the budget

in June, this government is committed to keeping our securities laws, the laws that govern people's investments, up to date and accurate so that our capital markets can remain competitive and strong. We understand that strong capital markets are very much part of a strong economy. People in Ontario have seen the fallout from the accounting scandals in the United States and that has caused them to have concerns about what may be happening in Canadian markets. That's why, on the one hand, while we have very good, strong markets in this country, we also recognize that simply patting ourselves on the back because Enron hasn't happened here doesn't mean we can be complacent. It doesn't mean we cannot respond to the expert advice and opinions we've been given in this field.

That's why we're going forward with what we believe is a balanced, made-in-Ontario package, if you will, one that reflects the situations here in this province, what our business community is like. We think this package of reforms in this legislation will actually support investor confidence in our markets.

Part of the advice we received that formed this legislation was from the five-year review committee, very ably chaired by Mr Purdy Crawford, I might say, the first comprehensive review of the Ontario Securities Act. We received many constructive recommendations to improve the regulatory framework. Much of what is in there has shaped what is in this legislation, as well as other consultations.

If passed, the bill will institute tougher penalties for securities infractions and set higher standards for public companies in order to protect public confidence and to maintain the competitiveness of our markets. We're raising maximum court fines, for example, from \$1 million to \$5 million. We're increasing prison terms for those guilty of fraudulent practice in our markets, from two years to five years less a day, for these kinds of infractions. We're also allowing profits that may have been gained through this kind of behaviour to be returned to investors.

Other amendments in the legislation will include a consistent increase in fines for illegal insider trading. The Ontario Securities Commission will have the ability to set rules for audit committees for their functions and responsibilities so we can have strong, independent, accountable audit committees in our businesses. The legislation will expressly prohibit market manipulation, making misleading or untrue statements, to be clear that these activities are not tolerated in this province.

The Ontario Securities Commission will be able to review the information that public companies provide to investors. That authority is clearly laid out in the legislation. It will give investors the ability to sue, expand their right to sue if they have been the victim of fraudulent activities, misrepresentation.

This legislation, if passed by the House, will provide the securities commission with rule-making power to require that CEOs and CFOs can be accountable for certifying the financial statements of their companies.

I'd like to say, because I know there has been some potential misunderstanding about the securities commission's authority in terms of rule-making, that one of things I think is important is that the rule-making process, first of all, allow a very detailed and nuanced approach that can be taken to dealing with these issues, which I think is appropriate in this area. Sometimes legislation can be a bit of a blunt instrument in dealing with complex issues. It also requires the securities commission to consult, to go out to the sector, to investors, to dealers, to consumers, to all of the different groups that represent our securities sector, to consult with them about what makes the most sense. At the end of the day—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know that the minister is presenting a very important bill with which we may not all agree, but surely to goodness there ought to be a quorum present of at least government members to listen to the finance minister of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr David Christopherson): Would the clerks' table please check for a quorum.

Deputy Clerk (Ms Deborah Deller): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Deputy Clerk: Quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Finance may continue.

Hon Mrs Ecker: I'd like to complete the thought that the Ontario Securities Commission, as I said earlier, must consult in making rules, which I think is a very, very good process to go through. It then comes to the government. The government has the opportunity to approve this, to say that this is the appropriate set of rules, and if we have some concerns, they can be addressed. So I think that provides a good check and balance in the system.

We also understand, I think, that rules that need to be put in place in Ontario must be sensitive to the needs of the capital markets as we find them in our country and our province, and recognize that for Ontario most of our businesses are small and medium-sized businesses. That means that rules should well differ from what might occur, for example, in the United States.

That touches on some of the highlights of the investor confidence piece, which we think is very, very important for people who are concerned about their retirement savings, who want to make sure that they have the right information to make good investment decisions and that those investments are well regulated.

There is another area of consumer protection that this legislation proposes to deal with, and that, as I mentioned earlier today and as we talked about in the June budget, deals with the pressures on auto insurance premiums. Because of rising health care costs, higher insurance claims, higher vehicle repair costs and reduced investment income, we're seeing some serious pressure in the auto insurance premium area, not only in Ontario but, quite frankly, around the world. The budget indicated our

intention to introduce reforms that would help deal with this.

1610

The proposed changes are based on the consultations that occurred in the last several months. I asked a committee of our caucus—Ted Chudleigh, who's the MPP for Halton and my parliamentary assistant, a very good man. My colleague mentioned is here off to my left; not often is he to my left. Also, he was joined by another very able colleague of mine, Rob Sampson from Mississauga Centre, and Wayne Wetlaufer from Kitchener Centre. All three of these individuals have a great deal of experience and expertise and have worked quite diligently with the auto insurance sector over the last several months.

What has been quite interesting is that in their work there has been an incredible—I would say consensus. Not everybody agreed on every point, but it was an incredible working relationship for all the groups, whether we were talking about lawyers, health care providers, consumers or insurance representatives, to try to come up with a package of changes that would work to the benefit of consumers and a strong, competitive auto insurance industry. So based on the recommendations that have come forward, this legislation reflects those.

Some of the highlights: we would expand the rights of seriously injured accident victims who are not at fault, particularly children, to sue at-fault drivers for health care expenses in excess of no-fault insurance benefits. The legislation would provide for a framework of treatment guidelines that would help, especially for those individuals who might have less serious injuries, to make sure that they can have earlier access to proper medical and rehabilitation care without getting caught in endless disputes around assessments or other disputes that may occur. The legislation proposes to institute regulations that would govern the conduct of paid representatives in the dispute resolution system, because we have had feedback and input that there have been some difficulties in this area. This legislation proposes to deal with that.

It would expand the disclosure requirements for insurance agents so that consumers will have a clearer idea about which companies insurance agents represent, sometimes a very important piece of information for a consumer. It helps to ensure that uninsured vehicles can get off the road more effectively, that we can prevent that from occurring, by requiring insurers to provide information on insurance status to the Ministry of Transportation.

We think these reforms will strengthen the auto insurance system in Ontario and benefit the consumers who depend on it. We look forward to continuing to work with all of the representatives in this sector, not only on implementing the legislation, should the will of this House be that it pass, but also to work on some of the regulations that would be required under this legislation. We hope that in that spirit of working together we can continue to resolve these issues in a very speedy fashion. I would like to thank my three colleagues—Rob, Wayne

and Ted—who have spent so much time on this. It has been very helpful for this government. They have indeed done a superb job. I hope their constituents recognize that.

The other issue that we talk about in this legislation addresses the issue, of course, of some aspects of pension reform. There are many, many issues in pension reform that I know from employees' perspectives and from employers' perspectives need to be addressed. This piece of legislation just deals with one particular aspect of that. The government felt, after the consultations that we held on this—for example, we had had a consultation paper that went out last summer. We talked about the need to move forward on this in the year 2000. There was a consultation paper out last year. There was work done and submissions based on that had occurred among, again, employers and employees. All representatives had presented to the ministry their recommendations about how to deal with this—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Point of order.

The Acting Speaker: Would the minister please take her seat.

Mr Kormos: I don't believe there's a quorum, sir.

The Acting Speaker: I'll have the clerks check for a quorum.

Clerk at the Table (Mr Todd Decker): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Call in the members. This will be up to a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk at the Table: A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Finance may continue.

Hon Mrs Ecker: To finish my comments, I'd just like to say that on the pension issue we're moving to protect the pension benefits of all current and former employees by protecting the long-term viability of pension plans and their surpluses. I think it's important to stress that nothing in this legislation affects the earned benefits of pension plan members or retirees, and the purpose of the legislation is to provide more flexibility in how employees, employers and plan members negotiate surplus-sharing agreements, which had been severely restricted by recent court cases. That is one of the reasons we're moving forward on this.

There are many, many other items in this legislation giving municipalities the opportunity to invest in their infrastructure through opportunity bonds and low-cost bonds, and giving those municipalities that have been struggling to get investment, new jobs and new businesses in their community the opportunity and some assistance through tax-free incentive zones. That is also in this legislation. Continuing to move forward with our plan to have reduced and more competitive taxes in Ontario is also included in this legislation.

We believe it is something that is important for this province to move forward on our agenda of growth and prosperity, and we certainly hope the members of this

House would see fit to pass this legislation. I know that in the ensuing debate my caucus colleagues will go on at great length about some of the other issues that are in this legislation.

The Acting Speaker: I see the member from Simcoe North standing. I gather you're going to continue the leadoff speech for the government. Is that your intent?

Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North): Yes, Mr Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Very well. You now have the floor.

