



**Legislative Assembly  
of Ontario**

Third Session, 37<sup>th</sup> Parliament

**Assemblée législative  
de l'Ontario**

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**Official Report  
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(Hansard)**

**Journal  
des débats  
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**Tuesday 26 November 2002**

**Mardi 26 novembre 2002**

Speaker  
Honourable Gary Carr

Président  
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk  
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## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 November 2002

## ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 novembre 2002

*The House met at 1330.*

*Prayers.*

### MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

#### CARDIAC CARE

**Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East):** I rise today to inform this House of a shocking report that was published today in the Canadian Medical Association Journal. Over a two-year period, this study shows that 50 patients died while waiting for an angiogram at the Hamilton General Hospital, 32 had heart attacks and 41 had congestive heart failure. In this particular institution that serves over two million people, 63% of individuals do not get an angiogram in the time slot recommended by their family physician. There are currently almost 500 people on the waiting list, the largest waiting list in Ontario.

What is even more shocking is that this government was warned. In 1999 the hospital made a submission for an extra lab. This government was warned that people were going to die on waiting lists, and they ignored this warning. This government was warned that people could not wait six months for an angiogram, as they have been. They ignored that warning and people died. I spoke to this issue in this House. They finally moved a couple of months ago, but the new lab will not be ready for another 24 months. How many more people have to die on waiting lists because of this government's neglect, incompetence and mismanagement of health care?

It is disgraceful that in Ontario in the year 2002, 50 Hamiltonians on a waiting list for two years had to die while this government did absolutely nothing and continued to ignore the demands for expanded facilities at this cardiac unit. It is a blight on this government. It is a disgrace beyond words.

How do you tell the families of those 50 people that those lives could have been saved had this government listened to the hospital, had this government listened to those of us in the House who said it is unacceptable for people to wait? It is disgraceful, and this government will have to pay a price for this. They owe an explanation to the families of those Ontarians and Hamiltonians who died on waiting lists because of sheer incompetence and neglect by this government.

#### CENTRAL NORTH CORRECTIONAL CENTRE

**Mr Garfield Dunlop (Simcoe North):** I rise in the House today to congratulate a successful public-private partnership in my riding of Simcoe North.

Last night, the Ministry of Public Safety and Security, and Management and Training Corp Canada, were honoured by the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships. They jointly received the prestigious gold award for service delivery for the Central North Correctional Centre project in the town of Penetanguishene.

This award comes only one year after the Central North Correctional Centre first opened its doors. It is a fitting tribute to the high level of ongoing co-operation between the ministry, MTCC and the community.

Central North Correctional Centre, better known in my community as the superjail, is Canada's first publicly owned, privately operated adult correctional facility. MTCC manages the facility. The Ministry of Public Safety and Security ensures that MTCC meets the high safety and security standards that apply to the operation of all correctional facilities in this province.

Our positive experience with the correctional centre has attracted attention from other parts of Canada. For example, I recently hosted a delegation from Alberta at the superjail. Looking to perhaps follow an excellent lead, the province of Alberta was interested in learning about what has made the project so successful.

The correctional centre has represented a win-win situation for everyone involved, including the inmates, who benefit from rehabilitation programs, and the community, which benefits from 360 more jobs and \$20 million invested directly into the community.

Last night, with the presentation of the gold award for service delivery, the jail stood out as a stellar example of how our government and the private sector can work together to better the safety and security of our citizens.

#### GROWING STRONG COMMUNITIES

**Mr Dave Levac (Brant):** I rise in the House today to highlight some of the commitments made by our leader, Dalton McGuinty, in the Growing Strong Communities plan introduced yesterday.

The people of Ontario want to know that they live in safe and secure neighbourhoods. The Ontario Liberals are committed to protecting Ontario families by placing

an additional 1,000 net front-line police officers directly on the streets and highways of Ontario. We recognize that there is a need for increased security on our streets, and we are providing that commitment to the people of Ontario.

It's interesting to note that Ernie Eves's throne speech in May did not mention fighting crime once. The Ontario Liberals have taken and continue to take a stand to protect Ontario citizens, while this government has consistently slid away from promises to provide more support to keep our streets safe.

I want to take a moment to commend our front-line police officers who go out day after day to protect the residents of Ontario and provide many services that continue to make our community safe. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals are committed to providing more support for our front-line officers by placing more officers on those streets. I am certain that this will be a welcome addition to municipalities that are struggling to cover the costs of police services due to the outrageous downloading that the Harris-Eves government has imposed on them for the last seven years.

While this government is preoccupied with fixing the mistakes they've made, the Ontario Liberals are providing a clear alternative to the promises to make Ontario a better place to work, live and raise a family.

#### LABOUR DISPUTE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** The labour dispute at the Sudbury Star is now into its eighth week. Some 75 workers—reporters, circulation and clerical staff, advertising sales people, pressroom and maintenance staff—were locked out by the employer on October 5, 2002. The lockout occurred after the union's negotiating team had already agreed to take the company's final offer to the membership for a vote.

The issues in dispute include wages—one third of the journalists are making \$8 to \$9 an hour; pensions—some of the unionized staff don't have one; and a guarantee of no layoffs when the lockout is over. This appears to have been the corporate message to workers when the Osprey Media Group took over the newspaper operation several years ago. From day one the employer has used scabs to produce the daily paper. They can do so thanks to the policies of this Conservative government. When employers use scabs, there is no incentive for them to get to the bargaining table to negotiate a collective agreement, and that's what's happening in Sudbury.

In December 2000, I introduced a private member's bill to prohibit employers from using scabs in strikes and lockouts. Today my colleague Peter Kormos, the NDP labour critic, will introduce another anti-scab bill. Its provisions are the same as the ones we had in place when we were the government. It's time to end scab labour in Ontario for workers at the Sudbury Star and for every other worker who is undermined every day by employers using scabs in strikes and lockouts.

#### ELECTRONIC MEDICAL RECORDS

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** During constituency week I attended an event at Listowel Memorial Hospital in my riding of Perth-Middlesex. The event was to mark the successful completion of the first half of a project to transfer all of the hospital's patient medical records to electronic format. While this is not unusual, there are two unique aspects to Listowel's project. The Listowel clinic of more than a dozen doctors is benefiting from putting all its patients' medical records on the same electronic format so that when a patient of a doctor at the clinic comes in to, say, emergency, the emergency room doctor will have access to their complete medical record, including allergies, past medical tests and blood work results and prescriptions. The benefit to patients will be great. Access to complete medical records will mean fewer errors and less paperwork, leaving doctors and nurses with more time to spend with patients.

The second unique thing about the Listowel project is that it is being completed on budget. That is not surprising for Listowel Memorial Hospital, which is noted for being efficient and providing high-quality services while operating within its budget.

I want to take this opportunity to publicly congratulate the board of trustees, the management and staff at the Listowel Memorial Hospital and all of the doctors at the Listowel clinic. In particular I want to recognize chief of staff Dr Barry Neable, as well as Brent Boshart and Mike LaPaine, who have undertaken and are working on this project.

#### ONTARIO NORTHLAND RAILWAY

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane):** Following the government's announcement last month that CN Rail would be given the nod to enter into exclusive negotiations to purchase the government-owned Ontario Northland Railway, the member from Nipissing, soon-to-be-unseated AL McDonald, asked Northern Development and Mines Minister Jim Wilson about the government position on protecting the ONR jobs. Wilson answered in the House that CN "had the best proposal at this time to protect jobs." Well, what happened today? In the midst of these negotiations, CN lays off 1,146 workers. So much for job protection.

**1340**

Just last Thursday, CN officials met with the North-eastern Ontario Mayors Action Group to tell them how good a deal this would be for jobs in northeastern Ontario. Wow, what a poker face these CN officials must have put on.

Today's announcement, coming in the midst of these negotiations, shows how insignificant a deal this is to CN. Normally, wouldn't such an announcement scare off such a deal, or is this already a done deal?

This is corporate culture at its worst. It's all about shareholder value and the bottom line and not about our people. If this purchase is so important to CN, how can

we be assured that they will take our part of northeastern Ontario seriously, provide good service and protect jobs?

Is this a good deal for northeastern Ontario? I don't think so.

#### SCARECROW INVASION AND FAMILY FESTIVAL

**Mr Bill Murdoch (Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound):** I rise in the House today to congratulate the success of the sixth annual Scarecrow Invasion and Family Festival in Meaford. It included the efforts and hard work of a group of people in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who dedicated countless hours of their time to help make this event spectacular.

The event is sponsored by the Meaford Business Improvement Association and the Meaford Chamber of Commerce. These people include a list of 10 organizers: Marilyn Morris, Donna Gorrie, Kate Belec, Joan Cooper, Chris Curry, Denise Horvath, Brad Johnston, Janet Juniper, Laura Tannis, Dennis Smith, Mary Woods and Laurie Adams. In addition, there were over 125 volunteers.

The scarecrow invasion is designed to build community spirit and pride, increase shopping in the business areas and overall tourism in the county.

From mid-September until after Thanksgiving, residents and visitors were treated to the sight of thousands of wacky scarecrows throughout the municipality of Meaford. The event was so successful that Meaford is competing for the Guinness Book of World Records challenge. The community-based scarecrow invasion promoted itself by simple, localized hard work from the many volunteers and staff of this municipality. It is truly a community-based event.

The media coverage was phenomenal. It included local, national and international exposure. It allowed everyone from Korea to England to Alberta to see just how community-oriented Meaford is. The interest shown in this event by the media was outstanding, and next year will be even bigger.

I congratulate all those involved in the success of this event and wish them the best in the seventh annual Scarecrow Invasion and Family Festival.

#### BOB AND BONNIE DAGENAIS

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** I rise today to pay tribute to two Ottawa educators who were brutally slain on the weekend as a result of a bungled break and enter while they were enjoying their first months of retirement at their nearby cottage.

Bob Dagenais started his career as a teacher and retired as a principal. He served as a principal in three high schools, including Glebe Collegiate Institute in my riding, where I knew him. He was very well loved and well respected by students and staff alike.

Bob's wife, Bonnie Dagenais, was a retired teacher from Broadview Avenue Public School, also in my

riding, where she taught grade 3 for the last 10 years. She was described by her colleagues as a talented teacher with a heart of gold.

These senseless deaths have left the Ottawa education community grief-stricken. Bob and Bonnie Dagenais will be sorely missed.

I echo a comment made by Ron Lynch, the director of education for the board, in which he said, "There are hundreds of staff and students who were impacted by the grace and goodness that characterized Bob and Bonnie. Their contributions to the educational needs of this community were monumental."

Bob and Bonnie, on behalf of everyone in our community, thank you for your exceptional contributions toward the education of our children. It is estimated that together you have touched directly over 4,000 young people in Ottawa.

On behalf of all the members of the Legislature, I extend sincerest sympathies and condolences to family and friends.

#### FIVE COUNTIES CHILDREN'S CENTRE

**Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough):** I recently had the privilege of touring the Five Counties Children's Centre, located in my riding of Peterborough, and was informed of the impact that the province's increase in base funding and fiscal one-time dollars had on the centre—\$499,000 to be exact. From reducing the backlog of outstanding assessments for children, to purchasing new assistive devices, improving building standards and moving the technology equipment into the 21st century, this money has been put to good use.

I'd also like to tell you about a young man who is 14 years old, a client of the centre and who wrote a letter about his experience. At the age of seven, this young man was severely injured in an automobile accident. As a result of the accident, he was unable to speak spontaneously like we can. The centre tried without success to find a computer system that would assist him while communicating.

I'd like to read an excerpt from his letter: "It took too long to get to the point where the computer would talk for me. I tried to call a taxi one time but they hung up on me before my computer said hello. Finally, in February 2002, they found the Light Writer, and since then I haven't been able to shut up. When I first came to the centre, I couldn't walk or even stand by myself. Five Counties helped me get a wheelchair and gave me wheelchair driving lessons. The physio department found me a one-of-a-kind special walker to help me learn to walk again. I have the only one like it in Canada. They found me canes, and now I can walk all by myself."

This is just one of the many great stories about the children in Peterborough county who receive wonderful treatment and therapy from Five Counties Children's Centre.

## CONSIDERATION OF BILL 211

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 69(b), the House leader of the third party, the member for Niagara Centre, has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 211, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board. The order for second reading of Bill 211 may therefore not be called today.

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

JUSTICE STATUTE LAW  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2002LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT DES LOIS  
DANS LE DOMAINE DE LA JUSTICE

Mr Young moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 213, An Act to improve access to justice by amending the Solicitors Act to permit contingency fees in certain circumstances, to modernize and reform the law as it relates to limitation periods by enacting a new Limitations Act and making related amendments to other statutes, and to make changes with respect to the governance of the public accounting profession by amending the Public Accountancy Act / Projet de loi 213, Loi visant à améliorer l'accès à la justice en modifiant la Loi sur les procureurs pour autoriser les honoraires conditionnels dans certaines circonstances, à moderniser et à réviser le droit portant sur les délais de prescription en édictant la nouvelle Loi sur la prescription des actions et en apportant des modifications connexes à d'autres lois, et à modifier les règles qui régissent la profession de comptable public en modifiant la Loi sur la comptabilité publique.

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

The Attorney General for a short statement?

**Hon David Young (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs):** The proposed legislation would modernize outdated laws, improve access to the justice system for middle- and lower-income Ontarians and protect the public's confidence in their investments.

The bill introduced today would regulate contingency fee agreements, consolidate dozens of limitation periods into one clear statute and provide a legislative framework for the important work being done by Professor Ron Daniels.

I look forward to debating this bill at second reading.

LABOUR RELATIONS  
AMENDMENT ACT, 2002LOI DE 2002 MODIFIANT LA LOI  
SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Mr Kormos moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 214, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 / Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

The member for a short statement?

**Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre):** The purpose of the bill is to restore the provisions that were incorporated into the Labour Relations Act by the Labour Relations and Employment Statute Law Amendment Act of 1992 during the NDP government and subsequently repealed by the Labour Relations Act, 1995, by, of course, the Conservative government.

The purpose of the provisions being restored is to prevent an employer from replacing striking or locked-out employees with scabs, a term that is defined in the bill. The bill allows scabs to be used in emergencies.

1350

## ORAL QUESTIONS

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to stand down the first question. We're waiting for the arrival of the Premier.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** We'll stand down the first question then. The second question, the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

## FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

**Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington):** My question is to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. On the Harris-Eves watch, single-parent families are being abandoned not once, but twice. Deadbeats are forsaking their families to a life of poverty, and your government is forsaking those families to your dysfunctional Family Responsibility Office.

When the Provincial Auditor looked at the FRO, he found that 75% of the cases were in arrears, with more than \$1.2 billion owing to children and their custodial parents—a most damning indictment. The auditor found that more aggressive enforcement measures, such as drivers' licence or passport suspension, bank account garnishment or a default hearing, were seldom pursued. I get dozens of FRO calls every week. Nothing has changed. If anything, things are getting worse. Minister,

why are you sentencing thousands of children in this province to a life of poverty?

**Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services):** I thank my colleague across the way for the question. This government very much cares about taking care of families, particularly in situations where we have single parents who are seeking assistance from parents who no longer live in the family. That's why we have made a number of changes to improve the Family Responsibility Office, to collect more money, a great deal more money, for support payments that are court ordered.

That's why in 1997 this government began by introducing a number of tougher reform measures, including suspending drivers' licences, including garnisheeing bank accounts, including using collection agencies. We now are beginning to see the results of those changes. In 1994-95, \$368 million was collected in court-ordered support payments. I'm now pleased to report that that has increased by 50%, to \$555 million in the year 2001-02.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Minister, the auditor's most recent report was very clear. You have failed to respond to his damning findings at FRO, and the hundreds of calls to my office and to the offices of every member of this Legislature confirm that.

Let me tell you about Pam. She is forced to raise her two children with a top-up from Ontario Works because the FRO is incapable of getting her husband to pay his child support. Yesterday, my leader released a plan to help Pam and thousands like her. It's tough on deadbeats. I know you're against our plan, but Pam thinks it's great. Your government has abandoned her. How can you abandon Pam and her children with your complete mismanagement at the FRO?

**Hon Mrs Elliott:** Our government has undertaken a number of initiatives. I didn't mention this in the first part of my response, but it's our government that has developed reciprocal relations with the United States so that we can find those payers who are reluctant to make sure their families are properly taken care of. It's our government that has aggressively pursued them to make sure these payments are made.