Mr Dunlop: It's an honour for me to rise today to take part in the debate on Bill 198, the Keeping the Promise for a Strong Economy Act (Budget Measures), 2002. I'd like to congratulate our honourable Minister of Finance for bringing forth this piece of legislation and as well for her hard work as an MPP in our caucus. I've had the privilege in the past of sitting as Minister Ecker's parliamentary assistant, and it's certainly one of the highlights of my political career to be able to work with Minister Ecker. When the opportunity came for Minister Ecker to become the Minister of Finance and to have the option of delivering the fourth consecutive balanced budget in a row for the province of Ontario, I was very, very happy for her; and of course she has done that.

As you know, this important piece of legislation that we're bringing forth today would implement a number of commitments announced by our government in the 2002 budget. I'd like to go back for a few moments and talk a little bit about our budget for 2002.

1620

As I said earlier, as a new member of this House, I've been fortunate because every year I've been here, when a budget was brought forward, it's been a balanced budget. Our budget this year is the fourth one in a row and we are extremely pleased. I see my friend Mr Gill nodding his head here. It's something we are very concerned about. As Progressive Conservatives, we know the importance of balanced budgets. We know the importance of job creation. With investor confidence at an all-time low in many political jurisdictions around the world, we know how important it is for governments of all political stripes, no matter where they are, to try their best to actually deliver balanced budgets.

I'd like to speak a little bit on some of the highlights of the budget and then go into a little bit about the reforms under Bill 198 that deal with Ontario's auto insurance system. First of all, going back to the budget, I was fortunate that Minister Ecker was able to use my office for some of the rollout of the budget this year. When she did some of her press conferences and meetings with the media immediately after the budget, she used my office for a lot of that, and I was pleased to be part of that.

The first budget of our new Premier, Ernie Eves, is sensible, prudent and clearly focused on keeping Ontario prosperous and strong, and, at the same time, trying to maintain the services that are most important to the citizens of our great province. Since 1995, we have

worked hard here on this side of the House on behalf of Ontario families to build a strong foundation of prosperity, jobs and economic growth in the province. Recent events have tested the strength of that foundation. We are pleased that, as a result of the 2002 budget, Ontario does remain strong to this day.

The announcement last month of the new jobs in our country was so important. In the month of September, 32,000 new jobs, or 80% of the jobs created in the whole country, were created right here in the province of Ontario. We look forward to the day—and we hope it's in the very near future—when we can actually say a million new jobs have been created since our government came to power in 1995. I think that will be a day for all Ontarians to be extremely proud of.

In the last year or so, as an aftermath of September 11, 13 months later, the United States, our largest trading partner, experienced a sharp economic slowdown. Ontario exports fell in that year and we encountered a slight recession, similar to the one in 1991. Added to this hardship, Ontario and all provinces continue to be shortchanged by the federal health and social transfers. They've actually failed to keep up with rapidly rising health care costs, the expansion of post-secondary education and the need to protect vulnerable people in our society.

We're very enthusiastic and looking forward to the announcement of Mr Romanow's commission, when he'll bring forward, hopefully, the recommendations relating to health care later on either this month or in December. We hope that will lead to an extremely productive first ministers' conference as we head toward the spring of next year. I believe there's something scheduled for January or February for the first ministers. Health care is a national priority. Again, we're dealing with the budget and the rollout from that budget. While the number of senior citizens is growing like never before in our province, the ever-expanding job of caring for our parents and grandparents through home care falls solely on the shoulders of the provinces. We're hoping, again, as we go toward the Romanow report, we'll see some recommendations in there for some help from our counterparts in Ottawa.

While Ontario is the economic engine of Canada, Ontario workers and employers continue to be unfairly overtaxed through excessive employment insurance premiums. That's a known fact. Especially here in Ontario. Our workers are penalized and we basically pay the employment insurance for a number of the other provinces in this country.

After September 11, this government took swift action to protect our hard-fought gains by accelerating tax cuts. That happened last year. Today our decisive action is beginning to pay dividends. Ontario is now poised again, even today, to lead growth as we move forward to a brighter future that is upon us. We have kept Ontario strong and we remain committed to the priority programs that matter most to real Ontario families. Those, of course, are health care, education and the environment.

We will continue to find efficiencies elsewhere in government spending as we head toward the future in many areas.

One of the key commitments of Bill 198 is the commitment concerning reforms to Ontario's auto insurance system. These reforms are designed to strengthen the province's auto insurance system and provide greater protection for our consumers.

At this time, it is my pleasure to provide some details about our government's next steps in our continuing efforts to improve the auto insurance system here in Ontario. As some of you may know, our government has a long-standing commitment to protecting consumers. Auto insurance is one area in which we have focused on consumer protection.

Since our election in 1995, we have moved forward with important reforms to improve the auto insurance system. In 1996, for example, my colleague Rob Sampson introduced Bill 59, the Automobile Insurance Rate Stability Act. Insurance rates for drivers, which had been increasing annually by double digits, declined substantially after that act came into force on November 1, 1996. Most jurisdictions experienced, and are continuing to experience, much higher rate increases than the province of Ontario. In Ontario, rates declined 12.5% between 1996 and 1999. Ontario rates have only recently returned to 1996 levels and are now only 6.9% higher than when Bill 59 was introduced by us in 1996.

That was an important piece of legislation and part of our commitment to the people of our province. That commitment continues to this day. We have continued to look for improvements, for new measures to strengthen our system. We have made commitments to improve the system by attempting to moderate cost and ensuring fairness in the system.

For example, we are phasing out the retail sales tax on auto insurance premiums, which was 5% when we came to power. That tax is currently at just 2% and will be completely eliminated by April 2004. We have made changes to the regulations to eliminate what we would call double dipping, where claimants receive both Canada pension plan disability benefits and auto insurance benefits. Some claimants were receiving more money for being injured than they had been before they were actually injured. The system is now fair for injured claimants as well as for all vehicle owners who pay their insurance premiums.

We have streamlined the process for settling a claim. We clarified and simplified requirements so consumers can make informed decisions on settlement offers and insurers can save administrative costs. As a result of our efforts, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, FSCO, now has a more improved, more efficient rate filing system that saves administrative costs for insurers. Insurers must still obtain approval from FSCO to increase their rates.

Finally, we have continued with consultations led by my colleagues Ted Chudleigh, who is here with us today, Rob Sampson and Wayne Wettslaufer, on how best to

improve the auto insurance system. They have held consultations and received submissions from many, many interested parties across our province, including consumer groups, insurers, brokers, health care providers and the legal community. These consultations have gone well and were completed in October 2002, just a few weeks back. In the 2002 budget in June, we announced our commitment to move forward with reforms once consultations have actually been completed. We are now ready to implement reforms based on input from both consumers and the auto insurance industry.

1630

With the measures included in Bill 198, we are now implementing an action plan that focuses on three key areas. The first area is increasing support for innocent victims whereby we will improve the delivery of treatment and people's rights to sue for benefits. In protecting consumers we want to ensure that consumers get credible information and that their interests are in fact protected. Finally, we are taking steps to ensure that the industry is competitive so consumers have real choice available to them. I'm sure you all agree that these are very, very important objectives.

These reforms are necessary because there are serious challenges facing the industry these days. Throughout North America, and across the world for that matter, insurance premiums are rising. In Ontario, rising premiums are due to factors such as rising health care costs not covered by OHIP and increasing expensive vehicle repair costs. I don't think most people are aware of just what the impact was on insurance companies and the insurance industry as a result of September 11, 2001. I just had a case the other day—I've had a couple recently, of small companies that have come forward and they're having a real problem getting insurance. They're actually asking me to look into whatever I can find or additional names that they could use to try to get insurance because a lot of the larger companies are just not underwriting a lot of the small companies as a result of the large payouts they made as a result of September 11. In fact, there are many, many lawsuits and credits still to go to people who died in September 11 and to pay for some of the costs of the demolition that was done during that period. So September 11 has had a major impact and a lot of small businesses are hearing that, and it's something that I think everyone across this planet has to look into because it certainly has been something that we didn't expect to see but has had a major impact.

We must move forward with measures to keep insurance premiums competitive while providing stronger support for our consumers. Today I am pleased to address the details of our action plan as included in Bill 198 and ask everyone in this House for their support on this particular bill. To begin with, Bill 198 would provide more support for innocent accident victims. If approved by the Legislature, our reforms in this area would include, first of all, expanding the rights of injured people to sue at-fault drivers for health care expenses in excess of no-fault insurance benefits. Currently, innocent vic-

tims are unable to sue at-fault drivers for excess health care costs unless they suffer catastrophic injuries. The government's proposal would expand the right for innocent victims who sustain a serious or permanent impairment to sue at-fault drivers for health care expenses in excess of insurance benefits.

The second point on that is that we would also expand the right to sue for health care expenses for injured children. That can be a very, very serious issue, as you know, when someone very young gets hurt and it has an impact, not only on the child but on all members of their family and on their education, as they may in fact be in the hospital for months and months at a time.

The third measure would also improve service to accident victims by ensuring speedier access to medical treatment through the introduction of treatment guidelines for specific injuries. Currently it takes longer for some people with certain injuries such as whiplash to get treatment because of disputes over the need for treatment. We intend that this measure set clearer guidelines for those injuries and help promote quicker access to proper treatment by eliminating prior approval by insurers.

Fourth, we are also looking to provide greater consumer protection. This would include measures to increase consumer awareness by requiring insurance agents to disclose which companies they represent, as brokers now must do. Currently, some consumers may not be able to distinguish between services provided by brokers and those actually provided by agents. Consumers may assume an agent has the ability to compare products and prices from different companies when in fact the agent only represents one company. This measure would ensure that consumers will be better informed about who insurance agents actually represent. It would also give consumers a clearer idea of what services are going to be provided.

Finally, we are moving forward with measures to ensure the auto industry remains competitive. These measures, if approved by the Legislature, would include controlling costs through the elimination of double-dipping. The government is planning to eliminate double-dipping by injured victims who win court awards for loss of income and then receive money from other sources for that same disability. This can mean that the compensation is greater than the losses experienced by the injured party. Situations like that simply add costs to the system for everyone who pays premiums while allowing a few people to double-dip. The government measures, if approved, would require the courts to deduct income replacement benefits received from another source.

Another issue we are trying to address to improve the auto insurance system is in the area of deductibles. There is a \$15,000 deductible, or \$7,500 for Family Law Act awards, applied to court awards for pain and suffering to discourage frivolous lawsuits. During consultations, Mr Chudleigh and Mr Wettlaufer and Mr O'Toole all heard that the deductible simply decreases the awards for the most seriously injured.

Interjection.

Mr Dunlop: I'm sorry, I've made a mistake. It was actually Mr Sampson, not Mr O'Toole, on that.

We therefore propose to eliminate the deductible for large awards over \$100,000; \$50,000 for Family Law Act awards. We do not propose to apply the deductible to court awards for health care expenses.

Lump sum awards currently may be adjusted upward so that after income tax is paid on the investment income from the award, the claimant is left with the amount of the lump sum award plus the investment income. We propose to clarify the provisions in the act such that court awards that are paid in instalments over time rather than in a lump sum are not to be adjusted to an upward position. The interest or other income from investing these awards should be taxable.

Changes are also proposed to the motor vehicle accident claims fund, which provides auto insurance benefits for those involved in an accident who did not have any other policy to cover their losses. We are ensuring that the fund's resources are correctly directed—in other words, it will no longer pay statutory accident benefits for accidents that happen outside of our province. In order to ensure that injured individuals do not experience an interruption in their flow of benefits in the event of an insurer insolvency, it is proposed that the motor vehicle accident claims fund take over payment of no-fault benefits to claimants. Any costs incurred by the fund will be recovered from the auto insurance industry. As a result, this measure would not increase the fund's operating costs.

1640

Ours is a balanced package of reforms, addressing many of the concerns we heard throughout our consultations. These reforms would enhance the auto insurance system in Ontario and benefit the consumers who depend on it. These reforms would keep rates from rising as much as they would have without any government action. These reforms would also help ensure the system is fair and effective.

That is why I would ask everyone to support Bill 198. I know Minister Ecker has put a great deal of effort into this legislation. I have confidence not only in Minister Ecker but in the great staff she has around her and the great people who work in the Ministry of Finance, who year after year work diligently with the Minister of Finance, cabinet and our government caucus to make sure we deliver a budget that works well for our strong and thriving economy.

With that, I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to say a few words today. I believe Mr McDonald and possibly Mr O'Toole will be making a few comments to follow my statement here as well.

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): In the June budget, the government announced pension surplus reforms. This was in response to concerns expressed by the pension community, pressing for legislation to address pension surplus. The pension community, which includes pension plan administrators, plan members, pensioners and employers, was reacting to recent court cases—which we all

know—which called into question the effectiveness of the current surplus distribution scheme and have made it difficult for many employers to negotiate surplus-sharing agreements with their employee members and pensioners, and led to legal uncertainty regarding the rules governing partial pension plan windups and pending resolution of the Monsanto case. Following this case, employers were being forced to distribute surplus on partial windup or delay as long as possible until the law changes. This case is still being considered by the Ontario Court of Appeal.

There is the concern about this case because, if it requires employers to distribute surplus on partial windup, members affected by partial windup may receive surplus even if the continuing members, pensioners or anyone who is terminated for other reasons may never receive surplus. Indeed, depending on circumstances, distribution of surplus on partial windup may jeopardize the basic benefits of the continuing members and pensioners.

Before this case, the pension community understood that employers were able to choose to distribute surplus or retain surplus in the plan on a partial windup. Employers routinely chose not to distribute surplus and were not required to do so. This case has thrown doubt on that practice, which employers thought was authorized by law.

There is a hard-working MPP from Durham named John O'Toole who has worked on this bill for a considerable time, and he has considerable expertise. What I would like to do, as the new member from Nipissing, is defer to Mr O'Toole, the MPP for Durham, to continue on the debate on Bill 198.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham): I'd like to thank the member from Nipissing. People on this side have worked and tirelessly. I look at Rob Sampson and Frank Klees, who both worked tirelessly on this. I think the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has had an opportunity to work on this. Mr Chudleigh, of course, is currently working on it and continues to do great work because there's always more to be done. Minister Elliott has probably worked on this too. In fact, Wayne Wettlaufer, the member from Kitchener Centre, has worked on it as well.

If I have enough time—and with only 17 minutes, I don't think there is enough time. I was particularly intrigued because when I was PA to finance under Minister Flaherty, like other members I have mentioned, there were considerable consultations on auto insurance reform, which Mr Sampson, to his credit, started. There were commitments in that discussion to have a review in two or three years, and it's long overdue. So this government, in keeping with its commitments—which is its moniker: doing what it says, keeping its promises—is certainly moving forward under this current bill that we're discussing today.

There are a number of sections in the bill. For those viewing, when you look, it's a fairly large bill. I like to give you a physical kind of representation. It's about 146 pages. It's half French, so that means it's approximately

73 pages in English, give or take a few pages, with a preamble. But if a person looks at this, it's really about having a strong economy while at the same time, in the specific sections of the bill—and I'm going to address just two of them—"consumer protection" is the first term that comes to mind.

Just to follow up on the member from Nipissing, who in his comments was talking about the Pension Benefits Act, as I recall, when I met with the pension groups there was a lot of discussion in a broad sense about pensions, about moving toward a defined contribution plan. Now, there's a difference here between a defined contribution and a defined benefit. It's just language, but in the essence of it all, it's a substantive change in what the pensioner actually receives, because if your defined contribution happened to be in Nortel, you have no pension. It's that simple.

So defined contribution is quite onerous. I know people like to have choices, especially young people. They think the world is a bowl of cherries, and it is of course as long as we're in government. But I think in the broadest sense the defined benefit plan is probably far more enticing for the more conservative-minded investors, or employees in many cases.

In fairness, the employer, who in many cases takes the risk to underwrite in a negotiated contract relationship with employees—or takes pretty well all the risk, because if they're entitled to so much a month, then pretty soon you've spent your house, you've spent your cottage, you've spent all your future options and you're running out of business, but you still owe to the pension plan as an employer.

On the pension benefit thing, the groups that I felt most compelled to listen to were the retirees. They had worked under a certain set of assumptions. If there's a great surplus today, some would argue that in their 20, 30 or in some cases 40 years of service they had made contributions and their contributions had set up a little nest egg which then during good times had earned great premiums. So the argument could be made that they probably created the bulk of capital in the investment plan and as such have, I think, an entitlement, even though when retired their voice may not have been appropriately recognized.

One of the groups I met with that I felt the most connection with—of course, I'm of pension age so it's always close to my heart. Except there's not one here, provincially. I hate to get off the track, but I hope people realize there is no provincial pension. There is no pension plan for provincial MPPs. I think some of the pages didn't know that.