Can we do more? Obviously we can do more. Have we seen changes? Well, yes. For instance, just a few years ago the speed at which payments used to be turned around was much slower. It used to take up to 10 days for a payment to be turned around. What is the time now? We can now turn around a support payment in less than 48 hours.

**Mrs Dombrowsky:** Let me tell you about this turnaround time, Minister. If you're so tough, tell me why Sue in my riding has been waiting for support for two years. She's owed \$12,000 in child support.

Minister, the auditor already exposed that you are tough on rhetoric but soft on deadbeats. You don't have the guts to use the enforcement measures you already have. Dalton McGuinty will post the names of deadbeat parents on a Web site, and he will take away their

drivers' licences, because no child in this province should be abandoned.

I know you're against our plan and I know that you're against real action to help children in this province. The Family Responsibility Office is an abysmal failure. There are thousands of people like Pam waiting for support, and they are angry at your failure to take tough action. Minister, how can you defend this shameful record of abandoning children in the province to a life of poverty?

**Hon Mrs Elliott:** My colleague, I think, is forgetting that we have made tremendous improvements. We have increased millions and millions of dollars we've collected to go directly to families. Is there more to do? There's always more to do in every single system we are responsible for. But a number of changes, and I'll add some of the other changes we've made to improve the family support office: 85% of all court-ordered support payments now are deposited directly into the recipients' bank accounts; 1,900 calls are handled a day; 17,000 callers are spoken to from Monday through Friday and 11,000 responded to on the weekend. We're trying very hard to be responsive.

My colleague across the way talks about drivers' licences, and I remind her that it's our government that first established this particular process. It's another one of the measures we've undertaken to find those payers, make them pay and take care of the children of Ontario, who deserve our care.

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to stand down my lead.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Yes. We'll continue and we'll go to the NDP in the rotation, if we could. They're standing down the question. No? OK.

## PENSION PLANS

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** My question is to the Premier and it relates to Bill 198, this government's budget bill, which includes provisions related to pensions. Mr Premier, you will be aware that on Friday the Superior Court here in Ontario ruled that terminated employees "have the right to have distributed that portion of the surplus that relates to that part of the pension plan being wound up." Yet your own legislation says under section 78.1:

"(3) If the windup report approved by the superintendent for a partial windup indicates that the pension plan has a surplus as of the effective date of the partial windup,

"(a) it is not necessary to pay surplus out of the pension plan on the partial windup unless the pension plan requires it."

This is clear evidence that your plan strips away the hard-fought rights of employees to access their surpluses. Will you withdraw this portion of the bill today, Mr Premier?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** There is no intention on the part of the government to do what the member is suggesting—

*Interjections.*

**Hon Mr Eves:** Just a minute—and if that is what some people are interpreting that section to say, then you have the government's undertaking that we will not proclaim that section, that we will consult with representatives of labour and of management to sit down and go over the solution to the problem. Quite simply put, there is a very basic principle here: that employees and employers should be entitled to share in any surplus that is being distributed, whether it's on a partial windup or a total windup.

There may be circumstances where there has been agreement as to who's entitled to that ahead of time, and if there's an agreement, then there's an agreement with respect to that. But if there is not, I share the member's concern.

**Mr Smitherman:** Notwithstanding your expression of concern, Mr Premier, your words do very little to reflect your understanding of the legislation. I've sent you over a copy of it and I urge you to read it.

I'd like to read this into the record too. This is from Mercer consulting, one of the leading members of the ACPM that the minister consulted with in the development of this bill. This is their analysis of the Monsanto ruling and its impact on other pensions. I'll read you just one line of it: "If enacted, this legislation would reverse the finding in Monsanto for plans other than Monsanto's."

Mr Premier, with all the evidence that has been compiled about your flawed consultation and about the fact that your legislation does exactly what the opposition has claimed it does, will you stand in your place today and as an honourable person agree that this has been done badly and that you will withdraw it?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I've already given the honourable member a commitment that we will not proclaim that section of the bill and that we will sit down with representatives of both labour and management and make sure there is an understanding that surpluses are to be shared equally between employees and employers unless there is an agreement and an understanding to the contrary.

1400

**Mr Smitherman:** All your assurances aside, unfortunately the reality is that the legislation you presented before this House and intend to have passed by all of your seals over there is legislation that takes away the rights of employees. If it isn't clear enough to you from reading your own legislation and from reading the Mercer ruling on Monsanto, Mr Premier, then you need a little sober second thought on this. You can't be trusted on this. Your consultation was flawed. The words you offer are in dramatic difference from what your legislation proposes. Will you stand in your place today and withdraw this legislation so you can get it right?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I have always supported the employees' share of surpluses in pension plans, and I'm standing in my place today and making a commitment that this section will not be proclaimed until everybody has the understanding as to what it means. And if the honourable member turns out to be correct and the section isn't properly worded, we will change the section and it will never be proclaimed. Is that satisfactory?

#### TENANT PROTECTION

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** My question is for the Premier. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation numbers released today show that apartment rents in Ontario cities continue to rise. Since your government changed the rent laws to favour landlords, the average tenant in Toronto is paying \$2,712 more a year for a two-bedroom apartment. That's \$2,712 going right out of the tenant's pocket to the landlord. It's time to give tenants a break. New Democrats propose a two-year rent freeze. Since your government is responsible for this, will you implement a two-year rent freeze, or are you going to continue picking tenants' pockets?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The Minister of Municipal Affairs will respond.

**Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** The CMHC report today was good news. It shows the vacancy rate is actually improving for renters in this province from last year. It's up to 2.7%, a little different from what you've been saying around here for the last year. Housing starts are at record numbers, and more people own homes. As for affordable rents, if you want to compare our record to your record on what you allowed rents to go up each year under your formula when you were in government for five years, I'd do that comparison any day of the week. Ours are still lower by far than yours ever were.

**Mr Hampton:** The reason that the vacancy rate appears to be going up is because all kinds of people can't afford the extra \$2,700 a year. In fact, statistics Canada tells us that since you brought in your landlord rent legislation, 40,000 units of apartment housing have disappeared. There's not more supply, there's less, but people can't afford it. In 1997, rent for a two-bedroom apartment in Toronto was \$821. Now, it's \$1,047 a month. That's how much it's gone up.

Will you recognize that you are literally taking money out of the pockets of tenants and putting it in the hands of landlords? Will you implement a two-year rent freeze and give tenants a break for a change?

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** The answer is no. The province saw your policies didn't work. We had rent control, and now the Liberals want to go back to the future when there's absolutely no investment in rental or any kind of housing stock in this province. What we're trying to do—the market is working, but there are some people who need help. We've got shelter allowances that we're improving to help people. We've signed the federal govern-



ment accord to build 10,500 more units of affordable housing. The TPA, the formula that allows landlords to raise rents, is actually less under this government than it was under your government.

**Mr Hampton:** Minister, it gets worse for tenants, because as a result of the hydro price increases this summer, landlords have already applied for an extraordinary rent increase. Landlords are going to stick the tenants with another rate increase, but when your pre-election rebates and rate caps for Hydro come out, nowhere in your legislation does it provide for that money to go to the tenants. So the tenants get stuck with higher rent. Meanwhile, you funnel the rebate into the pockets of your landlord friends. Is this a deliberate strategy to put the screws to tenants one more time, or did you just hope that no one would notice this?

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** That's not my understanding. The hydro policy enunciated by the Minister of Energy will be fair to the tenants as well, as it is to all home owners and consumers. I can say, though, that it's easy to make promises when you're the third party. You might be reminded that when you campaigned on An Agenda for People, you campaigned on a 10% rent reduction. That never happened. In fact you increased it year after year when you were in government.

#### PRIVATE HEALTH CARE SERVICES

**Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River):** A question for the Premier: All of your grand schemes to privatize Hydro have created a monstrous disaster, yet your government wants to plough ahead with privatizing more and more of our health care system. Reports indicate that Mr Romanow is going to call for a national home care program and is going to call for it to be protected under the Canada Health Act. Two years ago, a coroner's inquest in the death of young Joshua Fleuelling concluded that your government's privatization of our home care services backed up hospital emergency rooms, and that led to the death of that young man. That coroner's inquest demanded that you cancel for-profit home care. Your government privatized the delivery of home care. Will you now recognize that it is time for a publicly funded, publicly administered system of home care, and will you do the right thing?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** First of all, that information the leader of the third party provided is not factually correct. Second, he presumes that he knows what Mr Romanow's report is going to say on Thursday morning. I can tell the honourable member I have had two lengthy discussions with Mr Romanow over the last few months and I can assure you that Mr Romanow doesn't think any part of Ontario's health care system is "off-side."

**Mr Hampton:** Here's the reality of for-profit delivery of home care. Wages of home care providers, the workers, have plummeted. The control of community care access centres has been taken out of the community and seized by your government. Thousands of Ontario sen-

iors and disabled have been cut off home care. They have been told home care services are no longer available.

Premier, admit it, your Hydro privatization scheme has been a complete disaster. When the Romanow commission is giving every indication that they're going to oppose any further privatization of the health care system, why do you insist on ploughing ahead with more private delivery, more for-profit delivery of health care?

**Hon Mr Eves:** First of all, the health care system, not just in the province of Ontario but in virtually every province across this country, has about, as he well knows, 30% to 40% of the money in privately operated facilities in one way, shape, form or another, whether it's diagnostic procedures such as blood testing, whether it's kidney dialysis or whether it's some other form. The reality is, and what differentiates the Canadian system from other systems, is that it all goes through a publicly administered, equally accessible universal health care system. That principle has never been deviated from in Ontario, nor will it be as we go forward, and we look forward to Mr Romanow's report on Thursday morning.

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#### CANCER SERVICES

**Mrs Lyn McLeod (Thunder Bay-Atikokan):** My question is for the Minister of Health. Over a year ago your government set out to merge regional cancer centres with local hospitals, and you appointed Dr Alan Hudson to head a committee that would implement your directions. The negative response to this plan from cancer patients and from cancer care advocates forced you to retreat, at least publicly.

The committee report recommended "that the current structure of governance and management (of the regional centres) should remain at this time." It appears all that that did was give you the time you needed to get the issue out of the public eye so you could go ahead and do what you always intended to do. You are now moving ahead to merge regional cancer centres with hospitals. You appointed Dr Hudson to head Cancer Care Ontario, and he is proceeding "at your direction," as his newsletter states, to put both the budgets and the employees of cancer centres under the control of the hospital.

Minister, this is not just a plan to integrate cancer services for patients; this is a merger. Why are you proceeding with a merger that nobody wanted except you and Dr Hudson?

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** The honourable member's facts are wrong. The fact of the matter is that this is a plan that has been approved by the board of Cancer Care Ontario. It has gone about its business to have individual meetings with individual hospitals that also deliver cancer services across this province.

This is a plan not to merge but to integrate services so the cancer patient has the ability to understand who is responsible for what in the system so their care is better,

more humane, more accessible and of a higher quality, quite frankly.

This is a plan that has been agreed to by all of the major players who are delivering cancer services. Why are you opposed to something that is agreed to for better cancer services for the people of Ontario?

**Mrs McLeod:** Minister, I do agree with you that most of the consultation that was done on this was done in private. I also happen to know that the private ones were just as negative as the public one that you carried out.

Let me read you what Cancer Care Ontario had to say before Dr Hudson was appointed to do what you wanted done. In a confidential report submitted to the implementation committee, Cancer Care Ontario said, "The type of integration and other solutions that are required will not be found in giving hospitals operational control of the regional cancer centres. Indeed, such a move would likely exacerbate existing human resource shortages and, in and of itself, do virtually nothing to shorten waits for cancer surgery or improve access to diagnostic services."

Nothing has changed since then except the leadership of Cancer Care Ontario. Waiting times for diagnosis and treatment for cancer patients was a very big issue when you decided that you were going to merge regional centres with hospitals. So you wonder what happens to the waiting lists now. Do they disappear because you won't be keeping them any more? What happens to so-called dedicated budgets when the Provincial Auditor can't go in and examine the books?

I received an e-mail from one distraught cancer patient who has heard what is happening. He says, "Cancer patients have a right to know what is being done to their most important medical asset." I ask, do you agree with that? Will you make public exactly what you are doing with regional cancer centres in this province?

**Hon Mr Clement:** I'll go one better than what the honourable member suggests. We have appointed an eminent person who is going to be in charge of making sure that we get quality results for our cancer sufferers. Perhaps you've heard of him. His name is Michael Decter, and he is in charge of that file. So the honourable member can be assured that we are concerned as much about the quality of cancer care as about the process by which it is done.

I would say to the honourable member opposite, if she's got a problem with Dr Alan Hudson, the most pre-eminent neurosurgeon in the country, who has had experience at Princess Margaret Hospital, who is now heading up Cancer Care Ontario, she should stand in her place right now and say what her problem is with Dr Hudson, because he is doing the thing that is necessary to ensure that we have quality cancer care throughout the province of Ontario for all cancer sufferers, in an integrated manner. Better quality cancer care is what this government is all about.

## AGRICULTURAL LABOUR POLICY

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** My question is for the active and dynamic Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Helen Johns. I, along with a lot of my colleagues, have been attending a number of events this week at the annual convention of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture. The convention, as always, provides farmers with a series of workshops and seminars on issues of importance to agriculture and rural Ontario.

I am aware that on the agenda for this afternoon, the long gone missing leader of the Liberal Party is scheduled to speak at this convention. Could you speculate on what the leader might say about agricultural labour?

**Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food):** I'd like to thank the member from Perth-Middlesex for the question. I know he has a large agricultural riding and is always concerned about the issues. It would be interesting today to hear what the leader of the Liberal Party is saying about his position on Bill 187, the Agricultural Employees Protection Act, which passed in the Legislature last week. As I recall, the Liberals abstained from voting on the first reading, noting that they didn't have sufficient time to make a decision, even though we had just completed significant public consultations. Last week, the leader of the Liberal Party stated that he would allow full unionization and also that this bill was only the first step. The right to associate would go one step further: "We're going to allow workers working for large employers in the agricultural sector the right to form a union."

The farm groups have been clear on this issue: a farm is a farm and a Liberal is a flip-flop.

**Mr Johnson:** Thank you very much, Minister. I enjoyed not only the knowledge you conveyed to me in that, but the way you did it.

I'm also very aware that recently the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora and the president of the Liberal Party, the wannabe leader of the Liberal Party, also made some interesting remarks regarding Bill 187. Could you comment also on these statements and provide some indication of what these Liberal positions mean for Ontario farmers?

**Hon Mrs Johns:** Once again the position from the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora is the latest in a series of confusing Liberal statements on agricultural labour. Yesterday, this member was quoted as saying, "I think we have to repeal it" Bill 187 "and do something different down the road." So now the leader says it's the first step and the party president says, "No, let's repeal it." Perhaps the party president should be addressing the Ontario Federation of Agriculture today to explain his position.

We on this side of the House have consistently stated that farmers need protection from labour disruption at critical times such as planting and harvesting. We have also addressed the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada respecting the individual and constitutional rights of the employees.

Once again, in Toronto they're saying one thing; in the agricultural community they're saying something else. It happens in agriculture. It happens in education. It's happening all the time.

#### FOREIGN-TRAINED DOCTORS

**Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West):** My question is for the Premier. Last Thursday many people were stuffed into a room to listen to your announcement on foreign-trained physicians. During that announcement, you announced that you would have 656 new doctors practising in Ontario in the next five years. Now that the details are known, would you kindly stand up and correct the record?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I think the Minister of Health can deal with this question.

**Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** As the honourable member should have been aware at the time, we announced an eight-point, \$36.4-million plan that will reduce the barriers to registration and assessment and training for international medical graduates and other non-licensed physicians without reducing our standard of care. It means improving our physician recruitment and retention, it means creating up to 85 new post-graduate training positions and it means creating a single, integrated, coordinated system for assessing and training IMGs; it provides further funding for the IMG assessment program and provides funding for the physician-extender, three-year pilot project. That means next year alone there will be 150 new IMGs for the province of Ontario practising their skills, being part of our community, integrated into our society—better health care, more health care for the people of Ontario.

**Mrs Pupatello:** Well, I wish the Premier had answered this, because he made the announcement. What he said was 656 new doctors would be working. We have over 1,500 foreign-trained physicians who were desperately seeking news last Thursday. What happened instead, and what we know now, is that 300 of those 600-and-some doctors are doctors who are already here practising as general practitioners, who are now going to be called specialists. That's not 656 new doctors, is it? That is not 656 new doctors.

You are just stringing these people along, making them believe that you're actually helping them. Your own ministry spokesperson has confirmed that the eligibility does not change with any of your announcements. Last spring, we had to hear you announce your new fast-tracking. Please explain why again last Thursday you announced a new fast track.