The point I'm trying to make is that at the University of Toronto retired professors who had worked to build that great institution came to me and explained that with all their trust funds and with all their pension contribution holidays—and that's the trick here—these pensioners were in many cases living in rather dire circumstances. These are professors of philosophy, professors of physics who had built the great bastion of U of T and now they or

their spouses find themselves living in pretty odd circumstances.

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Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale): Good school. I went there.

Mr O'Toole: Raminder Gill from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale got his master's degree in chemical engineering, I believe.

Mr Gill: Yes.

Mr O'Toole: I hope you didn't sniff any of those chemicals, because it's dangerous working in those labs.

I also graduated from the U of T and thank many of the professors who taught me, as best they could. Of course, you had to attend classes to learn anything. I had a lot of empathy for that particular group and I believe this legislation goes a long way to strengthening the voice of the retired community.

There's another very famous case: National Trust—what was the bank?—and the merger that occurred. That National Trust group got kind of early retired and there was a huge surplus—

Interjection: Bank of Nova Scotia.

Mr O'Toole: Was it Scotia?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services): Victoria and Grey.

Mr O'Toole: Victoria and Grey. That's it. Pardon me, my mind is, as you get older—it's called Alzheimer's, I think.

In sincerity, they appealed to me as well. What happened, in my view, was there was an attempt to wind up when the two entities merged, and the National Trust employees, in my understanding, ended up with not a very specific voice in sharing the surplus at that time. If I look at this legislation, I'm convinced that we've moved toward any redistribution of any perceived surplus or actuarial surplus—that there needs to be a two-thirds vote of all members of the pension plan. As such, I think those organizations will become stronger over the years.

I cast that net even further. As companies do well, I know that often during negotiations the CAW and others look after their employees so that there's some incremental benefit to the people who are on a pension. I think that's important because in many cases people are retiring in their 50s to 60s, maybe very early 60s. I think that's too early, myself. A good example is Mr Chrétien. He's not retired. He plans to stick around longer than necessary. He's not retired, but he'll get a great pension anyway.

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): That's out of order.

Mr O'Toole: That's not out of order. It's the truth and the truth is never out of order in this place. Some have made the argument that he has retired, that he's just still there, but that's another issue.

I still go out to the seniors who will be living longer, thanks to the great health care system we have in Ontario, and with that they could possibly live into their pensioned years for longer than they worked. Just do the numbers: if someone started in the generation when you

perhaps didn't need a university education—I'm talking of the 1940s and 1950s—and then they worked for 25 or 30 years, say 20, and they retired at 50-something—that's impossible. Most of them are going to live to be 80 and they'll be retired longer than they worked.

I've looked at it quite sincerely. I hope this is in order. My wife is a teacher, and many of the members of my families are teachers. This isn't personal, although I could mention their names. I look at it this way. When you work in teaching, in the first 20 years of teaching they didn't make \$20,000—I'm talking about a specific case I know—and in their last 10 years, under the Liberals and the NDP, their salaries went up to some \$40,000 and some \$50,000. Now I think the average salary for a teacher—I'm not teacher-bashing. Some of them should make \$100,000 a year; some should make \$4. The point I'm making is that in the last 10 years they would maybe make \$30,000, \$40,000, \$60,000, and their pension is based on their best five years, so if the pension is 70 factor of \$60,000, then they're making about \$40,000, and that's more than they made for the first 25 years they worked.

In their pension contribution, which is significant, about 9% of payroll, in the first 10 years of retirement, at 55, not at 65, they've earned out all the money they ever contributed, and they're only 65 and they're going to live to be 85.

Guess why they have a problem with the public sector pension plans, unless of course Nortel re-emerges with a \$120 stock. Do you understand? We are the underwriters of all the public sector pensions: that's the OMERS group, a huge problem; HOOPP, the hospital pension plan; the teachers' pension plan—the main contributor to that, the only payer, is the taxpayers of Ontario. When those plans run into problems, the liable party is the government, the taxpayers of Ontario. Let's hope the market keeps going up, is all I can say. We all know the demographics. There's a huge whack ready to retire.

Honestly, on closer examination, you'll see that most of the public sector plans have been on a contribution holiday. OMERS, the Ontario municipal employees retirement savings plan, has been on a contribution holiday, saving the municipalities hundreds and thousands and indeed millions of dollars. In fact, the payroll—that's the actual take-home pay—has been reduced by as much as 9%. When those plans don't have a surplus and they have to go back to making their contributions, they have huge future implications for hospital, school and other public sector pensions. I just put that on the record as part of the debate on the pension entitlement attitude we have today.

I believe this bill goes a long way to addressing the responsibility of the employer—I do not neglect that—and indeed the responsibility of the employee for the tracking. I got into the details of tracking former employees. Anyone who established an employment relationship with a company 25 years ago is theoretically entitled to a pension once they reach pensionable age. Who is going to track all this information? Who is going to notify them

when there are partial or full windups of plans? There's a significant amount of work to be done on the Pension Benefits Act. As I said in the beginning, and will conclude those remarks, with respect to the pension benefit portion, I am most concerned that the voice of those major contributors, now retired, is recognized. I want that to be understood as the main point I'm making.

The budget bill proposes to deal first with reform of the surplus distribution under the rules of the Pension Benefits Act and its subset, the reform of surplus rules for partial windup, which I've just mentioned. In 1991, Ontario introduced a surplus regulation, a temporary measure to regulate surplus withdrawals based on a negotiated agreement from defined benefit plans. Again, I've mentioned defined benefit plans as opposed to defined contribution plans. Those are very important words, and the public should be aware of them. When you're a young person being employed, watch whether it's a defined contribution plan or a defined benefit plan.

Pending the development of a more permanent solution, the regulation was renewed in 1994, 1997 and 1998. Other governments have dealt with this. It's a very complex, very touchy issue, and it's my understanding that it expires December 31, 2002. Something had to be done, and this is the government that decided to move forward with, I think, a very balanced approach of making sure that consulting all the stakeholders or shareholders is indeed on track.

The extension of the regulation preserves the current situation pending the drafting of new surplus rules. Merely extending the regulations for a period, however, would not maintain Ontario's surplus sharing tradition, as recent court cases have restricted the ability of both employers and employees to enter into surplus sharing agreements.

I'm going to stop there for a moment. This whole idea of a surplus in a pension confounds me. I don't know of anyone, including Mr Phillips and Mr Kwinter, who are both quite respectable finance people—tell me what a surplus is. It's an actuarial mathematical formula that doesn't mean squat in the overall marketplace; otherwise we'd all be millionaires. These are forecast expected returns that, as we see in the case of Nortel and other kinds of failures in institutions, are only estimates. If you start spending that surplus that I've just described in OMERS, there is no surplus left. In fact, there's a shortfall in the Ontario teachers' pension plan. No one has talked about it, but I can assure you from very good advice—actuaries etc—that there is a significant bump in the road coming, because the plans have not performed as the pension actuarial forecasts have predicted. Who is going to be stuck paying the bill? The taxpayers of this province are going to be stuck paying those defined benefit plans.

Before the regulations entered into, the pension surplus was determined mainly by the courts in numerous lengthy and high-profile winner-take-all legal actions. For many years, and based on regulations, employers could withdraw surpluses where they had the agreement of pension plan members. The recent Divisional Court

decision of *Tecsyn v Superintendent*, released in May 2000, has restricted the effectiveness of surplus-sharing agreements. That's the Monsanto decision as well. Since the decision, employers have also been forced to demonstrate that the documents that created the pension plan clearly entitled them to withdraw pension surpluses.

1700

Again I want to stop for a moment in the brief time left, because I'm not in favour of employers who are abusing pension surpluses either. There's an agreement made. We both contribute, whether it's 9% of payroll or the employer's contribution. That surplus, I believe, in perpetuity has to survive the people who made the contributions.

Very few pension plans contain clear provisions entitling the employer to a surplus. As a result, few surplus distribution agreements have been negotiated between employers and pension plan members and pensioners. A surplus consultation paper, which I participated in, was released in July 2001, and 78 written submissions were received. We met with many of them. Most of the core proposals of the surplus consultation paper received broad-based support, and from the basis of the proposed surplus reforms, the informed stakeholder discussions announced in the budget took place in August 2002. Representatives of employers, plan members and pensioners participated and gave positive feedback on the modified proposals prepared by our Minister of Finance and staff. The reforms are also consistent with those in many other jurisdictions in Canada where surplus-sharing provisions have been enacted, similar to Ontario's 1991 regulation.

In the very few minutes left, I would like to explain why it's vital that we support the reforms to the Pension Benefits Act. I would say it is committed to maintaining public confidence in the future of their savings—very important. That includes pension benefits and a fair balance between the interests of the employers, plan members and indeed pensioners, as I have stressed throughout my remarks. Their concerns are legitimate and must be responded to.

We have also just recently proposed new measures to strengthen the Ontario Securities Commission, our securities regulator, so that securities violators would be dealt with firmly and promptly. Having effective capital markets in this climate of dealing with pension plans is an extremely important part of that capital market. As I said earlier, several Canadian jurisdictions have similar surplus-sharing agreements. The proposed surplus-sharing reforms provide a framework for the parties to come to their solutions on surpluses and avoid expensive litigation matters.

This budget and the few remarks I have made and that the minister, Janet Ecker, made earlier today are important to keeping confidence first with strong leadership from the top, Premier Ernie Eves, as well as Finance Minister Janet Ecker, so the people of Ontario and others in the economy, including the current House leader and Minister of the Environment and former Minister of

Labour, Mr Stockwell, former Speaker of this House—of the previous government, I mean. We are keeping our promise to stay on track. There is more to be done. I am anxious to hear the critics on the other side and their response, in a general sense, to this budget bill, a very lengthy document, as I said before, with about 25 sections. We've just touched on one. Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Monte Kwinter (York Centre): I'd like to comment on the member from Durham's comments. It's kind of strange, or as the phrase is that comes from the other side, "passing strange," that he seems to be advocating a defined benefit plan, as opposed to a defined contribution plan, when in fact this government took the defined benefit plan away from the members of this Legislature and gave them a defined contribution plan.

The other thing that I'd like to talk about is that he says, "Where does this surplus come from?" When you're in a defined benefit plan, it's the obligation of the employer to make sure the plan is actuarially sound. So what they do is put money into it to make sure that is the case. If, under actuarial estimates, there is far more money in the plan than is required to meet those commitments, they are, under the system, allowed to take it out.

The concern I have is that you are talking about changing the rules—and I have no problem at all; make it effective at the time this legislation comes into effect. But to go back to 1988, 14 years, to say, "What you did 14 years ago is going to be impacted by this particular bill," really creates some problems for me. What you are really doing is playing games with the people who had an obligation to make sure their pensioners were looked after. They were the ones who took the risk. What you're saying is, "We don't want it to be equal. If the pensioner loses money, then they have to go back and compensate for that." I really have some concerns with that. I totally agree that we have to address it if it is, but I really have some problems with saying we've got to go back to 1988 and, in 2002, impose obligations on people who entered in good faith in 1988.

Mr Kormos: The minister, when she made her comments, made reference to yet another kick at the can by the insurance industry when it comes to amendments to the legislation which determine the rights—few, if any—of innocent victims and insured automobile owners. She neglected to tell us, because the industry has been quite clear that notwithstanding they're getting their way again, there are still going to be double-digit premium increases.

The industry one day will insist it's the result of fraud. The next it will change its mind and say no, it's the result of the increase in medical rehabilitation costs. The next day it'll indicate no, it's a result of the impact of 9/11 on reinsurance costs. The next day the industry will indicate no, it's a result of the bear market and their not being able to get any returns on their investments. Why should auto insurance premium payers have to subsidize the

insurance industry just because the insurance industry bought Nortel at \$50 on the way down? I don't think and New Democrats don't think that's fair. We don't think it's kosher. Quite frankly, this government has a lot to account for. But at the end of the day it's not so much about the government not getting it right; it's about the industry not getting it right.

This is an industry traditionally with short arms and deep pockets. They've been gouging Ontario premium payers. The data are clear, because all of the same stresses that the Ontario industry talks about are surely present in other provinces, including British Columbia, with the Insurance Corp of British Columbia. The ICBC acknowledges an impact of 9/11 on insurance premiums, but there the impact is but 7.4%, as compared to the more than 13% argued by the industry here in Ontario. Clearly the industry is not being truthful with consumers, auto insurance premium payers here in Ontario. I suspect the industry isn't being truthful with this government that is working so hard to serve them.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Did anyone else have a flashback there to when the good member for Welland was on his feet for 17 hours, talking about the insurance industry and what a terrible operation was going on? Horrible things were happening. Then what happened? They got elected and they got into government. Their plan in the Agenda for People was public auto insurance. No more private companies.

Mr Kormos: You were no help.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, I didn't think the plan was a good idea. That was your plan. You, Bob Rae, Mel Swart and all your friends were really high and gung-ho. What happened? They had five years in office and they didn't do it. The insurance industry got worse and worse. They had nothing, not a thing, after all these 17 hours that we had to sit here and listen to the member opposite go on about the terrible insurance industry.

I had a bit of a flashback there. I know Mr Kwinter and Mr Phillips would understand exactly that flashback that took place.

Mr Kwinter: I was the minister responsible.

Hon Mr Stockwell: You were the minister responsible when the 17 hours—gosh, for five years what did they do? He was even the minister in charge. You were the minister in charge, remember?

Mr Smitherman: He was there for a week.

Hon Mr Stockwell: No, he was there months. He was there long enough to have his office swept three or four times for bugs. That's as long as he was there. What did he do? Nothing.

I've got to tell you, the Rob Sampsons of the world came to our defence and saved us. They ran up a good piece of legislation, passed it through this House and put a real wet blanket on that issue. There needs to be some constant tweaking, you're right. But you've got to admit, the member for Welland, in the last five years that issue hasn't even been anywhere near the level of concern in the public as it was when Mr Kwinter was in charge and

when you were in charge. So I had a flashback. They say if you can remember the 1960s, you didn't live them. I feel the same way about auto insurance.

Mr Smitherman: In a little bit I'll have a few more minutes to talk to some of the content of this bill, but I wanted to speak in response to the lead debate by the minister and three of her colleagues on what wasn't mentioned in their speeches.

This is really a camouflage bill. Under the guise of restoring investor confidence and dealing with auto insurance, what this bill does is raise taxes and it repudiates decisions of the government in the past. It camouflages and masks the fact that the government had to go to extraordinary lengths, because to raise the taxes in the way they propose, by delaying them, is to break their own law. So in the provisions of an enormous bill, they had to bury that element and they will through the course of this debate seek to do so.

1710

I guess that's why the Minister of Finance in her very brief lead remarks had a very difficult time keeping quorum and keeping the interest of the members from the government party, because the seven-year rhetoric line came to a crashing end when, in their budget, the government had to repudiate their own policies and delay those tax increases.

In just a few minutes, anyone listening at home will have a chance to hear from a man so much better qualified to be the Treasurer of this province, and he will tell you it is time to put an end to the plan for those corporate tax cuts, to put an end to that private school tax voucher, which threatens to take hundreds of millions of dollars away from public schools in Ontario.

For Ontarians listening at home, I want to let you know in the clearest terms possible that the real story is the story you will hear from the Liberals on this side of the House, and not from the government party, which in an hour of lead time failed to live up to the fact that their budget repudiated their own policies.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, and before that momentous occasion occurs, we have an opportunity to hear from one of the original speakers for up to two minutes. The member for Durham.

Mr O'Toole: I'm pleased to respond to the members from York Centre, Niagara Centre, Etobicoke Centre and Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

I want to reply, because I think it's important to know there are two new sections, 79.1 and 79.2, that govern the payment of surplus to employers and other prescribed persons out of the continuing pension plan or a pension plan that is being wound up in whole or in part. Section 79.1 creates a mechanism on the payment of surplus to them on the basis that they are entitled to the surplus. Section 79.2 creates a mechanism that applies when the employer has obtained the consent of two thirds of the members and former members. That's a very important clause. It could be missed in the broader debate. If I listened to the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale, there would be no content at all.

On the broader question, this bill, like many of the other sections of the bill, actually addresses many things that have been neglected for years—auto insurance, as Mr Kormos would know. This legislation deals very clearly with marketplace realities on the issue of auto insurance. He would know, for instance, that the motor vehicle accident victims fund act is a very technical menu of victims' entitlements. It provides for the process for payments out of the motor vehicle accident victims fund in respect of insurers that are being wound up, a new provision, which is required medical assessments in sections under the superintendent for uninsured drivers, a new provision indicating no statutory accident benefits for accidents outside Ontario, a new penalty provision of a reciprocal provision for payments out of the fund for non-residents. So these technical amendments—that explains the detail that is in this bill.

I commend the minister; I commend the members who have contributed to this process on doing the right thing for the people of Ontario. At the end of the day we do it, with a balanced budget, and I have every confidence we will move forward after the next election.