All you are is talk, Minister and Premier. You are doing nothing to assist these people who have been waiting for a good announcement. You misled the public on that announcement last Thursday.

1420

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** The member is going to have to withdraw that.

**Mrs Pupatello:** I withdraw "misled."

**Hon Mr Clement:** Nothing could be further from the truth. It does not make sense to have foreign medical graduates who do not have the ability to practise at all when they have the skills and training, nor does it make sense to have physicians who are foreign medical graduates who do not practise to the top level of their skill. We are allowing both to have access—

*Interjection.*

**The Speaker:** Order. This is the last warning for the member for Windsor West. If she keeps yelling across, she'll be thrown out. The minister waited patiently for you to ask the question, and it's his turn to answer now. If you don't do it, then I'm afraid I'm going to have to throw you out.

Sorry for the interruption, Minister.

**Hon Mr Clement:** Thank you, Mr Speaker.

We are allowing both groups to have access to the health care system so they can deliver quality, accessible health care for the province of Ontario, and if the honourable member has a problem with that, let her tell us what she has against international medical graduates who want to practise as specialists in Ontario. Stand in your place and tell us what you've got against international medical graduates who want to practise their speciality in the province. Tell us now.

#### LONG-TERM-CARE FACILITIES

**Mr Raminder Gill (Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale):** My question today is for the Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Like all the members on this side of the House, I'm very proud to be part of a government that has demonstrated such a strong commitment to meeting the long-term-care needs of Ontario seniors, both through unprecedented investment in new and redeveloped long-term-care facilities in my own riding, Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale, as well as across the province, and through our \$100-million investment in nursing and personal care.

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Order. Sorry to interrupt. The member for Don Valley East and the government House leader, please come to order. The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale has the floor. I apologize, member.

**Mr Gill:** Last week the Ontario Nurses' Association issued a news release suggesting that long-term-care facilities in our province aren't using the \$100 million in funding to hire new nurses and personal care workers as intended. For the benefit of my constituents, I would like the associate minister to please explain that.

**Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I'm pleased to respond to the hard-working and always effective honourable member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale. The Ernie Eves

government's historic \$100-million investment in nursing and personal care is earmarked into the nursing and personal care envelope for long-term-care funding. This earmarked \$100 million is being used for even better nursing and personal care across Ontario, including the salaries and benefits of registered nurses, registered practical nurses and personal care workers.

I would also like to point out that there were inconsistencies in the Ontario Nurses' Association's press release from last week, including the statement that West End Villa nursing home in Ottawa is using half of the money to cover off deficits. The fact is that West End does not even have a deficit, hasn't had a deficit and in fact has hired two additional full-time personal care workers at their facility.

**Mr Gill:** I'm glad I asked that question. I want to thank the associate minister for his response. I'm very pleased to hear that our government's funding is being used, as intended, to provide even better nursing and personal care to residents of Ontario. I know that my constituents will be very happy to hear about that.

I would like to ask the associate minister for specific examples of long-term-care facilities in Ontario that have hired new nursing and personal care staff, as intended, with the \$100 million that we've paid them.

**Hon Mr Newman:** I once again thank the honourable member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton-Springdale for his question. This summer, the Ontario Long Term Care Association suggested that our government's \$100 million in new additional funding could be used to hire an additional 2,400 full-time-equivalent nursing and personal care workers across the province, and this still is the case.

This can be seen in Ottawa, for example, where the ministry is aware of roughly 15 facilities that have added nursing staff to their complement to assist in the provision of care to residents. A multiple-home operator has also added 42 full-time-equivalent positions and another six full-time equivalents in a single home.

In fact, at the Metro Toronto Legion Village in Scarborough, a charitable home for the aged, a nursing supervisor position has been added with the enhanced personal care dollars. In addition, Metro Toronto Legion Village has added 98 hours a week in health care aide hours and has enhanced evening shifts from a health care aide to a registered nursing position.

I hope that even the Liberals and the NDP—

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

#### ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

**Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth):** My question is for the Premier. In the west gallery today are adoptees, an adoptive mother and a birth mother. They represent the thousands from the adoption community who have been working for many years on adoption disclosure. They want the heartbreak of secrecy stopped. They want Bill 77 passed.

As you know, Bill 77 would open up adoption records to adult adoptees and birth parents. There's a contact veto for those who are concerned about privacy.

Premier, will you agree today to call Bill 77 for third reading and a final vote?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** First of all, I believe that issues such as the one she's talking about don't have any place in partisan politics. I believe there are several private members' bills in this Legislature that should go forward on a free vote and a non-partisan basis. The member for Waterloo-Wellington, for example, has a bill that I believe should go forward and be acted upon.

I have talked to our House leader this morning about this very issue. There are many substantial improvements, I believe, that the Legislative Assembly committee is on the verge of recommending to the House to make this a more free and open democratic process, especially as far as backbench members are concerned.

I would urge the honourable member to talk to her House leader so there can be an arrangement among all three House leaders so members of all three parties can bring forward private members' bills that can be voted upon.

**Ms Churley:** Premier, I appreciate the fact that we've come a long way from where we were before, but I do want to point out to you that it's a half-yes; we're not all the way there.

There are illnesses and deaths as a result of this bill not being passed. I do not want to see it caught up in the usual negotiations and BS that goes on around here when it comes to negotiations around the passage of bills.

Please listen to me, Premier. I appreciate what you said, but these people here today want a guarantee that this bill will be called for third reading and a final vote. Since 1999, it has been sitting there waiting for passage. Would you agree today that, no matter what, you will see to it as Premier that this bill comes forward for a final vote?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I certainly appreciate the fact that the honourable member believes very sincerely in the cause she's talking about. I believe there are several other members of this Legislative Assembly who share that same concern and that same belief. I would like to see the bill brought forward, but she knows how this place works. I think she has a bigger problem, quite frankly, convincing her House leader than she does people on this side of the House that the bill should come forward.

#### EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** I have a question for the Premier. I want to ask you about your statements made last week to the parents and the public of Toronto about the funding that your appointed supervisor is providing to them, and to students in particular. You said very explicitly that funding to the classroom in Toronto will be increased by the supervisor's proposal.

We now know that in fact there's at least a \$23-million reduction in funding to the classroom compared to last year. Those parents and those students were depending on you. You and your minister are the only elected officials who have any influence over the future of their children this year.

It turns out that what you said last week isn't correct. Will you stand today in the House and apologize, and more importantly, will you reconsider the funding for those students in light of your statements and in light of the facts?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** The Minister of Education will be able to correct the honourable member.

**Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education):** The member opposite knows full well that the only people who abdicated their responsibility to the students were the trustees, the small majority who refused to balance the budget and present a balanced budget to the Ministry of Education.

The reality is that Mr Kennedy's methodology is flawed. The supervisor's table compares net expenditures in 2001-02 to net expenditures in 2002-03. He did an apples-to-apples comparison, but not Mr Kennedy, of course. He did a comparison where he took a look and he compared total expenditures in 2001-02 to net expenditures in 2002-03. It was an apples-to-oranges comparison. Why he'd do that, I'm not sure.

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**Mr Kennedy:** We have the minister opposite who said to us just now that there was a mixture between gross and net figures. They won't release the gross figures. They are afraid to put out how much money is being spent on behalf of students. Why are they afraid? Because the partial figures we have obtained and that were confirmed by the school board—those members over there hope against hope they might be true—prove the fact that the Premier last week told this Legislature that, first of all, the money spent in the classroom has actually increased and in fact it has not. It hasn't increased.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Kennedy:** For all the laughing members opposite, students in this city have less teacher assistance, have fewer teachers, have less classroom assistance, and despite your assurance, Premier, and you're afraid to come up and talk about this question, they have fewer textbooks.

I ask you again, Premier, will you apologize to the students and the parents for whom you have provided inaccurate information, but more importantly, will you instruct your minister now—it has been proven it's not working. Will you reconsider the funding given out for the students in Toronto? Will you do that today?

**Hon Mrs Witmer:** If I heard the member opposite correctly, he said he didn't have the figures. Does that mean he made the figures up?

## CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

**Mr Toby Barrett (Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant):** I have a question today—

*Interjections.*

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Order. The member for Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant has the floor.

**Mr Barrett:** I have a question today for the Minister of Natural Resources. Many people in the province of Ontario are very concerned about a troubling disease that has been detected in both deer and elk populations in some of Ontario's neighbouring jurisdictions. It's known as chronic wasting disease. Could you please explain to us today, first of all, what this disease is and, secondly, has it been detected in either deer or elk herds in the province?

**Hon Jerry J. Ouellette (Minister of Natural Resources):** Chronic wasting disease, or CWD as it's known, is a progressive fatal disease of the nervous system detected in deer and elk. It's caused by an abnormal protein called a prion, and there is no scientific evidence to date that CWD, in any way, shape or form infects humans. Scientists are not sure how the disease is transmitted. I've heard various aspects come forward such as bald eagles transmitting it, and it's not quite sure how it is found. Also, there is no detection of the disease in Ontario, and the MNR will continue to protect Ontarians and Ontario's deer and elk herds.

**Mr Barrett:** Thank you for that explanation. I am relieved to hear there has been no detection of chronic wasting disease in the province. However, given the harmful potential for this disease, it's important that our province continue to not only remain vigilant but remain watchful for any indications of its spread. What steps have you been taking to ensure there has not been any incidence of this disease in the province, and what are you planning for the future?

**Hon Mr Ouellette:** That's right. You can't wait until the last minute until a disease is actually detected in your area. So what the MNR has done is launch a pilot project this year during deer season. This was designed to develop a process on how to collect data, to review that data, to analyze it and to implement a program to deal with the situation should it arise in Ontario. To date, we've had over 140 samples collected, with no positive results in any of the animals that were brought forward.

I want to thank the outdoor community for a program that has been well received and has been very supportive. I want to assure everyone that the MNR and outdoor partners will continue to bring this program to a closure so that we can establish a comprehensive, permanent safety measure to ensure the protection of Ontario's deer and elk herds.

## LOBBYISTS

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I have a question for the Premier, and the question is about the

return of the prodigal son, Guy Giorno, who has obviously returned to call the shots for this government.

Yesterday, you were in Ottawa discussing the Kyoto Protocol with the Prime Minister, and you said that you were not persuaded by the arguments he provided. But obviously you—

*Interjection.*

**Mr Bradley:**—and the backbencher who's so yappy and the rest of the government are persuaded by Guy Giorno, who is lobbying on behalf of the oil barons, on behalf of the opponents of the Kyoto accord.

When I try to get any information, all I get are blackened pages like this. That's all I get from your government.

I want to ask the Premier why he is listening to a major lobbyist who worked for the former Premier of the province of Ontario who is now back advising you? Why have you been persuaded by Guy Giorno to oppose the provisions of the Kyoto accord?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I have never had a discussion with Guy Giorno about the Kyoto accord.

**Mr Bradley:** That's one of those statements where, whether it's true or not, nobody believes it. That's one of those statements.

Let me talk about perhaps the ethics of Guy Giorno lobbying you, holding this reception where he trotted out his friend, the Minister of Energy, John Baird, to speak, and brought together chief Tory operatives downstairs on October 15.

Subsection 30(b) of the conflict of interest and post-service directive states: "For 12 months after leaving the service of the crown, a former senior public servant is restricted from lobbying for or on behalf of any person, entity or organization to any ministry or organization of the crown with which the individual worked in the 12 months prior to leaving the service."

Could you tell us whether you think it's appropriate that Guy Giorno was doing so much of the lobbying against the Kyoto accord and trying to persuade your government not to agree with the Kyoto accord, when clearly he is violating the provisions of this particular act?

**Hon Mr Eves:** I would refer this supplementary to the Chair of the Management Board.

**Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture):** One of the concerns we've had in terms of this type of purported conflict of interest was that we've created an independent office of the Conflict of Interest Commissioner. We've appointed the Honourable Lloyd Houlden to be the commissioner.

We're very concerned to make sure that upon leaving the government, not only civil servants but also senior staff in ministers' offices and the Premier's office are expected to meet with the commissioner, who provides them with clear directions about the activities they may engage in, in accordance with the post-service directive.

Last fall, we in fact revised the conflict-of-interest rules to ensure they're up to date and meet the government's commitment to accountability and transparency to the public.

In short, Mr Giorno was required to meet with Mr Houlden and was required to indicate to him the direction he was going to take, and obviously that has occurred.

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#### AFFORDABLE HOUSING

**Mr John O'Toole (Durham):** My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Last week I was thankfully invited by Gord Carey to attend a National Housing Day open house at Faith United Church in my riding of Durham. The event included organizers who are looking toward the issues facing affordable housing, not just in Durham region but indeed across the province, members like Len Perkins and Lynn Teatro, and John Jensen, president of Project Next Step.

They provided me with a very good reference point on the issues facing us in terms of housing supply. Consequently, I was impressed with the housing supply working group report released this week.

Minister, I wonder if you could tell us what needs to be done to get people building more rental and affordable housing in the province of Ontario.

**Mr Chris Hodgson (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing):** I appreciate the question from the member for Durham, a hard-working MPP. I can tell you that the housing supply working group issued two reports. I received last week the second one. It talks about how to make the numbers work for affordable housing.

We're having huge success in the province of Ontario in terms of home ownership, condos and apartments at the top end of the rental scale. Eventually the supply will work, but in the short term, what needs to be done to get the numbers to work for affordable rents for working families in this province? They've identified a number of barriers that need to be removed. The top of the barriers we've already removed since 1996, undoing the damage of that lost decade of Liberal-NDP mismanagement.

On top of that they've recommended some further things that need to be done: full rebate of the GST, a deferral of the capital gains tax, increasing the depreciation allowance on rental housing and restoration of the soft costs deductibility. These are all things they're recommending to make the numbers work so it's economically viable for the private sector to build affordable housing.

**Mr O'Toole:** Thank you very much for your response on this important policy issue, Minister. I commend you for your leadership and for making it clear about the lack of commitment by the federal government on the issues you've mentioned, the CMHC transfers, the municipal tax rate on multiple residential, as well as our initiative on the PST tax relief.

The Tenant Protection Act amendments and proposals brought forward by the Liberal McGuinty government

plans to establish rent control on vacant units. We understand that the market usually determines this. That plan, in my view, has failed to address the fundamental question. Minister, what's your response to that suggestion?

**Hon Mr Hodgson:** I think everyone knows that was a failed policy. In any jurisdiction in the world it has been tried, it doesn't work. The federal government has announced a federal program to try to kick-start 10,500 units. We're working with them; I was on the phone again this morning with Minister Collette. We expect to be rolling that out in the near future.

Going back to the future of rent control, you can look at any jurisdiction; it fails. The supply is what you need to concentrate on. You need to have incentives to make the numbers work to get more supply. There is a huge success story taking place in Ontario with home ownership: 67.9% of the public now have ownership of their residences. That's up from 64%. That's at historic highs.

The CMHC report that was just released is great news. It shows a huge, dramatic improvement in the vacancy rates, 2.7%, from 1.7% just a year ago. That's the highest vacancy rate since 1975, the year rent controls were brought in to stifle any further investment in this field. Even Vince Brescia, president and CEO of the Fair Rental Policy—

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

#### SMELTER OPERATION IN TIMMINS

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** My question is to the Premier. Globex, a mining company in northern Ontario, has discovered a large magnesium-talc body just south of the city of Timmins. This could represent the largest mining project in Timmins since the strike of Texasgulf in the early 1960s. Part of this project could include a refinery and smelter that would create some 500 jobs in the community of Timmins.

Premier, I don't need to tell you how badly we need those jobs for the province of Ontario. What are you prepared to do to make sure Globex builds that smelter in the city of Timmins?

**Hon Ernie Eves (Premier, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs):** I refer the question to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

**Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines):** I thank the honourable member for the question. As you know, I've met with the company on a few occasions, as have officials of the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. We've rolled out the welcome mat as best we can.

Globex has been given a pretty good—at least they tell us, both privately and in the media—subsidized power deal from the province of Quebec. It's perhaps a deal that's very generous, and I would say the taxpayers are going to be subsidizing that company. Right now the debate is, can Ontario match it? We're certainly looking at it, but it has not been the policy of this government, nor should it be, to give money directly to business.

We've created a million net new jobs in this province since 1995, and we've done it without corporate welfare. We don't want to go down that road.

We're dealing with Globex. I think it makes eminent sense to have the smelter near the mine but, as you know, the province of Quebec is also in these discussions.