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Tourism and Recreation): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I beg your indulgence. I'm sure you will agree that you will rule this is indeed a point of order.

We celebrate our pages, and I had the privilege of having lunch with my page. He sent me a thank you note, and I just have to read this into the record.

Thanks, Minister Klees

for the magnificent lunch

My father and I had a wonderful munch
The pasta was great, as I'm sure was the sole
The salad was awesome, all set in its bowl
I'm writing this poem to say thank you to thee
It's a reason with which my dad would agree.
Alexandre Soulodre.

He will one day be in this House, debating as we are today. I thank him.

The Acting Speaker: The minister will know that's not a point of order and he may not read that into the record.

It is now time for the leadoff speech of the official opposition, and the Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I should let the House know that I'll be sharing my time with the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

As previous members have said, this is an extremely complex bill. It amends 27 different acts and creates two new acts. We're truly dealing with an omnibus bill. I happen to think it's inappropriate to do this, but the government can do whatever it wants, and I think that's unfortunate.

I want to begin by talking about some of the key elements in this bill. The first is that the people of Ontario should recognize that at the centre of this bill is the government breaking its word and increasing taxes by \$1.5 billion.

Mr Smitherman: How much?

Mr Phillips: One point five billion dollars. These were promises the government made. More than promises, they are in legislation. They were legislated commitments that the government made on corporate taxes, personal income taxes, the private school tax credit and residential education property taxes. None of the government members have mentioned it, but people at home should recognize that at the corner of this bill they were promised \$1.5 billion of tax cuts, starting January 1, 2003.

Interjection.

Mr Phillips: Mr Chudleigh is here, and his residents will be glad to hear he is supporting a bill that breaks a fundamental promise the Conservatives made. That's how they got elected. They promised this, Mr Speaker. You will know that we have said for some time they can't afford it. You are making promises you can't afford to keep. "No, no, no. We're going to go ahead and do that, because we'll get elected that way."

I was intrigued by the government's own document, which they put out at their convention, because it makes our point for us. It says on page 4, "Questions and answers"—this is a Conservative document—"How can the government justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act?" I would say that was the corner of what Ernie Eves believed in. The Premier believed in this Taxpayer Protection Act. I think every single member of the Conservative Party signed it, and it was right at the heart of matters. Mr Chudleigh signed it.

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton): I did, proudly.

Mr Phillips: But what happened? I say to the public, if he signed it and believed in it, how in the world, Mr Chudleigh, can you justify breaking it? Why did you break it? You go on to say in this document, "Because Moody's Investor Services have said that to meet the target of a fourth balanced budget, the government must delay for one year scheduled reductions in a number of tax rates." That's what we've been telling you all along. Mr Chudleigh, you're making promises that you can't keep. They may get you elected, but you're going to find that taxpayers say, "What in the world? How can I believe you? You said this Taxpayer Protection Act was something you fundamentally believed in. You signed it. You got elected on that basis."

This is not my document. This is what the Conservative Party put out at its convention to try to rationalize breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act. I'm glad you delayed the tax cuts, because you couldn't afford them. You made promises that were irresponsible. I would say that to balance the budget this year, the government is selling off key assets of the province—many viewers at home are interested in this. You merely need to get the budget document, which shows that in 1999, when the election was called, the government chose to sell off Highway 407. You can see that this line went from \$600 million to \$2.1 billion. This year, the year we're in right now, it's gone up \$1.8 billion.

To balance the budget this year, the fiscal year we're in right now, the government's going to sell off some of the crown jewels of the province. Originally, Premier Eves tried to sell off Hydro One but kind of got trapped on that; I think they're still out trying to sell 49% of it. To balance the budget this year, they've got to do that. To balance the budget next year, Premier Eves has to go against his own Taxpayer Protection Act, something that most people thought could never be touched. As they say in their own document, how can the government justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act? Well, Moody's, the credit rating agency, quite rightly says, "If you want a balanced budget, you're going to have to delay these tax cuts." That's what we've been telling you all along. Finally, you've admitted it yourselves in writing.

1720

To the people of Ontario, I'd say that you won't hear the Conservatives talk about this tax cut delay, which is the cornerstone of this budget: \$1.5 billion in tax cuts that were legislated, and the only way that the government can get around them is to pass legislation.

Just before the budget was presented, I was asked by a reporter, "Do you think they'll delay the tax cuts?" I said, "If they do that, I'll eat my hat because this is what they say they believe in." They say they believe in this Taxpayer Protection Act. I said, "They should delay them because they can't afford them, but they can't delay them because they signed, to get themselves elected, this Taxpayer Protection Act."

I think the people of the province—

Mr Chudleigh: Did you eat your hat?

Mr Phillips: Oh, I did eat my hat, Mr Chudleigh. I ate my hat because I made the mistake of thinking you'd do what you promised you would, but you wouldn't, so I had to eat my hat. I ate my hat and I don't mind admitting it to the public. I actually made the mistake I'll never make again of believing the Premier when he said he'd support the Taxpayer Protection Act. I'll never believe that again, ever.

When the public listens to this debate, it starts with \$1.5 billion of tax promises not delivered. This isn't promises kept; this is promises broken on the \$1.5 billion and the Taxpayer Protection Act.

I agree with the delay in the tax cuts. You can't afford them. You've made promises you can't afford and you admit it yourself. You even hand out, at your own convention, Moody's telling you that you couldn't afford it and you have to balance the budget by delaying them.

I must say I was personally offended by the budget where the government attempted to hide the number. If you look at the page in the budget that purports to explain to the public how much this tax cut delay was costing them in forgone revenue, they only reported three months. I think that was inappropriate for a government that owes the public a full accounting of its financing. We work for the public. They deserve a full accounting.

The fourth point I'd want to make is on the incompetence of the government. Today we finally got the audited statements from the year that ended March 31,

more than seven months ago. If this were a company listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange and it tried to get away with delivering its audited statements seven and a half months after the fiscal year ended, they'd be delisted. The government just today finally issued its financial statements. Why I'm particularly sensitive on this is that, when the Premier was the Minister of Finance, in 1995—I remember it very well—he made a promise actually that the audited statements would be out within four months and he was going to aim for three months. By the way, he promised he'd eliminate the two sets of books. We've still got two sets of books in the province. He promised there would be a budget delivered before the fiscal year started. This year's budget, I think, was the latest in the history of the province.

I always say to my business friends: just because they may be called Conservatives, don't assume they know how to manage the finances. Nothing could demonstrate it better than legislating tax cuts that now have been delayed and balancing the books this year by selling off \$1.8 billion worth of assets. It would be like a corporation saying, "Listen, we're going to lose money this year on our operating, but we can break even by selling off some of the furniture and some of our major assets."

The next point I'd like to touch on is one that I think is fundamental in many respects to the future of the province. This is the government which has decided that corporate taxes in the province of Ontario need to be 25% below those of our competitors in the US. I would say that this decision is going to shape the province of Ontario. We now are the most export-oriented jurisdiction in the world. Nobody relies on exports like Ontario does. Thank goodness we are able to compete effectively. Today it's 55%. Back in 1990, it was 29%. We can compete well with the US because of our business community, and thank goodness for that. But we have to make our choices very carefully as to how we want to compete with our neighbours to the south.

If you look at the budget now, the comparisons are not made to Quebec, Manitoba and other provinces; they're made to Michigan, Illinois, New York and Pennsylvania, because those are our major trading partners. Let me just say that I think competing on the basis of, "Come to Ontario because we're going to have corporate taxes 25% lower than you could get in the United States," is not a solid, long-term economic policy.

The state of Pennsylvania has had quite a few ads on television recently, and you will recall them. They say, "Come invest in Pennsylvania because we graduate more engineers than anybody else. We have three world-class universities in Pennsylvania. Our post-secondary education system is second to none. You will have the best workforce."

We have decided here in the province of Ontario to compete on the basis of corporate taxes 25% below those of the US. This is a substantial amount of money that we're talking about. To have corporate taxes in the province of Ontario 25% lower is forgone revenue of \$5

billion a year. We have decided we are going to forgo \$5 billion a year.

By the way, the federal government also supports this policy. The province has decided to forgo revenue of \$2.2 billion and the federal government \$2.8 billion. It is an enormous amount of money. That's how we're going to compete.

But if you look again, as I say, at the US jurisdictions and how they've decided to compete, it's on the basis of a superior workforce. Some \$5 billion in the province of Ontario, in my opinion, is too high a price to pay. Why we would want to compete on the basis of corporate taxes 25% lower than those of the US is beyond me.