**Mr Bisson:** That says a lot about your hydro policy, but back to the Premier and my original question. I hope, Premier, when you visit Timmins tomorrow you'll have something better to tell the citizens of Timmins, because a year ago Globex wanted to meet with your government to talk about how your government could assist them in developing a bankable feasibility study in order to not only build the mine but build a refinery and smelter.

The only way they were able to meet with your government was by way of a fundraiser, and when they showed up they were basically told what the minister just said: "We don't provide any loans or grant programs directly to the private sector. We're not in that business whatsoever."

Now where are we at? Twelve months later Globex is in a situation of being lured over to Quebec by the province of Quebec and not only are they looking at building the refinery smelter over there but they're prepared to participate in a bankable feasibility study.

My question to you is really simple. It's clear at this point that you dropped the ball on this. When you go to Timmins tomorrow, Premier, what are you prepared to tell the citizens of Timmins about what your government is going to do to make sure that that smelter, if built, will be built in the city of Timmins, Ontario, and not in the province of Quebec?

**Hon Mr Wilson:** I want to give the member an opportunity to correct the record. He knows very well, because he was with the company when we met in my office, and I've never met the company at a fundraiser. I extended the courtesy of his coming to that meeting, he extended the courtesy of accompanying the company and I thought it was a very good meeting. We've had follow-up meetings.

It occurs to me it's difficult to compete with Quebec because in our Confederation, Ontario is the economic engine of Canada and we give far more tax dollars to Quebec—actually to the federal government, and they give them to Quebec—than we get back from the federal government. This is one of those cases where being the economic engine of Canada is perhaps working against us.

Having said that, this Premier, the previous Premier and this government have created a million net new jobs in Ontario. These jobs can be created in Timmins. We want to keep working with Globex. We have the most competitive mining jurisdiction in North America. We're number one in the world this year for low mining taxes—

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** I thank the minister.

**Mr Bisson:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to clarify the record. It wasn't the current minister setting up that meeting; it was a previous minister.

ONTARIO DISABILITY  
SUPPORT PROGRAM

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** My question today is to the Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services. People receiving ODSP tend to have higher-than-average medical needs. They often need to travel in order to get specialized services. They receive 18 cents per kilometre for their trip. That's about half of what you and I get.

You have now brought out a new process that requires their doctor to submit on what their expenses will be for the next year. They must determine what their doctors' visits, dental visits and medical supplies will be for the coming year. Doctors have said to me that they have to either be liars or clairvoyants to fill out this form.

Minister, without this form being completed, our citizens are unable to get their medical services. You have created a major new barrier to citizens with disabilities. I ask you now, today, to withdraw this process and pay them for the trips they incur as they do them.

**Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services):** I thank my colleague opposite for the question. We have worked very hard to make changes to the Ontario Disability Support Program Act to improve the lives of those who are disabled. It's our government that introduced the Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It's our government that removed those who are disabled from the welfare act to give them a new plan, the Ontario disability support program, with great improvements.

We have been concerned with some of the processes in the Ontario disability act and we've tried to improve them. I'm not exactly sure what the questioner is referring to. We have made some changes to simplify the application process in creating one consistent form, and we did that with extensive advice from the Ontario Medical Association to improve the form that the physicians were asked to complete. If this is the form in question, then I'd be happy to speak to my colleague further about this.

**Mr Parsons:** Let me explain to you what you have done. You have created a form called the mandatory special necessities benefit request. People receiving ODSP cannot receive funding for their trips as they incur them. They now must submit for the following year, well into 2003, and then they receive a certain amount on each cheque.

No one knows what's going to happen in the next year. This is a bureaucratic nightmare. If a citizen receiving ODSP makes some money, within 15 days you can claw back that money from their cheque. Surely within 15 days you could process a travel claim and pay it. Rather than an airy-fairy best guess of what's going to happen in the next year, let's do it right. Let's do it financially soundly, and let's remove the barrier. Doctors are refusing to fill out this form, and we have citizens on ODSP who are not getting the medical treatment they require because of your new, ridiculous barrier.

**Hon Mrs Elliott:** We've worked very hard on this side to improve the lives of those who are disabled. We've worked very hard to make the process easier, straightforward and improved in every way. If this form or any other form is a problem, it's a form I will be examining and improving.

**Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek unanimous consent to immediately call the orders for second and third readings of Bill 211 today, notwithstanding standing order 69, and that the Speaker put the question without debate.

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

1450

BACK TO SCHOOL ACT  
(SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD), 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LE RETOUR  
À L'ÉCOLE (SIMCOE MUSKOKA  
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD)

Mr Clark moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 211, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board / Projet de loi 211, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants catholiques anglo-ontariens et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board.

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

BACK TO SCHOOL ACT  
(SIMCOE MUSKOKA CATHOLIC  
DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD), 2002

LOI DE 2002 SUR LE RETOUR  
À L'ÉCOLE (SIMCOE MUSKOKA  
CATHOLIC DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD)

Mr Clark moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 211, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board / Projet de loi 211, Loi visant à régler le conflit de travail opposant l'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants catholiques anglo-ontariens et le conseil scolaire de district appelé Simcoe Muskoka Catholic District School Board.

**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.



## VISITORS

**Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings):** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd like to welcome Peter Callaghan and a group of students from Loyalist College in Belleville. I hope they have not been too disillusioned by their experience here.

## PETITIONS

## ALUMINUM SMELTER

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** This is a petition to clean up the abandoned aluminum smelter in Georgina, and the petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the abandoned aluminum smelter located on Warden Avenue in the town of Georgina has been deemed to have heavy metals exceeding Ministry of the Environment guidelines; and

"Whereas the site is adjacent to a wetland that leads to the Maskinonge River feeding into Lake Simcoe;

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

"The Ministry of the Environment should immediately conduct a full environmental assessment and cleanup of the site."

I affix my signature. I'm in complete agreement.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** If we could stop the clock just for a quick moment. It's a little noisy as some of the members leave. We'll just take a quick moment here.

## EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina):** "Whereas the government has cut over \$2 billion from public education over the past seven years;

"Whereas the provincial funding formula does not provide sufficient funds for local district school board trustees to meet the needs of students;

"Whereas district school boards around the province have had to cut needed programs and services, including library, music, physical education and special education" and more;

"Whereas the district school boards in Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto refused to make further cuts and were summarily replaced with government-appointed supervisors;

"Whereas these supervisors are undermining classroom education for hundreds of thousands of children;

"We, the undersigned elected leaders of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, call on the government to restore local democracy by removing the supervisors in the Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto district school boards."

I support that.

## HIGHWAY 69

**Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury):** In light of the government's latest announcement last Thursday in Sudbury about their agreeing to four-laning Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound, I will continue to introduce these petitions into the Legislature until in fact that four-laning is done.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas modern highways are economic lifelines for the north; and

"Whereas the stretch of Highway 69 from Sudbury south to Parry Sound is a treacherous road with a trail of death and destruction; and

"Whereas the carnage on Highway 69 has been staggering; and

"Whereas the Harris-Eves government has shown gross irresponsibility in not four-laning the stretch of Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound; and

"Whereas immediate action is needed to prevent more needless loss of life; and

"Whereas it is the responsibility of a government to provide safe roads for its citizens, and the" Harris-Eves "government has failed to do so;

"Be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the" Harris-Eves "government to begin construction immediately and four-lane Highway 69 between Sudbury and Parry Sound so that the carnage on Death Road North will cease."

I affix my signature to this petition and give it to Annelise to bring to the table.

## CHILD CARE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have petitions that have been sent to me by Lisa Gregory, by the YWCA of St Catharines and by the Jubilee Heritage Family Resources program in Sudbury. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas 70% of Ontario women with children under age 12 are in the paid workforce;

"Whereas high-quality, safe, affordable child care is critical to them and their families;

"Whereas the Early Years Study done for the Conservative government by Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain concluded quality child care enhances early childhood development;

"Whereas this government has cut funding for regulated child care instead of supporting Ontario families by investing in early learning and care;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario government adopt the NDP's \$10-a-day child care plan and begin implementation by reducing full child care fees to \$10 a day for children aged two to five currently enrolled in regulated child care by providing capital funds to expand existing child care centres and build new ones, by funding pay equity for staff and by creating new \$10-a-day child care spaces in the province."

I agree with the petitioners. I've affixed my signature to this.

PROGRAMME D'ALPHABÉTISATION  
ET D'INTÉGRATION COMMUNAUTAIRE

**M<sup>me</sup> Claudette Boyer (Ottawa-Vanier):** « Attendu que les 44 personnes qui assistaient au programme d'alphabétisation et d'intégration communautaire de la Cité collégiale perdent en moyenne 2,5 jours par semaine de services directs et d'appui dans leur communauté dû à la fermeture de ce programme;

« Attendu que les agences de services du secteur de la déficience intellectuelle ne peuvent offrir de services de remplacement à ces personnes, compte tenu que leurs programmes sont déjà remplis à capacité;

« Attendu que les 44 personnes qui assistaient à ce programme seront maintenant insérées sur la liste d'attente à coordination des services, qui comprend déjà plus d'une trentaine de personnes francophones et que certaines d'entre elles attendent déjà depuis plus de deux ans;

« Attendu que nous considérons inacceptable de laisser les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle et leurs familles sans ou avec trop peu de soutien, de programmes et de services;

« Nous, parents, familles, amis et intervenants, demandons au gouvernement Eves de collaborer afin d'assurer un financement adéquat pour la mise en œuvre d'un modèle de services aux personnes francophones ayant une déficience intellectuelle qui répondra aux besoins, favorisera la mouvance dans le système de déficience intellectuelle, réduira la liste d'attente et reconnaîtra le droit à l'éducation pour les personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle. »

It's my pleasure to put my signature on it.

EDUCATION FUNDING

**Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre):** I have a petition by several hundred people from the Ottawa area. It says:

“Whereas the government has cut over \$2 billion from public education over the past seven years;

“Whereas the provincial funding formula does not provide sufficient funds for local district school board trustees to meet the needs of students;

“Whereas district school boards” across “the province have had to cut needed programs and services, including library, music, physical education and special education;

“Whereas the district school boards in Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto refused to make further cuts and were summarily replaced with government-appointed supervisors;

“Whereas these supervisors are undermining classroom education for hundreds of thousands of children;

“We, the undersigned members of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, call on the government to restore local democracy by removing the supervisors in the Hamilton-Wentworth, Ottawa-Carleton and Toronto district school boards.”

I'm happy to place my signature along with these others.

1500

PROVINCE OF ONTARIO  
SAVINGS OFFICE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition sent to me by people from Holland Centre, Ontario. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petitioners, and I sign my signature as well.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

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

“Whereas some motorists are recklessly endangering the lives of children by not obeying the highway traffic law requiring them to stop for school buses with their warning lights activated;

“Whereas the current law has no teeth to protect the children who ride the school buses of Ontario, and who are at risk and their safety is in jeopardy;

“Whereas the current school bus law is difficult to enforce, since not only is the licence plate number

required but positive identification of the driver and vehicle as well, which makes it extremely difficult to obtain a conviction;

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

"That the measures contained in private member's Bill 112, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to protect children while on school buses, presented by Pat Hoy, MPP, Chatham-Kent-Essex, be immediately enacted. Bill 112 received the unanimous all-party support of the Ontario Legislature at second reading on June 13, 2002.

"We ask for the support of all members of the Legislature."

I too have signed this important petition.

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have a petition sent to me by Catherine Callaghan of Cambridge, Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Conservative government increased fees paid by Ontario's seniors and other vulnerable people living in long-term care facilities by 15% ... instead of providing adequate government funding for long-term care; and

"Whereas the Conservative government has therefore shifted the costs of long-term care on to the backs of the frail, elderly and their families; and

"Whereas this increase is 11.1% above rent increase guidelines for tenants in the province of Ontario; and

"Whereas in 1996 Ontario abandoned its minimum requirement of 2.25 hours of nursing care per nursing home resident; and

"Whereas the government's own contribution to raise the level of long-term care-services this year is less than \$2 per resident per day; and

"Whereas according to the government's own study, government cutbacks have resulted in Ontario seniors receiving just 14 minutes a day of care from a registered nurse ... and

"Whereas the report also found that Ontario residents receive the least nursing, bathing and general care of nine other comparable locations;

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

We demand "the Conservative government eliminate the 15% fee increase for residents of long-term care facilities, increase the number of nursing care hours for each resident to a minimum of 3.5 hours per day and provide stable, increased funding to ensure quality care is there for Ontario residents of long-term-care facilities."

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

#### NATURAL GAS RATES

**Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London):** I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"... be it resolved that we, the undersigned, demand that the Ernie Eves government issue a policy directive under section 27.1 of the Ontario Energy Board Act disallowing the retroactive rate hike granted to Union Gas; and we further demand that the Legislature examine the Ontario Energy Board, its processes and its resources, and make changes that will protect consumers from further retroactive rate increases."

I am in full agreement and will affix my signature hereto.

#### COMPETITIVE ELECTRICITY MARKET

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have petitions that have been signed by many people in my riding, and they read as follows:

"Whereas the Harris government's plan to privatize and deregulate Ontario's electricity system will lead to higher rates because private owners will sell more power to US customers whose rates are typically 50% higher than Ontario's; and

"Whereas selling coal plants like Nanticoke to the private sector will lead to more pollution because the private owners will run the plants at full capacity to earn a profit; and

"Whereas electricity deregulation in California has led to sky-high rates and blackouts; and

"Whereas Ontario needs a system of public power that will ensure rate stability, environmental protection and secure access to power;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned call on the government to scrap electricity deregulation and privatization and bring in a system of accountable public power. The first priority for such a public power system must be incentives for energy conservation and green power. Electricity rates and major energy projects must be subject to full public hearings and binding rulings by a public regulator instead of leaving energy rates to private profit."

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

#### LONG-TERM CARE

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** I continue to receive dozens upon dozens of petitions containing hundreds of names from places like Newmarket, Burlington, Hamilton, Kitchener, Guelph, Orangeville and Parry Sound, among others, dealing with the long-term-care situation. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Eves government has increased the fees paid by seniors and 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 fee 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, and I’ve signed it accordingly.

#### CHILD CARE

**Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt):** I have some more petitions. They are sent to me from the Welland campus of Niagara College and from a Child’s World, which is also located in that area, in Port Colborne specifically. It reads as follows:

“Whereas 70% of Ontario women with children under age 12 are in the paid workforce;

“Whereas high-quality, safe, affordable child care is critical to them and their families;

“Whereas the Early Years Study done for the Conservative government by Dr Fraser Mustard and the Honourable Margaret McCain concluded quality child care enhances early childhood development;

“Whereas this government has cut funding for regulated child care instead of supporting Ontario families by investing in early learning and care;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario government adopt the NDP’s \$10-a-day child care plan and begin implementation by reducing full child care fees to \$10 a day for children aged two to five currently enrolled in regulated child care, by providing capital funds to expand existing child care centres and build new ones, by funding” proxy “pay equity for staff and by creating new \$10-a-day child care spaces in the province.”

I agree with the petitioners. I’ve affixed my signature to this.

## OPPOSITION DAY

### PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence):** The Legislative Assembly of Ontario directs the Ernie Eves government to commit to directing two cents of the existing provincial gas tax to municipalities, which will double the provincial investment in public transit.

**The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr):** Mr Colle has moved opposition day number 4.

**Mr Colle:** I’m happy to be here talking about the need to have an ongoing dedicated portion of the gasoline tax collected by the province that goes toward the funding of public transit throughout the province. This would come out of the existing gas tax, of which the province collects about \$2.6 billion a year. We would like to take a portion of that and apply it to the operation and funding of capital projects for transit.

**1510**

I think this is necessary, because we can see that right now Ontario is basically the only jurisdiction in North America which doesn’t have an ongoing, full-time commitment of funding for the operation of transit. Even in Europe, there’s a regular, ongoing commitment of funding. This used to be the case in Ontario up until 1997, when the Harris government decided to walk away from that commitment and essentially downloaded the cost of funding public transit to the municipalities. Right now, transit in Toronto is funded by the property taxes—it’s the same in Ottawa—and the fare box. So you have an incredible situation where property taxpayers who have already reached the limit are now also asked to fund transit out of their property taxes. That is not sustainable, because transit is an extremely expensive operation to maintain financially. It’s not only the capital requirements of subway cars, buses, streetcars, bus stations, bus garages; it’s also very labour-intensive. You have to hire mechanics to maintain and operate the system, and drivers. So we need ongoing funding.

We can see what has happened in recent years: for instance, the TTC in Toronto is now carrying 45 million fewer passengers per year than it did in the late 1980s, despite an increase in population of over 20% in the Toronto area. We always think that with all these population increases, and I think this is similar for the whole GTA—we see increases in population, yet we see a decrease in the number of people using transit. The reason for that is that the basic way of attracting new ridership is increased service.

I remember I was talking to the city manager of Oakville one time a couple of years ago, and he said they had to reduce the frequency of the bus routes because of the cutbacks, so the bus would only come at half-hour intervals. If you’re waiting a half hour, you’re not going to wait. It’s not going to be a viable alternative to taking the car. You have to increase and maintain service.

By giving them funding, these transit systems will be able to put more buses on the road, provide more services and then at the same time attract more riders. The benefit of this is that in the long run it gets rid of one of the major causes of economic loss, certainly in the Golden Horseshoe area: loss through congestion and gridlock. We all witness it; we all see it. We lose person-hours waiting in traffic. We waste fuel. Therefore, deliveries take more time. By getting more people on transit, we not only benefit the transit users, we benefit those who have to use the roads to deliver goods and services or make sales calls during the day. It benefits everyone, even though you're not a transit user per se.

It's critical not only for the economy of the province and the GTA, but for the environment too. Because with all this added gridlock, people sitting in traffic on the QEW or the 401 and there's continual emission of all kinds of noxious substances that diminish air quality. So this is another benefit of putting this amount of money, which will amount to about \$300 million a year, toward the funding of transit in Ontario. Whether it's in Ottawa or Windsor or Kingston, it will go toward improving the level of service.

There was a very detailed study released a couple of years ago by David McCleary, who was the manager of policy planning in Halton region. He did this for the GTSB, where he looked at the challenges here. He said that right now, GO Transit is running to capacity. In fact, the Lakeshore line is running at 160% of capacity. We have to do something.

"Municipalities," Mr McCleary said, "are spending about \$570 million a year on transportation infrastructure. But if cities hope to reduce congestion and handle the expected growth, they should be spending \$1.37 billion a year, almost three times that, to make our roads less congested." That's what the director of policy and planning of Halton said.

Property taxes or development levies can't be expected to make up this \$800-million shortfall, so you aren't going to do it by raising property taxes. You can't fund transit that way; nowhere else in the world do they fund transit on property taxes, only in Ontario. The province can, however, by tapping into the \$1.1 billion it collects each year in gasoline taxes and vehicle and driver licensing fees within the GTA and the Hamilton-Wentworth regions.

As I said, the province collects \$2.6 billion every year in gas taxes; it collects over \$1 billion in GTA region alone in gas taxes and related fees, so there's money there that could be used to not only improve public transportation but also get our roads freer for goods and services to move. Because it doesn't matter how many roads we build, if we really want to improve the mobility of Ontarians, we have to get people, if they have the option, to go to the public transit. That's the key. Whether you go to Munich, London, Paris or New York, that's the way they make those cities work.

We, in the last number of years in Ontario, have walked away from our commitment, so we, as Liberals,

believe there should be a commitment back to public transit. That's why we announced yesterday in our Growing Strong Communities plan that we would put this two cents, which amounts to \$300 million a year, into funding transit on a regular basis. We would also, to better coordinate transit planning and to make sure we spend dollars properly, establish a Greater Toronto transit authority that would act as a planner and comprehensive allocator of resources to the GTA, making sure things move smoothly, making sure resources aren't spent that are contrary to the movement of goods and people across the lines—especially transit, across the regional lines.

We all know transit should not stop at an artificial barrier at the Mississauga border or at Steeles Avenue. We in the GTA go across these borders continually, so we need a coordinating body, and that's why Dalton McGuinty, yesterday, supported the concept of a GTA authority to better plan and allocate our resources more properly. We also think that there should be an easy pass across the GTA so people who use GO Transit or maybe Mississauga Transit or Toronto Transit can use one transit pass instead of buying different tickets etc, so you'd have an easy pass across the GTA.

I remember Lou Parsons, 15 years ago, tried to get this going. It's really a no-brainer that has to happen if we're going to treat transit and transportation as a serious issue that affects our economy and environment. That's why you have to make this commitment that is not just on an ad hoc basis. This government will make announcements about transit, but there is no plan, there is no serious year-after-year, long-range commitment. That's what you need. You need this.

I know the Minister of Transportation and the Premier speculated the other day about privatizing transit to make it better. Well, it doesn't work. They mentioned Australia. Privatization of transit in Australia, in the state of Victoria, has been a total failure. In England, they tried to privatize some of the railway there; another failure. You can't really use the private sector to act as a panacea here because you don't really make money on transit; it really is providing a service. That's been the case all over the world. There's marginal privatization of transit throughout the world; it's really unheard of.

We also need to look at ways of ensuring that transit is not just a municipal responsibility. You have a strong province and you have strong cities and towns, and that's why this investment is not so much, as some people would say, an extra amount of money; it's a reallocation, it's a reinvestment in things that make cities work. If we're talking about planning the GTA better—the government likes to use the term "smart growth." Well, you can't have smart growth without transit.

This government has tried to say they're for planning things in a sustainable way, yet they haven't put any money into transit. You can't have good growth unless you have good transit planning; you can't have proper sustainable planning in Ontario unless you have invested in transit. So this government, as I said, has to come to realize that there will be more wastage of fuel, more

congestion, more gridlock and more pollution and smog unless you support this concept of putting provincial money back into public transportation.

1520

In Montreal that's how they fund their transit, partially, through a gas tax—in British Columbia; in Alberta. In Alberta they do the same thing: subsidize Calgary Transit and Edmonton Transit. It's really unusual that a province as wealthy and as advanced as Ontario does not fund public transit on a regular basis. We walked away from that. We've taken millions of dollars out, and subsequently we've relied on the fare box. For instance, in Toronto about 80 cents of the funding of transit comes out of the fare box. It's unheard of. Most places in the world 50 cents is by fare—in most other places, states and provinces. Traditionally, constitutionally, this is the responsibility of the province. Up until 1997 we used to do this. We've got to get back in the business of transit. It's good for the economy, good for the environment and something that makes eminent sense if we're going to save our air and save a lot of money. By doing this, we could also get the feds to match this two cents. Can you imagine? If we put in \$300 million and the feds put in \$300 million, we could do some great things in transit. So please join us in doing something that's good for the air, good for the economy and good for everybody in Ontario.

**The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson):** Further debate?

**Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio):** I appreciate the opportunity to speak on the opposition day motion today. Once again our government is being asked to dedicate a specific tax to a specific program, and once again, for the benefit of our province, we must staunchly refuse to do so. Certainly, it doesn't seem to matter—when it comes to taxes, a Liberal always likes it. They really love to get involved with tax, spend and borrow. And here's another example where they want to nail down the two cents. I question the kind of research they've carried out on this. Is two cents per litre really going to be the amount of money that's needed by municipalities? Is it too much? Is it too little? I've heard of very little, if any, research on this. But I certainly welcome this opportunity to tell you why earmarking taxes is not a prudent course of action and not in the best interests of the people of the province. I also want to tell you what our government is doing to address the infrastructure needs of Ontario's communities.

But first things first: we're being asked to direct two cents from Ontario's gasoline tax to municipalities for investment in public transit. On the surface, I can follow some of the thinking. But this is a very simplistic response to a very complex issue indeed. Tax revenues currently are deposited into the province's consolidated revenue fund; some people refer to it as CRF, although there are other acronyms, CRFs, that refer to community reinvestment funds. It's then up to the members of this Legislature, who after all were indeed elected to repre-

sent the people of this province, to decide how that money is best allocated.

I think of a circumstance in the riding next door to mine, the riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. When a new hospital was being built in Bancroft, that particular member voted against each and every budget bill that was to provide funding for that hospital. I really have difficulty understanding why people would be voting against funding for a hospital in their own riding. But that's an example, and as I say, they must decide how that money is best allocated. Obviously that person did not want to have the hospital built in their riding.

Public transit, like other programs and services supported by the provincial government, is funded from the consolidated revenue fund. This method of program funding is flexible. It is efficient. It allows our government the best means available to address the changing needs of our province.

By not linking certain taxes with certain programs, we're better able to respond to the challenges inherent in governing a province as diverse and dynamic as Ontario. By having this flexibility we can compensate, for example, when the federal government, which is supposed to be coming through with 50% funding for health care, drops it all the way to 14%. More recently they dropped it right down to around 9% or 10% and it's back up to 14% now. That gave us the flexibility so we could fill the void the federal government was not filling. I understand from the Romanow report that this may actually go up to something like 25%. It's halfway to the original agreement, but that's a heck of a lot better than it is now. It points out that it gives that flexibility to the province to fill those gaps where the federal government is not prepared to properly look after health care in Ontario.

Earmarking money from the gasoline tax for municipalities to use on transit services would take money directly out of the consolidated revenue fund. This would leave the consolidated revenue fund with less money and less able to meet the funding requirements of other priority programs and services, such as health care and education. From some of the speeches we've heard from the opposition benches about health care and education, you would think they would want that flexibility there and would want the funding available for those programs. But obviously they've been successfully lobbied by municipal governments and they've bent to those pressures. This would leave the consolidated revenue fund in a weaker position to cover all the needs.

Earmarking taxes is also unadvisable for two opposite but equally negative reasons: it can provide more money to a program than is actually needed, or it can provide not enough money to fund the program properly. As I mentioned in my introduction, I haven't seen any research to indicate that two cents is the right amount that's needed there. Should it be five cents, one cent or a half cent? The Liberals have conveniently picked out of the air something that sounds good, like two cents, and plugged that in.

Overfunding a program is inefficient and grossly irresponsible fiscally. I am sure everyone in this House will agree that watching a surplus grow in one program area at the expense of another is completely unacceptable. Similarly, the potential that a program being funded through earmarked taxes may not receive adequate funding is a chance we will not take. The only way to ensure adequate funding for all program areas is to allocate money from the consolidated revenue fund. The allocation of funds is then reviewed each year as part of the budget process, at which time there is also a review of government priorities.

I'm impressed with that budget process, with the finance committee touring the country, with the Minister of Finance receiving a very large number of stakeholders. The amount of effort that goes into the preparation of the budget, the opportunity for stakeholders, the opportunity for opposition members, the opportunity to consult with the minister and his staff is, I think, exemplary for our government, and many other governments could follow this style.

This way of funding programs, including the annual review process, ensures government accountability. We will continue to fund the province's programs in this manner. It is flexible and it is fair. It is efficient and it is accountable. It ensures that the programs important to all Ontarians receive the funding required to provide the services on which we all depend.

**1530**

In addition, the logistics of earmarking money from the gasoline tax to municipalities may require an overhaul of the current collection system and result in an undue administrative burden on Ontario's gasoline retailers. Currently, Ontario's gasoline tax is pre-collected by about 23 refineries or wholesalers on behalf of the retailers. This is the most administratively efficient method of collection. It offers the biggest bang for the buck. To be able to allocate taxes on a local or a regional level, taxes would have to be remitted directly by each of more than 3,000 retailers here in the province of Ontario. Just think about it: collecting taxes from about 23 refineries or wholesalers, or collecting taxes from over 3,000 retailers. It is clear which is the better, more efficient use of government resources.

Our current funding methods are the best way to meet the needs of Ontarians. This applies to programs and services in communities right across the province. In fact, our government is already making significant investments in communities all over Ontario. For one, we are committed to investing in the infrastructure on which our quality of life depends. I'm referring, of course, to infrastructure projects such as highways, transit, universities and colleges, hospitals, water systems and community facilities. Our infrastructure investments mean that the people of Ontario will have the services they need, where and when they need them.

To meet these investment objectives, our government created the Ontario SuperBuild Corp, which plays an important role by coordinating capital investments in

Ontario and promoting new projects that build for the future. SuperBuild also identifies needed investments and develops new partnerships to ensure taxpayers' dollars go further.

Investments are extensive. SuperBuild is committed to investing at least \$20 billion of public and private investments in infrastructure over five years. This is the largest infrastructure building program of its kind in the history of the province of Ontario. SuperBuild investments cross all sectors of the economy: renewing and building new hospitals, improving highways, expanding sports and recreational facilities, upgrades to water and waste water infrastructure, colleges and universities and more. These investments will ensure that our communities have the foundations to promote new growth and new jobs. Through SuperBuild and its partners, the province will stimulate local economies, improve the quality of life in our communities and create construction-related jobs in every area of the province. To date, SuperBuild and its partners have committed to invest over \$13 billion in more than 3,300 projects.

In the budget of 2002, the Minister of Finance announced an allocation of \$2.7 billion for infrastructure investments. These important investments include \$1 billion for highways. Just as I mention \$1 billion for highways, I think of the 401 going east from Toronto, going through the great riding of Northumberland. When I came to office in 1995, one of the big concerns in my area was crossover on 401, especially on snowy, slippery days. My phone used to light up with people concerned that there was not a centre barrier on the 401 through there. I'm pleased to report that almost all of that barrier has been completed. Not only that, we've six-laned 401 from 115 well into Northumberland. Several bridges are being changed and updated. There's just a tremendous amount of investment in Highway 401, which is good for all of eastern Ontario.

We have also invested some \$342 million to build or expand hospitals and other health care infrastructures in communities across Ontario. I think in my riding of two hospitals: the Trenton Memorial hospital has been built, and over half of the construction is done on the Northumberland Health Care Centre for west Northumberland. Two hospitals in my riding are being built since we've taken office. From 1985 to 1995, there were only two hospitals built in all of Ontario. That is the kind of turnaround we're seeing.

We've committed to 20,000 long-term-care beds. The associate minister, the Honourable Dan Newman, is very familiar with this project. Two of those are in my riding: one in Cobourg, which is now open and operating, and another one under construction in the Port Hope area. What happened from 1985 to 1995? Not one single long-term-care bed was built in Ontario. Over and above that, many acute care beds were closed at that time. I think both parties can understand how that happened. I find it really difficult to understand, but that was what evolved.

Continuing, there's \$143 million for the renewal and construction of courts and jails, and \$135 million for

projects to improve and modernize cultural and tourism facilities. Construction will begin this year on a number of major highway projects in the GTA to address gridlock and improve safety.

When I think about gridlock around Toronto, I can tell you in 1995 there was no gridlock coming into Toronto. I could drive into Toronto any time and there was no gridlock and there were no traffic problems. There were very few people going to work. That, in fact, is why there was no gridlock. We're now at 1.8 million net new jobs in Ontario created over the last seven years. I think that's pretty remarkable. No wonder there's some gridlock. With all these people going to work, it's not surprising. Do we need to develop more highways to accommodate them? Absolutely. You look at five people going to work, and one of those five got one of the net new jobs since we took office. That's why we have some gridlock. When I, for one, get caught in it, I reflect on what has happened with our government in the last seven years and I don't object all that much to getting caught in that gridlock. I see these people driving home with a job. One day they went home and said, "Hey, guess what? I got the job." Some 1.8 million people went home and said that during the last seven years. Their kids are proud of them, that they have a job. They're proud of the fact that mom and dad are going to work. That's the kind of pride that's inculcated in some of our homes, because 1.8 million people are now working who wouldn't have been working if we had continued in the same vein we were in in the early 1990s and the late 1980s.

I got a little sidetracked here, but we've also moved forward with upgrades to our major highways. This includes improvements to Highways 7, 400, 401, 427, the QEW. I just reflect back and think about the condition of highways when we took office: potholes. The Honourable Al Palladini was out there, committed to filling every pothole if he had to do it himself. There were stories about potholes across this province. They were phenomenal. Even the CBC had a humorous program about the size of the potholes they were reporting from all across Ontario. Do we see those potholes on 400-series highways, the ones the province is looking after? Not at all. As a matter of fact, I have a daughter and son-in-law who lived in Sioux Lookout. Driving from Dryden to Sioux Lookout, they hit one pothole so badly that it not only ruined two tires, it ruined the two rims as well on that side of the vehicle. That was just one pothole that was left there by previous governments. That's the kind of thing we took over: phenomenal potholes. I just can't believe how terrible those potholes were. But now that is a beautifully paved road. I'm sure you can agree with that and realize the excellent road that is there now from Dryden to Sioux Lookout.

As part of Ontario's Smart Growth strategy, the province is also preparing Ontario's transportation network to support economic and population growth expected over the next 15 years. There will be a new highway connecting with Highway 427, north of Highway 7. We'll also be extending Highway 404,

establishing a Bradford bypass, and Highway 407 east to Highway 35.