I carry around the booklet that the province of Ontario uses to sell Ontario. This is the document: "Why Should You Come to Ontario?" It says, "Come here because of our remarkable health care and education systems, which are publicly funded and open to everyone." It also says, "US manufacturers pay on average more than \$3,100 per employee for the kind of health care coverage provided by Canada's publicly supported system, whereas Ontario employers pay \$540."

In other words, we have a \$2,500-per-employee cost advantage in our health care system. Well, there's no magic as to why that is. It is because we have chosen in this country to essentially, all of us, collectively, insure ourselves and to have a public health care system.

So I say to our business community, listen, I know that you're not going to reject corporate taxes 25% lower, but there is a huge price we pay for that. We are going to erode our health care system, our post-secondary education system and, I think, the advantages that we've had here in the province of Ontario.

I do not, for the life of me, understand the rationale of the policy. I've actually asked that question here in the Legislature probably five times. I've said to the government, "Tell me again why we need it 25% lower than the US." I can understand "competitive with the US," I can understand "modestly lower than the US," but to forgo \$5 billion? The government has never given me an answer. We have tried to refer this matter to a committee. They've never agreed to that; they've always rejected that. I believe that's a debate we need to have.

If the province were simply to forgo its tax cut, we would still have corporate taxes in the manufacturing area at 33% versus the US at 40%, and in the non-manufacturing area at 35% versus 40% in the US. If we just cancelled this corporate tax cut, we would still be dramatically lower. I truly believe we'll have to do that or put at risk education and our health care system.

On tax cuts, there's another part of this bill that I believe should be cancelled rather than delayed for a year, and that's private school funding. This is going to be at least \$500 million of funding.

1730

Hon Jim Flaherty (Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): That's nonsense, and you know it.

Mr Phillips: Mr Flaherty, who is the architect of this, says it's not true, but private school enrolment is rising dramatically.

Hon Mr Flaherty: It hasn't happened anywhere in Canada.

Mr Phillips: We'll see. You'll get your chance to talk later on, Mr Flaherty.

Five hundred million dollars going into private schools is a fundamental mistake, for these reasons—

Hon Mr Flaherty: You can't even count. I'm disappointed.

Mr Phillips: Well, Mr Flaherty, you may get a chance to defend this position later on in this debate, but in the meantime you may want to listen to this debate. Five hundred million dollars is going into private schools at a time when our public school system needs all the support it can get. I have no difficulty with private schools—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry. Please take your seat.

I understand the odd outburst now and then, but now it's just continuous, and this member doesn't deserve that. No member does. So please show the respect that you would expect from colleagues.

Sorry for the interruption. Please continue.

Mr Phillips: Thank you, Mr Speaker. I believe that \$500 million of public funding going into private schools is a fundamental mistake. Private schools are fine, if they want to fund themselves. I just think that taking public money now and putting it into private schools is a mistake.

I've said many times in the Legislature that the area I represent is very diverse. I represent an area in Toronto, Scarborough-Agincourt, in the northwest part of Scarborough, a great place. It has undergone fundamental change. Over a 30-year period, the composition of that community has changed completely. It has gone through that change with a minimum of problems and a maximum of goodwill, but it has completely changed.

Why has that happened? In my opinion, the major reason—not by any means the only reason—has been our schools. I was at a graduation last week at L'Amoreaux Collegiate, a terrific school. They have flags in that school from 82 countries, representing the countries of origin of the student body there, religions of all sorts and backgrounds of all sorts. I spoke here one day about the Tamil community, a terrific community. The valedictorian two years ago was someone whose background is Tamil, and this year the brother of the young lady who was the valedictorian two years ago was the valedictorian.

I just mention that because for me that school is a metaphor of the value of all our young people coming together and getting to understand each other and the multiplicity of countries and religions and ethnicities. But what's going to happen now in my own area is that there are probably going to be five new high schools opening up as a result, in my opinion, of this plan of funding private schools—five new high schools, and probably end up 12.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): That's diversity.

Mr Phillips: Mr Hastings says, "That's diversity." You and I have a different view of how we build a cohesive community.

In my view, a key of that is that our young people come together, get to know each other, get to share each other's views. I just have a different vision than Mr Hastings. I understand that you can have yours, but I can have mine. Mine is different than yours. Mine doesn't support this, and mine says it's wrong. I'm prepared to debate that and defend it.

I think it's a fundamental mistake that will have profound and long-term implications for Ontario, recognizing that Ontario will continue, and thank goodness for this, to attract at least 150,000 people from other countries every single year into Ontario. We need that. But if, as they arrive, we simply divide our young people on the basis of, as I say, language or ethnicity or religion, I think it's a mistake. Mr Hastings doesn't. I will choose to disagree. I think it's a fundamental mistake, and that's part of this bill. It is a continuation of the private school funding.

I mentioned earlier what is offensive to many of us, in that this bill amends 27 different acts. It has huge changes for auto insurance, pensions and investor protection. There is this \$1.5 billion of tax delays. The \$10 million: quietly, and thank goodness for it, it gets rid of that. Remember the \$10-million gift to the Blue Jays? That's in this bill. I haven't heard the government mention it. That was the one that was quietly approved by Minister of Finance Ecker, Minister Tsubouchi and Minister Cunningham, the \$10 million that for some reason or other was quietly walked around and signed, a gift to the professional teams. That's in this bill—quietly trying to get rid of it. We certainly support that.

It is an omnibus bill. Earlier we talked about pensions. In my opinion, this bill needs to go to committee. It needs to be split out. On the pension one alone, you're going to find, and we're finding, that thousands of pensioners are going to be negatively affected by this. This bill will negatively affect thousands of people, pensioners, who have been laid off by firms. It will not only affect them, but it's retroactive to 1988. It's a matter that was being dealt with through the courts, and suddenly, I gather, the government thought they were going to lose the court battle, so now as I read and understand the legislation—recognize that this bill was introduced a mere few days ago—they will lose their rights and it will have a very substantial impact on them.

I also wanted to mention the municipal financing authority that is a new act. I remember I heard the announcement of \$1 billion of government monies going into this. I thought, "That's a lot of money and that's going to be very helpful to municipalities and infrastructure." It's \$1 billion going in, not as government funding for infrastructure but money that municipalities can borrow. It's essentially a bank loan. It caught me off guard.

The Premier announced \$1 billion to help municipal infrastructure, and the mayors, as I recall, were quite enthusiastic about it. But we find out now it's essentially just a \$1-billion loan that the municipalities can borrow against. That's fine, but it's certainly not what it was presented to be.

1740

I want to stress again as we debate the bill, that the government members have focused on auto insurance, investor protection and maybe the pensions. But they've missed the fundamental purpose of this bill—it's a budget bill, after all—and that is to raise taxes by one and a half billion dollars. I say it's to raise taxes because these were tax cuts that were legislated, promised, that the government got elected on.

You will know that the government often says here, "Well, you didn't like those tax cuts." No, we don't like the corporate tax cut; we think it's a mistake. We do not like the \$500-million tax break for private schools. And we don't think you can afford your tax cuts.

Well, we've been proven right. The government itself, in its own document that it used at its convention, questions and answers: "How can the government justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act?" Moody's say to meet the target of a fourth balanced budget the government delayed for one year scheduled reductions in a number of tax cuts." So they say, "We had to break the Taxpayer Protection Act. You see what Moody's says. We had to do it to balance the budget." This is the point we've been making with you. You are promising things that you can't deliver.

As an aside, I think we all know the turmoil that the whole province is in because of hydro. The government promised this was going to result in lower rates. We found that it has resulted in dramatically higher rates, with no solution in sight, as far as I can determine, by the government.

So the first point I think the public should be aware of as they watch the debate on this bill is that the government promised you something that they can't deliver. I love the title of this bill. It's called Keeping the Promise. That's what the government called the bill.

Second, they couldn't keep their promise on the Taxpayer Protection Act. I do remember Mr Eves's debate on this bill. It was, "This is the toughest taxpayer protection in the country. It's going to protect you against tax changes, and it is airtight." What we see—and believe me, I support the delay in the tax cuts. I did not think you could afford them when you announced them; I didn't think you could afford them when you ran. Now we've been proven right. This year, the fiscal year we're in right now, the government has to sell off \$1.8 billion worth of assets. They're going to have to sell Hydro One or the provincial savings office or other major assets. For next year, the year that starts April 1, 2003, they've had to delay \$1.5 billion worth of tax cuts. Again, I say to people listening out there, look at the document they put out at their own convention that explains why they had to abandon the Taxpayer Protection Act.

I also would say that the debate around corporate taxes—by the way, it isn't as if the US is going to be cutting corporate taxes and they're going to get below us. Virtually every state in the US right now is running deficits. They have to balance their books, so they are using the reserves they've got, but virtually every state in the US is running deficits. The federal US government, as we all know, has gone from quite a significant surplus into a significant deficit position. So why we want to have corporate taxes 25% below the US—first, businesses that would come on that promise will leave on that promise. Second, it is forgone revenue of \$5 billion, which is a huge amount of money: \$2.2 billion for the province of Ontario. Third, if we want to be a long-term competitive environment economically in this province, we will do it with a totally competitive cost structure. We cannot be out of line on that. We know that; we understand that; we support that. We have to make sure that our business community can compete successfully on the basis of cost. But believe me, businesses will grow here on the basis of the quality and education of the workforce and the quality of our living environment. Part of that is our health care. As I said earlier in my remarks, the average company in Ontario pays \$2,500 less for health coverage than in the US.

The other tax measure in here that I believe, rather than delay, should be cancelled is the private school funding. Mr Flaherty and I will just choose to disagree on this. He thinks it's a good idea and he will run on that platform; I think it's a bad idea and I'll run on that platform. We'll allow the public to make that decision; that's what it's all about. I will do it on this basis, as I said earlier in my remarks: I believe one of the keys to the kind of community that I like to live in is that our young people come together. Our young people come together, first and foremost, in our schools. I am terribly worried, personally, if this is allowed to proceed. I see it in my own community. There are three new high schools being built. There's another public high school that closed that is now being rented out to a community. It is fragmenting on the basis of language, religion or ethnicity. I think that's a fundamental mistake, but that will, I guess, be determined in the election. That's why in this bill we believe that, rather than simply delaying it, it should be cancelled.

I will speak very briefly on two other areas that I find worth pursuing, personally. The bonds area and the tax incentive zones are potentially worth experimentation. On the major elements of this bill that affect me as our party's finance critic, I think the government's making a fundamental mistake in not cancelling the corporate tax cut and not cancelling the private school funding.

I think this bill makes the point for us that we've been making for a long time: you can't afford the promises you've made. And that's not me speaking; that's yourselves speaking. The document you handed out at your own convention points out that you had to break the Taxpayer Protection Act to balance the budget. The next time somebody from that side gets up and says, "Tax cuts

generate untold revenue," I'll say, "Wait a minute. This year you had to sell off \$1.8 billion of our assets, key crown assets"—

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): It's like selling your car.

Mr Phillips: It's like selling your car to buy your groceries.

Next year you're going to have to delay one and half billion dollars of tax cuts to balance the budget. Isn't that proof that you have made promises that you can't keep, and proof that the tax cut delay was necessary to make sure that you had sufficient revenue coming in?

Finally, before my colleague from Toronto Centre-Rosedale takes over, I say I find it somewhat offensive that this bill being presented is changing 27 acts.

Hon Mr Flaherty: He's not that offensive. He's talking about you.

Mr Phillips: No, Mr Flaherty, I'm talking about the bill, but you're probably not listening. I find the bill offensive, trying to amend 27 acts and create two new acts. I think a wiser move, as far as the public's concerned, is that we should have an opportunity to split this bill up. I suspect that will not happen, but I hope the bill can at least be referred to committee.

1750

Mr Smitherman: As my party's financial institutions critic, it's an honour for me to have a chance to participate in this debate. I say it's an honour because of the role I have, but it's a lousy bill to be talking about. I want to say that my friend the member from Scarborough-Agincourt has done an awfully good job in leading the Liberal reaction to this government omnibus bill, which looks a little more like an ominous bill, in terms of highlighting the extent to which the government is camouflaging so much of their real intent with this bill. It is, in a sense, a little bit of an interesting way to break seven years' worth of rhetoric. Their ironclad pledge to the people of Ontario has, in one fell swoop of the finance minister's pen, been axed. I find it interesting to see the former finance minister, whom one assumes wouldn't have done that had he been in that position, sitting through this debate and from time to time offering pretty much unhelpful interventions. I think it's really important to highlight the extent of what this bill really is.

I want to say that we made the point, and we'll make repeatedly through the course of this debate, that this bill, as presently constituted, does not provide an effective way to be debated. It deals with too many statutes. We believe it should be broken up, because up-and-down votes on certain matters are a good way to get a real sense of where you're democratically elected people stand. For my part, I sure think it would be appropriate that when the member from Kitchener stands and votes and the member from Etobicoke North stands and votes, they are doing that in a fashion where their constituents can understand that their ironclad pledge around the Taxpayer Protection Act has been decimated, has been eliminated, has been eviscerated to the extent that laws

currently on the books in the province of Ontario have to be amended to make their budget legal. I'm looking for some really forthright speeches from those backbenchers, who have no shortage of energy to heckle. It is their government that is, in this bill, breaking perhaps their most significant pledge, repeated ad nauseam, I think it's fair to say, over the course of seven long and lost years. Break it up. Break up this bill so we can watch the up-and-down votes on that.

I'll have a chance on another day when this bill comes back to talk about the intent of the legislation with respect to restoring investor confidence in Ontario. But I want to introduce my comments with a couple of points. Firstly, some of the stuff that's in here is stuff that since 1998 the Toronto Stock Exchange, through the Allen report, has asked three successive Conservative ministers of finance to do something about—five years from the stock exchange responsible for sending a message to the world that this is a capital market that works and can be trusted and can be widely respected. Premier Eves, as Finance Minister, sat on it. Minister Flaherty, as Finance Minister, sat on it. It took this minister to deal with this stuff, only after investor confidence had been lost and billions of dollars had gone in the tank.

That mirrors this government's commitment to the Ontario Securities Commission and its prosecution record. I would say that many people have viewed the Ontario Securities Commission as an organization and an operation that is improving, and I think we should all celebrate that. But as Ontarians, I think we should acknowledge that our prosecution record with respect to white-collar crime in this province is pathetic. We have done an inadequate job of sending the strongest possible message that it is not just the kind of crime conducted by criminals we see every night on television channels, but we also deal with the kind of crimes that bilk people out of their hard-won investments.

In the United States this kind of legislation, coming as it did after the decline in value of people's retirement funds, was a bipartisan effort. We saw, the other night, some changes in the US Senate, but Sarbanes-Oxley came forward in response to the problems in the United States: 99 to 0, support from both sides in the Senate; 423 to 3, representing very strong bipartisan support in the US House; both Houses of the Congress voting almost unanimously in support of legislation designed to restore investor confidence, because it was seen as an issue that was so important to the people whose hard-fought retirement savings were being put at risk.

But instead, we have an approach from this government that continues to place everything in a position where there can be no potential for agreement on a vote because they load the bill up with more hostages. This is their strategy: always a hostage in a bill, making it impossible to gain support on both sides of the aisle.

As a parliamentarian who looks forward to playing a role in helping to send a message to Ontarians that we've learned the lessons and that we're seeking to enhance the protections associated with their hard-fought retirement

funds, we have from the government more of the same, more of the partisan kind of bills with 27 different statutes, making it impossible to have this piece of legislation, which talks about investor confidence but is loaded up with so much other stuff, making it impossible for my party to support this bill.

The consumer investor protection is buried. It might have been the name on the backdrop, but the legislation obviously deals with so many other things. As to the public's right to know that their Legislature understood that when Freedom 55 becomes Freedom 75, when it hurts people in the very place they cannot afford it—their retirement funds—this government could get its act together and get support from both sides of the House and send a message that we all looked at it and agreed—no, they won't.

That's why I think we need public hearings, because we need to give the Ontarians who have lost hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of their retirement funds a chance to look right into the whites of the eyes of

the government members and give them an opportunity to ask the hard questions, to analyze what's there, and to make the suggestions.

Bay Street has been consulted; the Crawford report is reflected here. But what about the average person, the consumer investor trying to squirrel away a few bucks to pay Ernie Eves's hydro bills? What about those people? Have they been consulted? No, they haven't, and that's why we think public hearings are an appropriate consideration, that the average person should have a chance to look in the eyes of their legislators and get a sense of confidence from that.

This might be an appropriate time, given the clock, and I look forward to having an opportunity to offer even more substantive comments when this bill is called again for debate.

The Acting Speaker: It now being 6 of the clock, this House will stand adjourned until 6:45 this evening.

The House adjourned at 1758.

Evening meeting reported in volume B.

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