#### 1540

Our government has been listening to Ontarians making key infrastructure investments. The beneficiaries of these investments are the people of this province, in every community. We remain committed to their needs. To meet the challenges of the future, our government is focussing on many areas.

Also, to help boost efficiency in transportation and the economy in the north, we'll continue with major highway projects in the north this year, including highway rehabilitation and safety projects, major expansions and four-laning projects on Highways 11, 17 and 69.

We will also support municipal road infrastructure, including investments through the connecting link program, the Ontario small town and rural development initiative, affectionately known as OSTAR, and the millennium partnerships initiatives.

To meet the challenges of the future, our government is focussing on three priority areas: growth, fiscal responsibility and accountability. Mr Speaker, I think you've heard these terms on many occasions. It has become a hallmark of our government: growth and job creation; fiscal responsibility, something that certainly didn't happen from 1985 to 1995; and accountability, totally lacking during that lost decade. We will continue to provide the people of this province with the programs and services they need, including transit and infrastructure, in a manner true to our priorities. This means focussing on efficiencies, prudence and accountability.

I look forward to the day Highway 407 is extended east and reaches Highways 35 and 115 and seeing the growth that will evolve in eastern Ontario because of that. The federal government made a really big mistake some 30 years ago when they backed down on putting a new airport in at Pickering. It did a tremendous amount of harm to east-central Ontario and maybe all of eastern Ontario. I'm sure if they could have stood up to the public and what was being said at the time and put an airport in there like they should have, eastern Ontario would be flourishing far more. Now that we have to come through with highways, six-laning Highway 401 out into eastern Ontario and also bringing out Highway 407 to Highways 35 and 115, I think that will help to develop eastern Ontario. I don't think there's any question.

We believe the course we're on is indeed the best way to ensure that Ontario remains the best place in North America in which to live, invest and raise a family.

**Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale):** Holy moly. If ever there was a better opportunity for me to contrast myself and the vision of my party, a forward-looking and progressive view about Ontario, with a speech, it was that one, the "Pave it and they will come" speech. That member over there spent his time not only taking credit and celebrating gridlock and all of the environmental, economic and social costs associated with



it, but he suggested that the way to get ourselves out of gridlock in urban areas is to build more highways. That is some of the most stale, out-of-date, backward thinking that I've ever heard in my life. It should come as absolutely no surprise that it comes from the member for Northumberland. That has become his hallmark in this place.

It seems like just a few weeks ago that I was here, a newly minted MPP, hearing the throne speech from the other side, saying—I see the Speaker turning down his speaker—hearing the speech from the other side. “We’re not the government,” they proclaimed. And still we heard that they were going to fix it. And then we heard a 25-minute speech from a member strongly standing up in favour of the status quo, which has made sure that in our province the government of Ontario has operated as if it was the custodian of all knowledge, all common sense and all capacity to deal with problems.

He forgot to tell you another part of the story, and that’s the part that whenever they run into something they don’t quite like, that doesn’t quite work for them, they download it on to municipalities.

In 1995, when this government was elected, two things happened that I think are quite interesting in this debate. Firstly, the city of Toronto was selected by Fortune magazine as the best city in the world in which to do business, and in that same year, if my memory serves me correctly, the Toronto Transit Commission was given awards for the efficiency and quality of the operation of their transit system. Now, seven or eight lost, long years later, these guys, by their sheer lack of commitment to the city of Toronto and to transit in the city of Toronto, have diminished the quality of life for Torontonians, have made the transit service that we used to hold up as a shining example of one of the qualities of our cities now something that is falling into disrepair and is becoming much less attractive to so many people.

In the face of that and in the face of the kinds of costs associated with gridlock, like the \$2 billion a year that the Ontario Trucking Association estimates it costs to move goods just through the GTA—\$2 billion a year being paid by you and by me because of gridlock—and in the face of the evidence from countless people who have said that their lives have become just-in-time lives where they have been deprived of spending time with their family and their friends, engaged in taking kids to soccer practice, and in the face of the toll of automobile pollution on the quality of the air that we breathe, we stand as Liberals and proclaim commitments because we believe there are better solutions out there.

One of those is our commitment that we will invest in public transit across the province. Why? Because public transit reduces pollution, commuting times and gridlock. By allocating two cents of the existing provincial gas tax to municipalities, we will double the existing provincial investment in public transit. That is a commitment to be applauded and to be celebrated and to be supported, because it’s long overdue and it’s absolutely necessary.

The future progress of our province, and especially of our urban regions, is absolutely dependent upon it.

Let’s talk for a second about urban regions, because they are increasingly important in the economic context of our province and, indeed, of the industrialized world. We know that from the standpoint of creation of economic opportunity, urban regions are where it’s at. How many times have we heard about Toronto, the engine of the Canadian economy? Yet these guys are willing to see it choke on its own success. They’re willing to celebrate gridlock. If I can think of a more compelling reason in the context of a debate around funding for public transit to support the Liberal position and to reject these guys, it’s because they celebrate gridlock.

So for any of you who are ever faced with circumstance where you are bumper to bumper, where you are moving along at a rate of progress to be compared with glaciers and their growth or shrinkage, if that’s how you’re feeling, then remember that the member for Northumberland, in a 25-minute speech, stood up, took credit for gridlock and suggested that was something to be celebrated. That is evidence of the extent to which these guys have got to go. They’ve got to go because they’re happy to see our urban areas clogged and choking on their own success.

According to the Ontario Medical Association, 1,900 Ontarians die each and every year as a result of the air they breathe here in our province. What do we get in response from the government? A celebration of gridlock. That’s what it has come down to here in Ernie Eves’s Ontario. Because the government opposite is part of a carbon addiction. They’re addicted to carbon.

**1550**

I don’t want to give away security considerations, but one only needs to look at the chosen vehicle of the Premier of Ontario. It is a land yacht. It must have 12 cylinders to get those big tires moving. I can’t imagine what it does in terms of pollution, but I certainly know what message it sends to people all around Ontario when Ernie Eves jumps out of his government-paid-for vehicle. It’s big enough for an army.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Smitherman:** I’m being heckled by a minister opposite, but these vehicles are not in the same class. One has a minivan and one has an SUV that could only be characterized as a land yacht. Its towing capacity would haul all the dead carcasses that will be left in that party after the next election.

I want to close by saying that I am awfully proud to be part of an opposition party that has as a leader a man named Dalton McGuinty who is prepared in advance of an election to put on the record the clear commitments we are making; and also because he’s a man who, in his commitment to transfer two cents of the gasoline tax to municipalities, shows and makes a commitment to an understanding that municipalities, our municipal partners, play an important role in creating the quality of life that fuels economic opportunity for Ontarians.

As opposed to these guys who trust nobody, we stand proud of our commitments to do like other sophisticated jurisdictions have done—in Vancouver, in Montreal and in American centres—and that is to take some portion of this gasoline tax and transfer it to municipalities for the purpose of helping to provide for an enhancement to public transit. That's the Liberal Party view, and the opposition view has been forward by the government of the day. What do they do? They celebrate gridlock. That's your choice, Ontarians.

**Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands):** I'm very pleased to rise in this debate and applaud Mr Colle and the Ontario Liberal Party for coming up with this idea and notion that two cents of our gasoline tax should be contributed to local municipalities, so that in effect that money can be used to do something about the transit situation, not only in Toronto—we all know we have a major problem here. All one has to do is sit on the Don Valley, either coming from or going to work. It used to be during rush hour. I can remember when I lived here 30 years ago you had a rush hour of about two hours per day in the morning and two hours per day in the afternoon. Now you literally have rush hour, particularly along some of our major routes like the Gardiner Expressway and the Don Valley Parkway for, let's say, 16 to 18 hours per day. That's totally unacceptable. All one has to think about is the fact that 1,900 people die annually because of the tremendous amount of pollution we have around us, and most of that pollution is caused by cars.

It's time to do something about it. It's time to come up with new initiatives. The old ways of doing things are no longer acceptable in the 21st century. The first thing we have to do is something that municipalities have been asking for, have been crying for, for the last 25 years that I'm aware of. Let's help them with the ability to get some extra money by giving them, for additional tax revenue, two cents of every litre of gasoline that is sold. That's a start, and it's a start that is absolutely necessary. I know that smaller municipalities will be quite thankful for that. It's basically a new source of revenue for them.

We all know that our municipalities are starving from the point of view that there simply isn't any methodology to get new revenues to them. They only have two ways of doing it. They can either increase the property tax base or they can increase the user fees—or establish new user fees. One of the major things this government did, about five or six years ago, that was very detrimental to most municipalities that have a transit system in this province, is when they basically said, "We are not going to fund transit at all any more." You know, they love to talk about political parties flip-flopping, but you talk about a flip-flop that took place at that point in time. Remember, at one time they said, "Absolutely, no, we're getting out of the transit business. It's up to you, local municipalities." And what happened three or four years later, when they realized that that was totally unsustainable? They came back and said, "Well, I guess we are going to support transit now."

We in this party are saying we can go one step better than that. We want the local municipalities to make the decisions as to how they're going to make transit work for them, whether they're large or small. The way to do it is to give those local municipalities extra sources of revenue, and the way to do that is to give them two cents per litre of all gasoline that is sold within that municipality.

I too heard the member from Northumberland earlier today, and I couldn't believe my ears when he said that we should actually celebrate the fact that people here in the greater Toronto area spend about an hour and a half to two hours per day involved in gridlock. That's totally, totally unacceptable.

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberal Party have come up with a plan, and that plan is Growing Strong Communities. That's really what it's all about. We live in a wonderful country. We live in a large province. But when you get right down to it, the vast majority of the people in this province live in their own communities, and the quality of life that they enjoy is basically a result of the communities that they've decided to live in and the amenities they find and the friendships they find in those communities and the various associations they make in those communities. So what we're talking about is making communities stronger, allowing communities the ability to invest in areas such as transit, so that those communities will become the better for it and so the people who live in those communities can lead a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle and have a greater quality of life. That's what it's all about. That's what we should be all about.

I think where government comes in is to sort of equalize the ability to get part of that higher quality of life. Government should be about equalizing the ability to get an education and to get access to the health care system. I've often said it isn't the better-off in our society who need government; they do quite well. They don't need the protection of the government. It's the more vulnerable in our society who need the help. This is another example of that. We all know that the vast majority of the transit users around the province are people who are basically from the middle to the lower economic scales, and we've got to make it easier for them to get around, to get about. They have just as much right to a high quality of life as everybody else in this province.

So I applaud Dalton McGuinty. I applaud our policy people for coming up with a plan that calls for stronger communities. One way to do that is by giving some dedicated tax money to those local communities so they can build the transit systems so we can get some of those cars off the road where they're causing, quite often, a fair amount of pollution.

**Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines):** I of course am speaking in favour of the motion that's before the House this afternoon. I think it makes a lot of sense. I think it is what municipalities have been looking for, municipalities who have been struggling over the last few

years to meet their obligations as they relate to public transit.

We always think of the one in metropolitan Toronto, which is the largest transit system, but each one of us in our own community that has a city size or a major town size has a transit system as well, and they struggle from time to time because of lack of funding from the provincial government.

I think what is contained in Growing Strong Communities, the Ontario Liberal plan for clean, safe communities that work, offers a lot of good suggestions on improving our communities, on making them stronger, on making them cleaner. I think the part that relates to gridlock, to transportation, there are a lot of good suggestions in there.

**1600**

The gasoline tax is collected, and there's a presumption on the part of people who pay the gasoline tax that it's going back into the field of transportation. Most people probably think it goes into roads and into the administration of the Ministry of Transportation. But it goes to help fund public transportation as well, and that's important.

The municipalities have said, "Look, we're having a tough time. We've had a lot of responsibilities that cost a lot of money downloaded to us. We would like to be able to access some other funds so we can devote them to transit."

Now, this is not something that the provincial government would be transferring to municipalities so that the Tories and the local council could take the money and give it away in tax cuts, as the provincial Tories do, my friend from Scarborough would know. When they get money from the federal government, what they do is feed their tax cuts with it. They simply cut their own portion and give the money away in tax cuts. That's why he, as Associate Minister of Health and Long-term Care, would know that any federal government is going to be reluctant simply to transfer more funds to the provincial government, knowing that on so many occasions they take the money and give it away in tax cuts. That's what they really want if for.

So, just as the federal government should spend directly, just as the federal government should spend more on health care and spend it directly on health care, and not put it into your hands so you can give it away in tax cuts, that's why it's important when this transfer of funds goes to municipalities that there's an assurance that it's going to be spent on public transportation and not simply squirreled away so that they can brag at election time that they have no tax increase.

If they want to add additional funds for the purpose of health care, if it's a provincial government getting federal money or, in this case, the municipal level of government and the local transit commission, they should be getting it to have additional service, improvement in services, enhancement of service and updating of equipment. For instance, we want them to purchase vehicles which are as

environmentally benign as possible, not those which burn the worst kind of fuel and give the most emissions.

We want to ensure that we have some help for those who are disabled so that the new vehicles are able to accommodate those who are disabled. I know in my own municipality of St Catharines, the St Catharines Transit Commission has been purchasing vehicles where you can have wheelchair access. That makes all kinds of sense.

So public transit is a good option for people. It doesn't mean that everybody who owns a vehicle is never going to drive it. However, it does give people an option to use public transportation when it's viable and when it's reasonable.

We, for instance, in the Niagara Peninsula, would like to see an enhanced train service coming to St Catharines. Does that mean we would expect the GO Transit line that comes to Mississauga? No. There's a huge population in Mississauga; there are a lot of people who commute into Toronto. We understand that. What we would like to see would be a situation where we have more trains that are going into Toronto and coming back from Toronto, so that people would have that option. My friend from Niagara Falls who was here this afternoon would want to see that so people can enjoy the tourism of Niagara Falls, because the Niagara Parks Commission has its own transit system, as well. It's a people mover that is very useful for people who are enjoying the sights and sounds of Niagara Falls.

So the two cents of the existing gasoline tax—it's not an increased tax; it's the existing gasoline tax—makes all kinds of sense. I know that municipal leaders are going to want it, particularly those who are pro public transit.

Public transit systems have come under pressure because, as you will recall, the Harris-Eves government eliminated all provincial financial support in 1998. The capital infrastructure was the hardest hit as systems were forced to defer bus replacements, infrastructure renewal and other refurbishment needs.

I recall that when I was chair of the St Catharines Transit Commission, we received 75% in capital funding from the province and the operating funding was generously assisted by the provincial government as well. So we were able to have a service that people could access, whether they were people who simply did not want to use their vehicle on a particular day or those who didn't have access to vehicles. It saves on the roads and the maintenance of roads to have this. It improves the environment for our areas and it's just good sense to be able to do this. I'm glad it is contained in this document that Dalton McGuinty released the other day that talked about a lot of these issues that will improve everything for us.

I know the whip will tell me when my time is expiring, because I want to share it with others, but I did want to mention the transit passes. Free parking passes are not taxed as an employee benefit, so we believe it is unfair that employees who instead receive a free transit pass do not receive the same benefit. Obviously, that's a change in the taxation system that should be made. It

makes a lot of sense. I'm glad it's contained in the proposals of the Ontario Liberal Party.

We should also work with the federal government to make transit passes a non-taxable benefit so that people who receive passes from their employers will no longer have to pay taxes on this benefit. That makes all kinds of sense. A pass, a ticket that would take you throughout the greater Toronto area would be useful as well. It doesn't mean the price is going to be the same if you are going from Pickering to Mississauga, but it does mean that you can use one ticket and that it's going to be much more efficient.

I think there are a lot of good ideas in this. I hope the House will approve of this resolution this afternoon in a multi-partisan or non-partisan way, because something like this deserves the support of all members of this Legislature. I certainly lend my support to it, and I know that the constituents I represent will be very enthusiastic to see this implemented. I welcome the government stealing this as one of their own policies, as they have on so many different occasions.

**Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West):** I appreciate the opportunity to join in and add a bit of a Hamilton perspective to this. Many of the overall views I would express are similar to those of the previous speaker, my friend from St. Catharines, particularly—I'm going to pull this out of what he said as a good starting point for me—the whole notion that whenever the feds do something, often the provincial government of the day merely takes that money as money they now don't have to spend and just deducts it from their expenditures without even so much as a thank you very much. The lot of the government in power is better, but it hasn't done a darn thing on the ground where all of this matters. What has happened, of course, is that this has been going on for so many years and through so many administrations that we now find ourselves with municipalities that are dying.

The road out cannot be paved with just good intentions. At some point there has got to be an injection of new money into all the business of municipalities, not just infrastructure. A darn good starting point is an acknowledgement that your policy will be: if the feds decide to go ahead with a major investment, which we can only hope they do, you're not going to do anything other than ensure that the money, if you're involved in the process through partnerships, is flowed straight through to the municipalities.

My understanding is that the federal government is looking at ways they can bypass provincial governments. It doesn't play very well in Quebec, and that's understandable, but for a lot of us, with the history of what's happened in the past, we wish them well because there are a lot of municipalities that would be quite prepared to sit down and make obligations with regard to where this money would go and where it would have the greatest impact on the greatest number of citizens within any given municipality, without creating a cookie-cutter, made at Queen's Park, that says virtually all municipi-

palities are the same, and therefore the programs we will fund will be the same for all of you.

It doesn't work that way. We can't afford for the federal and provincial governments to continue to beat up on municipalities. Government members may not like that terminology. You can phrase it as nicely as you want and pick all the flowery language you want, but at the end of the day municipalities are totally hamstrung in terms of their ability to address the challenges that face them.

#### 1610

The cutbacks in the transportation system we have in Hamilton for our disabled, DARTS, is getting to the point where there are people in Hamilton who are waiting weeks to get out of the house, to get out of their apartment, to go and take care of necessary business. The whole idea of having a parallel transportation system was to ensure that the special needs our disabled citizens have vis-à-vis the scooters, wheelchairs and other assistive devices would be accommodated in a way that would allow that parallel system to provide, as closely as possible, public transit the same as everyone else in the community gets. We are so far away from that in Hamilton, as my friend and colleague from Hamilton Mountain will attest, and I suspect it's the same right across the province.

That's not even beginning to speak to the broader issue of urban transit as a whole, at a time when our federal counterpart, as we speak, is debating the issue of Kyoto and how we as a nation and the provinces therein and the municipalities therein are able to meet these targets. There are so many reasons why taking care of environmental issues on a community-by-community basis makes sense that it really is almost a crime that we're not there now. I mention Kyoto because I'm hoping that will provide some impetus for this government, even though you oppose it. It looks like the feds are going to support it, and I hope they do. I understand the questions marks and challenges that are there, but I also live in a community where the environment and pollution are a top priority. We have young people who are finding themselves diseased with asthma at rates way beyond other parts of the country. We've got cancer rates that can only be addressed if senior levels of government provide their legal structure, but the weight of government in terms of enforcement and also the funds to do it. We can't do it alone. You can't tell us to deal with all the pollution problems that, to use the obvious examples, Dofasco and Stelco create and say, "It's your problem. You've got to deal with it." We can't do it in one fell swoop, simply because the elimination of all those jobs means our local economy would collapse in a blink.

Yet it's important to say that some of the strongest proponents of doing something are the United Steelworkers of America. So this is not about jobs versus the environment; this has got to be about jobs and the environment. And we can do it. Again in my home town of Hamilton, there are great examples of new technologies that have created jobs by virtue of the fact that they're cleaning up the environment. That's a win for all

of us. But you can't leave us stranded alone to try to deal with this.

That's why the NDP, prior to the official opposition announcement of two cents, had come up with a three-cent. I'm not going to play a bidding war here: who's the best party, at two cents or three cents or a nickel? To me, the important debate today ought to be the absolute priority to transfer more money from the senior levels of government, in this case the provincial government, to municipalities and to provide for infrastructure.

Hamilton is a classic example. Growth is a priority, an absolute priority in terms of our generating the revenue we need to meet the challenges of today as well as the future. At the same time, Hamilton is a very green community and becoming more green all the time. The whole notion of stopping urban sprawl is important to Hamiltonians. But you can't leave us with this dilemma and leave us there all alone. We can't, as a province, say, "We've got to do something about urban sprawl," because we're much too quickly losing, extinguishing, valuable farmland, growing land that we're not going to get back once it's paved over, which is why the Red Hill Creek Expressway is such a problem. Once gone, it's gone forever. But if we recognize that the provincial government is not going to allow, nor do we want, municipalities to generate growth from sprawl, then we've lost the traditional way of raising and accelerating revenues in a local economy: sprawl. If you take that off the option page, now we're left with a whole new dilemma in terms of trying to find new revenue, revenue that is not there today and that we can plan for and invest for and encourage for the future to pay for all the challenges that, quite frankly, it has to be said, have been exacerbated by the policies of this government over the last seven years.

Our homelessness problem is greater than it has ever been, certainly since before you took over seven years ago. The lack of affordable housing is worse than it was when you took over seven years ago. The lack of social services and support services: we said to you that over time these things are going to show themselves, and the first place they're going to show themselves is the individual who doesn't have the supports he or she needs for a decent quality of life. Then it spreads to their family. Then it spreads into neighbourhoods, and you start to see what becomes, quite frankly, a decaying community going in the wrong direction, with no tools available to change that outcome.

So if we've eliminated sprawl as a tool, a mechanism of growth, now we're left with investment in infrastructure that's going to create the kinds of jobs and investment we need in the future. You sure can't put it all on property tax. Yes, Hamiltonians, like everybody else in the province, are prepared to pay their fair share of property tax for a quality of life within their municipality. Absolutely. Nobody's asking for somebody else to pay the bills. But we can't do it through property tax alone and we can't do it through user fees alone. It doesn't work, particularly in communities—large urban centres,

older centres—where there are real challenges, serious family challenges, fiscal challenges, health and safety challenges and, yes, environmental challenges.

Our goal as a provincial Parliament should be that municipalities not only succeed in the future and grow strong and create a good quality of life for all of their citizens, but that it should be self-sustaining. But you've got to help municipalities get there. The province has got to play the leadership role in saying, "We're here to help." I know that sounds rather trite, but that's a revolutionary thought from where we have been the last seven years. You have not been there to help. You have made things worse.

I think there's lots of capacity for municipal governments to assume a lot of these responsibilities that have now been placed in front of them. I don't think that's such a bad thing in and of itself. What is bad is to hand off those areas of responsibility to municipal governments, using the provincial government's argument that the government closest to the people is the best government and they make the best decisions etc—I have no problem with all of that as a governance structure for municipalities. But what you cannot do is what you have been doing: downloading responsibilities and not giving the municipalities, that local government, the money they need to do the job. You can't do that. Yes, it makes you look good. The ministers all stand up and say, "Well, we cut taxes by this amount. We've reduced the deficit by this amount," and you brag about it. Overall, you may look fine in terms of talking about how fiscally responsible you are, but look at the damage that has been done on the way to your getting there: underfund hospitals, underfund school systems, underfund municipalities, give municipalities more things that they're now responsible for but don't give them the money to deal with it. You can only run that string out for so long, and that's where we are.

#### 1620

That's why, to me, the important thing we're debating today is not the details of how we get there but a commitment that every party has to make going into the next election that it will be a priority to actually be a partner and be supportive and work with municipalities so that we can create the quality of life that people are entitled to and that, quite frankly, this province can provide. We're still the richest province in this entire rich nation. We're one of the wealthiest states on the entire planet, and we are the biggest, strongest, wealthiest province within that, yet we have more poor people and more middle-class people worrying about poverty than we had when you began this odyssey. It has to stop.

If the federal government of the day is prepared, and I don't care what political stripe it is, to start talking to municipalities in a new context of a new partnership—either direct, one on one between the federal government and municipalities or, as we've done in the past, with the three, the municipality, the province and the feds, fine—but a recognition by the federal government that they can't stand back any longer and hold up the Constitution

and say, "It's not our responsibility. Gee, it's a shame that municipalities are dying out there. It's a shame those local economies are slowly grinding and grinding away. But you know, there's nothing we can do. Traditionally, that's not our role"—not acceptable. It looks like we're at the point where there may be a sea change with regard to that and it should be encouraged and, yes—I'll say it—even applauded.

I was there in Hamilton in the front row when former Minister Paul Martin gave his speech at FCM, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I think it was the first time a federal Liberal cabinet minister had me willingly standing on my feet, applauding. It was music to my ears: a federal Minister of Finance talking about the federal government's responsibility to municipalities, that they are about to recognize that things have to change and they're going to look at stepping in with real money. Unfortunately there isn't such a happy ending, because that guy got fired 48 hours later. It remains to be seen how much of that gets back on the agenda.

**Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East):** He'll be back.

**Mr Christopherson:** I hear some of my Liberal friends next to me saying, "He'll be back." Well, maybe; maybe not. There are a number of political lifetimes in that calendar time frame that's there. What I care about is that whoever ends up in the Prime Minister's office is prepared to make those commitments. That's what matters.

This Legislature needs to take every opportunity, and it's tougher sometimes when the government of the day doesn't buy in, but we have an obligation. And do you know what? It really doesn't matter whether we're talking environment, transportation, health care, schooling, social services, the arts community, the industrial sector, light or medium industrial, high tech; it doesn't matter. Whatever you're talking about in terms of our economy, if it's not working on the local level, guess what, folks? It ain't working. On the ground, it has to be in somebody's municipality.

In winding up, let me just conclude where I began, which is that we need the buy-in from the provincial government and the federal government more than we ever have in the history of this province, to recognize that the larger municipalities that have been created through amalgamation, the downloading of services and responsibilities to municipalities and, quite frankly, just the evolution that's happening all around the world—take a look at Europe; take a look at some of the American states, the large cities.

In many ways, we really are coming back to a modern version of the city state. That's a good thing. We're way beyond the need for a paternalistic view from Queen's Park or Ottawa toward municipal governments, but you just can't hand them all that responsibility, wash your hands, walk away and say, "Well, that's it. We're done. You're on your own."

If you want to see that proof, take a look at any of our cities and where they've been over the last seven years: the property tax increases, the service cuts and, quite

frankly, the wage demand battles that have ensued in many of our communities. I know in Hamilton we've had them and it broke my heart to see the transit drivers, the HSR drivers, and the city council battling, when they weren't the cause of the problem. The cause of the problem was Queen's Park. There wasn't enough money in the municipal coffers to sit down and negotiate a fair agreement. I don't believe it was that the city councillors didn't want to negotiate one; I think it's that they didn't have the funds because they were trying to be responsible.

User fees: there are people in our cities now who are not using services that they used to be able to avail themselves of a number of years ago, because they can't afford them now. If you're talking about a working middle-class family that can afford it, that is disposable income that is now being spent on a public service that they once had and their benefit was a little bit of trickle-down tax cut, because we all know that the bigger the money you made, the more money you walked away with to the bank in terms of these tax cuts. That trade-off was not a fair trade-off.

Higher user fees, fewer services, communities divided, with citizens fighting each other, a deterioration in the quality-of-life measurements that matter to all of us, particularly toward our children: that's where we are. There is a chance to change that, but it requires hearing something different from the government than what we've heard over the last seven years. If the backbenchers are just going to stand up and make the same old tired speeches that they've made before, we're in a lot of trouble. We need to hear something different, something positive, something that gives municipalities real hope that they're going to get the tools and the support they need to deal with the ever-growing challenges that are in front of us.

I might remind the government again that, assuming Kyoto passes, those challenges are going to increase. Now's the time to step up to the plate and say things are going to be different, because if it's the same-old, same-old, we're in trouble. To that extent, we will be supporting the resolution in front of us because it speaks to these very issues that are so critical to all our municipalities across the province.

**Mr Caplan:** I am very pleased to speak to the resolution standing in the name of my colleague Mr Colle, from Eglinton-Lawrence.

For the information of all the members here, Mr Colle is not a johnny-come-lately to this. As a past chair of the Toronto Transit Commission, he knows what he speaks about with the need for investment in transit for reliable, sustainable, stable funding sources for public transit, not only here in the great city of Toronto, but across the entire province of Ontario. It is something that has been sorely lacking.

Don't worry, I say to the residents of Don Valley East and of Ontario, there is a leader in Ontario with a plan. Dalton McGuinty came out just yesterday with his Growing Strong Communities platform. A big compon-

ent of it is a true commitment to public transit. Two cents of gas tax revenue—this is Growing Strong Communities, the second in a series of platform announcements by Dalton McGuinty. It's very exciting. It's something that municipalities have been calling for.

**1630**

I am going to read a little bit from the platform as I get into my remarks, but I want to talk specifically about what some other people are saying about what's needed for transit investment and infrastructure, what's needed for sustainable, reliable, stable funding.

I want to start with a report that came out earlier this year from the Toronto-Dominion Bank, certainly not a traditional source, talking about cities and urban transit, housing, all the infrastructure that's required. They recognize very clearly that cities are the fundamental building block for our economy. They make some absolutely fascinating comments in their report. I heard one of the members of the government speaking earlier about the fact that Mr Colle and Dalton McGuinty hadn't done their homework. Nothing could be further from the truth. It seems like the government members at least are not reading any of the research, are not listening to the experts from TD Bank or other places I will be quoting.

This is what the TD Bank had to say: "Municipalities need access to new sources of funds." It said, "What cities really need is access to an ongoing revenue source." You can provide it from the federal government, from the provincial government, from a combination of both or give municipalities access to others.

They go on to say, "Federal and provincial governments have downloaded programs and services to municipalities, so they would be doing less with less," but they're doing more and more and the revenue sources have not followed to enable cities to keep up, to enable cities to keep their taxes down but also to provide the necessary services and the necessary infrastructure that we need to have a strong, growing, vibrant economy in our cities across Ontario and across Canada.

This is not simply an indictment of one level of government or another, but this has been happening for a long period of time and it's about time that somebody showed leadership, like Dalton McGuinty, and addressed this very critical problem.

It's quite true that other jurisdictions, our competitors around the world, are investing in their cities and in their communities and in necessary infrastructure. There are several examples in the American states, in England and in other places that are cited in the TD Bank report. They say that one of the greatest threats to the quality of life and to our economic viability is the erosion of city infrastructure. "Until recently," they say, "the relative youth of Canadian cities meant that the pressure on Canadian governments to reinvest in infrastructure was relatively modest compared to their US and European counterparts. But it is becoming evident to most Canadians that their cities are showing distinct signs of strain. Merely maintaining existing roads, bridges, transit

systems and other types of infrastructure is not enough—modernization is also required."

It is true that in Ontario the Harris-Eves government withdrew completely from public transit, from supporting not only public transit infrastructure but public transit operating, and that has been contrary to the advice of experts like those at the Toronto-Dominion Bank.

They talk about some of the tools municipalities have available to them to finance infrastructure and ongoing programs. They say this: "Property tax not right for the job." There our four main problems with it. "First, it's based on assessable property values, and hence, has only a weak relation to ability to pay. Second, its regressive nature.... Third, the commercial property portion of the tax impedes competitiveness. And fourth, there may be extended periods during which property taxes do not rise in tandem with the cost of cities" doing business and providing "programs and services."

What do they recommend? You wouldn't be surprised if this measure we're debating here today, standing in the name of my colleague Mike Colle from Eglinton-Lawrence, is precisely the nature of what folks like the TD Bank recommend.

I'll quote from their document, "The federal or provincial government could hand over a share of the receipts from a tax in their own arsenal (ie, personal income tax, excise tax, sales tax) to municipalities. Although an arrangement of this sort is effectively a grant, there is one important distinction that makes it more attractive. In contrast to outright grants, this form of revenue-sharing is funded by a specific revenue source, and hence, whereby cities would fluctuate one for one with changes in an incoming stream. As such it is both less likely to become a drain on federal and provincial finances in difficult economic times—and it is more likely to provide a reliable source of funding than an outright grant, which is funded by an unspecified source."

So this is reliable, it's stable, it's sustainable and it's the right thing to do. This is kind of advice we're getting from the TD Bank. In fact, they go on, when they talk about excise and sales tax. The pro is that it's excellent, that it's accountable, that there's sufficient growth, that it's reliable and it's equitable. On a scale of 0 to 4 in their survey, it's rated as a 4, the highest recommendation they have. This is the way to go in order to fund infrastructure, in order to fund transit operating, and that's what Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals are committed to doing.

Other folks are commenting on this type of a proposal. Professor Peter Tomlinson from the University of Toronto, one of the leading urban economists said: "Stable funding is essential to maintain our transit infrastructure. Mr McGuinty would dedicate part of the gasoline tax to this purpose—certainly a step in the right direction, and in line with what other provinces are doing." That's from Peter Tomlinson, an urban economist at U of T.

But there are others. A couple of months ago, back in June, the Toronto Board of Trade issued a paper called *Strong City, Strong Nation*. They talked about the need for infrastructure investment in the city of Toronto and, by extension, to all cities. When they surveyed their members they said that providing infrastructure—transit, housing, all of those kinds of things—was a top priority, even above tax reform, for their members. Because the Toronto Board of Trade understands that to be economically viable and prosperous, to capitalize on the advantages that we have right now, we have to have the proper infrastructure in place. And we don't have that right now because we have an absence of leadership.

I've got to tell you that Premier Eves has done absolutely nothing to cure this kind of a problem. All he has suggested in Bill 198 is that we engage more debt; what he's calling opportunity bonds. That's just more debt for cities and future tax increases, quite frankly. It's not the way to go. What the Toronto Board of Trade is saying is that government should provide "greater access to gas tax revenues by cities to support transit enhancements." They go on to say in their report, *Strong City, Strong Nation*, "Occupying existing tax room is the preferred solution as it mitigates the potential for the overall tax burden to increase."

So we've got TD Bank, we've got Peter Tomlinson and we've got the Toronto Board of Trade all saying what Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals are saying. This is the kind of leadership we need to maintain our infrastructure. This is the kind of leadership that's required to make sure we're an excellent place to invest, to raise a family, to grow, and to cure the problems of gridlock that we're seeing.

This is a critical problem for this Legislature to tackle: our cities, the fundamental building blocks of our economic prosperity. There are many more challenges that we face and that are addressed in this *Growing Strong Communities* platform. I'm delighted, absolutely delighted, to have an opportunity to speak in favour of this one particular measure. It's time. It's needed. It's what real leadership is all about.

In fact, I would challenge any member on the government bench to tell us, if you don't like this plan, what is your plan? They can't answer that question. They have no plan. They have no policies—absolutely nothing that I've heard or seen to date for education, for health care, for cities, for transit, for housing. They have no plan. They have no policies.

**Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex):** Hydro.

**Mr Caplan:** I say to the member from Perth, you don't want to be talking about hydro, my friend. You guys have flip-flopped and bungled that file more than just about anybody has in this province. So, my friend, I wouldn't be talking about hydro today in this House at all. You ought to be ashamed of yourself, how you bungled the market completely. It's the people of Ontario who are going to pay the price for your incompetence.

But there is a leader. Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals are committed to solving the problems

of what you fixed, but also taking it to another level. We're going to do it. Whenever Ernie Eves has the guts to call an election, you believe me, it's going to happen. I want to turn the floor over to some of my other colleagues to speak today, but I'm proud to support this measure.

1640

**Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay):** I wasn't going to go there because I thought we'd come into this debate just saying that we support the motion because we believe it's a step in the right direction, but after the comments from my good friend talking about Tories flip-flopping, I just can't resist the opportunity to point out that for the masters of flip-flopping to be calling the Tories flip-floppers I think is a little bit hard to take. I didn't want to let that go by without making sure that people understand that the Liberals under Dalton McGuinty have been flipping and flopping on all kinds of issues.

We watched the hydro debate unfold over the last couple of weeks. First of all, our good friend Mr McGuinty says, "Oh, I'm with the workers and I'm with not privatizing and opening the market." Then it was, "Oh, no. I'm opposed." Then he was in favour, then he was opposed, and on the day he finally said unequivocally, "I oppose the opening of the market and if I was the former government," says Mr McGuinty, he would not revisit this issue. He sent out a fundraising letter to the Bay Street people saying, "Send me money because I support the market and market opening."

Don't have Liberals stand in this House and accuse Tories of flip-flopping. I like it when Tories flip-flop, because normally they're going in the opposite direction to what I want. So I give you credit as Tories for having reversed a position on a number of unpalatable issues in my view, but for the Liberals to call them flip-floppers I think is just a bit more than I want to take today.

**Interjection:** The NDP is flip-flopping.

**Mr Bisson:** No, the NDP is very consistent. I'm just saying to my good friends in the Liberal caucus and my good friends in the Tory caucus and to all those in this assembly and others who might be watching, the one thing you can count on is that New Democrats will take a position. Sometimes it may not be a popular position. We understand that at times we take a step forward as a caucus. We say as a party that we want to take a position on something that may be seen as unpopular, but we do it as a matter of conviction. Sometimes people will agree with us and sometimes they won't.

I want to get back to the motion because I think the motion that has been raised by my good friends from the Liberal caucus is a good one, and that is the whole discussion about how we're able to better support our communities out there and able to provide proper funding and a good partnership between the province and municipalities in providing transit funding. I believe it's a good start. I'm not going to wholly endorse the Liberal plan because I think there are some things in their plan that are falling short of where they've got to go, but it's a



step in the right direction. I'm prepared to give it support, as are the rest of the members of our caucus.

I want to talk about what the Liberals are proposing first. That is the concept of saying that we the province of Ontario should basically give municipalities a share in the taxes paid by motorists when it comes to the gas they purchase for their cars. That's something that our caucus put forward, I think about a year and a half or two years ago. We put that notion forward as an idea, saying it was something we were interested in, in a discussion paper. We then took a position formally, that that is something that we believe in and something that we should be doing, should we form the government. The Liberals have come to see the wisdom of this NDP policy. We support Liberals sometimes coming over and supporting some of our ideas. I get a little bit miffed as a New Democrat because far too often they like to steal our ideas and basically say that it's them who thought of it, but let's not get into that fight today. Let's just talk about what the issue is.

The concept is, municipalities should share in the revenue. We, as the New Democratic Party, as a social democratic party of Ontario, understand that's not a bad idea, it's not a bad concept, because municipalities by and large are paying the lion's share of being able to provide road infrastructure and transit infrastructure in their municipalities. The pollution that happens in those communities because of the gas-guzzling cars that are out there and because of pollution in general is felt by people in those communities. Municipalities and local ratepayers by and large are having to pay for pretty well the lion's share of the transportation infrastructure. So the concept of getting municipalities to share in the gas tax revenue is not a bad one. We think that's something that quite frankly would make some sense. That's why we as the New Democratic caucus have put forward the idea, going back a couple of years ago, that there should be three cents set aside out of the taxes collected on gas for municipalities so that we can assist municipalities in providing good transit systems.

I want to come at this debate of transit from a bit of the perspective of a northerner and also from the perspective of what it means to people in Toronto. Now, many of the communities that I represent don't have transit services. The communities are small. The way of getting around is basically by road. If people are lucky enough, they own a car and that's how they get along. In a lot of communities there are no urban transit systems because of the size of the communities. That's why in those cases, those communities need to get the support to use some of that gas tax money to be able to support the roads the municipalities have and keep them in good repair in order to provide a transportation network within their communities.

I look at communities like Kapuskasing, Hearst and others across northern Ontario that are having to do this by and large on their own. Other than the connecting link program that they use in order to maintain highways that

go through their communities, municipalities by and large are left alone to maintain those roads.

So I as a northerner welcome the concept that we've put forward as New Democrats, and that now the Liberals have come to, of saying that those municipalities should be able to share and they should be able to get some of that gas tax money back so they can properly maintain their roads. One thing I want to point out is that a lot of roads in these communities have gone very seriously into a state of disrepair over the past number of years. One of the reasons for that is that upper levels of government have downloaded much of that service on to municipalities. I'll defend the government to a certain extent. It started with the federal Liberal government. They started this massive downloading of federal responsibility on to the provinces. As a result, they've shed a whole bunch of spending that they used to be responsible for, and a lot of it went to provinces to support municipalities when it came to maintaining road infrastructure down to the provinces. As a result, provinces across Canada have been in a position where they've been downloading the responsibility on to municipalities, to the end user.

I want to use some words that Mike Harris said a long time ago, and it's one of the quotes where I agree with him: "There is only one taxpayer." If the federal government at the upper level decides they're going to absolve themselves of their responsibility and not properly fund provinces that, in turn, fund municipalities, they're kidding no one. All it means is that the money they cut out of this budget is eventually going to be recouped with taxes at the bottom, at the municipal side, or the service is not going to be provided at all.

In the case of municipal road infrastructure, far too often what ends up happening is that the infrastructure is not well maintained. You can go into communities across this province and see to what point the roads have deteriorated since that entire downloading process was started by both the federal Liberal government and the provincial Tory government here in Ontario. It's rather sad, because unfortunately—or fortunately, depending what side of the debate you come on—roads are an essential part of our transportation infrastructure.

So we support the concept of giving, as they say, the tools to municipalities to be able to do their jobs by sharing in the gas tax revenue. That's why we first proposed that idea, oh, better than about two, three years ago.

What do we need to do to build a good infrastructure in an urban setting? That's the other part of what I'd like to talk about.

Part of what the Liberals have focused on is what we focused on as well, which is being able to have municipalities like Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Timmins, Sudbury or any community that has an urban transit system have funds to be able to operate that system so that the burden of operating it is not entirely on the ratepayer by way of higher rates, not entirely on the back of the municipal taxpayers. So by allowing some of the gas tax

to go over to those municipalities, they're going to be able to offset some of that cost. We support that concept.

I have a bit of a difference with the Liberals in the narrowness of the plan they're putting forward. I think we need to go one step further. What we need to look at in this province, I think, is the examples of what we're seeing in some of states in the United States and some of the cities, but more to take a look at what happens in Europe. Europe has come at the transportation question in a very different way. If anybody has travelled to Europe—I have a number of times now. I've noticed they have not only a much better urban transportation system but much better city-to-city transportation. They have developed a transportation system by rail that you can get in almost any city in Europe; I would say any city in Europe is probably the correct term. You can get on a train and be able to move from city A to city B in really reasonable time, be brought from downtown core to downtown core and do it in a way that's very cost-effective.

#### 1650

The countries in Europe, like France and Germany and Italy and others, who are big promoters of rail service obviously are subsidizing the running of the rail service, and in many cases the rail service is owned by the country itself, is owned by the state, the point being that they made a policy decision some years ago that rather than putting all of their eggs in one basket, as we have in North America, which is the building of roads, they would divide the money they use to subsidize transportation by some of it going to rail transit, some of it going to air transport and other parts of it going over to maintaining roads.

For some reason, in Canada we've taken a very odd view, as the Americans have, that the only correct public subsidy for transportation is for highways. I find that a very bizarre policy when you look at it. In North America governments of all stripes have no difficulty—in Canada or the United States—in understanding that we have a responsibility for not only building highways and municipal roads but for maintaining them. We think nothing of the billions of dollars that we spend every year to build up road infrastructure in this province. People generally—the voters, the taxpayers—see that as a good thing too. But for some reason, in North America, and the case is here in Ontario as well, we say, “Well, we don't have a responsibility,” like it's a bad thing if we spend public dollars to maintain a rail system and it's a bad thing to spend public dollars to operate an airline system.

I just think that's rather an odd position to take, because if you take a look at the Europeans, their airline, rail and road systems are in some cases entirely paid by the taxpayer or greatly subsidized by the taxpayer. For instance, in Europe, if you take a look at it, most countries own the rail system. Except for England, where they've privatized and it's become a real disaster, most rail systems in Europe are owned by the state. If they're not owned by the state, they may be privately owned but are greatly subsidized by way of construction—capital

costs—or operating costs by the state itself. And the reason for that is that Europe has understood that in a setting of how many hundreds of millions of people live in Europe, if you were to only put your eggs in the highway transportation system, you would end up with congestion in the cities and the countrysides of Europe to the state that nobody would be able to drive from point A to point B in a very efficient way. They've understood that you have to have an integrated approach when it comes to developing a transportation infrastructure. So they've purposely put public dollars in the rail system.

As a result, if you go to Europe, fly to any city in Europe—I've flown into Paris, I've flown into Milan, I've flown into Heathrow, I've flown into Amsterdam. I've been to a number of cities across Europe and different parts of the world, but for the case of Europe you fly into any major city and the rail system comes right to the airport. A traveller who's coming from abroad or coming from within Europe for business or pleasure basically gets off the plane, goes through security, walks out, is on the rail platform and away you go anywhere in Europe that you want to go, at a very reasonable price and at a very quick speed. For example, a person flying into Paris to go to Brussels can get on the train at Charles de Gaulle airport and end up in downtown Brussels in about two hours, two and a half hours at the most. That's really a quicker way of doing it than renting a car and trying to drive along the highway. Conversely, when a European traveller gets on the highway system in Europe, you don't see the congestion on freeways in Europe that you do in North America.

But they have a lot more people in Europe, and you have to ask yourself the question why. Because they've understood that if you all do is build highways, eventually what you'll end up with is more road congestion and then you're caught in a vicious circle. You're caught with, “Build more roads so that we can free up the congestion, and the bigger we build the roads, the more people use the cars and the more roads you've got to build after. It's a vicious circle.”

In North America we've taken a completely opposite view. We've said, “The only way to really invest public dollars that is acceptable to most governments is to spend them on building highways and not developing our rail and air infrastructure.” So we look at a federal government in Ottawa that started under the Chrétien government, that has basically sold off CN. CN used to be a crown corporation that was there for the benefit of all Canadians. The government has sold it off, said, “That's a bad deal.” The government, when Mulroney was in government in Ottawa, got rid of Air Canada and got rid of the whole transportation system that we used to own as citizens, taxpayers, in the airline industry. In Ontario, the Conservatives were elected in 1995. They first of all privatized the only air service that we owned as a province, which was norOntair. Conversely, now you've got Bearskin Airlines that is basically providing the entirety of whatever service is left, which is less than it

used to be under NorOntair. We're paying far more to travel and the connections are a lot less.

If a traveller comes to Timmins or Thunder Bay and wants to go east or west across northern Ontario, more times than not, the east-west connections across northern Ontario are insufficient and people actually fly through Toronto. I know lots of people who are in Timmins who have to do business in Thunder Bay, and rather than paying \$1,200 to fly return by Bearskin air services, which takes about three hours because of all the stops, they are electing to go to directly into Toronto and back up to Thunder Bay at a lesser cost. For example, we've got Jetsgo coming into Timmins at \$188 return from Timmins to Toronto, and then you can get on WestJet to get up to Thunder Bay. It's cheaper for people to go to Toronto and back up to Thunder Bay.

We have taken a completely opposite position than I think we should have, as a public policy. This should not be an ideological debate, I would hope. Governments of all stripes have to understand that if we're going to develop a transportation system in North America, in our case in Ontario, you have to have an integrated approach.

You have to say that where it makes sense, we will spend money on roads and we will use public dollars to do that because it's for the public good. Where it makes sense, we spend money on urban transit because we don't want everybody to use cars in our cities. We should have a good transit system so people can move around conveniently and at a cheap cost. Where it makes sense we should use rail, such as GO Transit, so that a person can move from one community to another—for example, from Oshawa to Toronto to Hamilton—and do that in a cost-effective way to both the ratepayer, the person who pays the taxes, and the end-user, the who has to use it. And where it makes sense, why not look at developing our air services? Canada is a large country. It may not be feasible to build rail everywhere, so maybe in some cases you have to have some sort of air service to link communities together.

I would support that we have to come at this in a whole lot of ways. In Ontario, it would be a complete departure from what public policy has been for a long time. What you have to do in order to do this correctly is establish a special committee of the Legislature, give it a mandate to look at this for probably a year or two, because it's quite complex, and to say what kind of public investment we have to make in Ontario to develop a better integrated transportation system, so that no matter where you live in Ontario, you have reasonable service. You probably can't afford to build a Cadillac, but you can probably afford to invest and build a reasonable transportation infrastructure so that it's not just highways. The problem is, the more you build roads, the more you use them, and the bigger you make them, the more they become congested. It's a vicious cycle.

I look at Highway 401 as a good example. It was built some years ago and it was thought, "That's going to carry us into the next century without a problem. Look how big the freeway is." You may as well walk when you're on

the 401 anywhere from about 8 to 10 o'clock in the morning, because you can probably walk faster on the 401, at times, than you can drive. Governments, including mine, the NDP government, and including now the Conservative government, spent money to try to deal with some of the bottlenecks, not only adding extra lanes, but building brand new highways such as Highway 407, which we did when we were in government. All that does is create more congestion on our highways because more people use cars. I would argue that a special committee of the Legislature should look at the issue of what kind of investments we need to develop a good transportation system.

Let me tell to you what I think a good system would be. You should have a system that says, for example, that in southern Ontario we invest and develop a better GO service. GO does the best it can with the limited amount of money it gets. At one point they used to get public subsidies. The Tory government came in and cancelled all that. Now they've reneged somewhat and started to give some of the money back.

What do we need to make GO really work? For example, I'm a pilot and I have flown across this great province many times. Just recently I was flying down toward the London area at night. I was looking at the rows of lights in southwestern Ontario. There's just lots and lots of population in that part of the province. It seemed to me it would make a lot more sense if we had a good inter-urban transit system when it comes to GO, to be able to connect communities like Hamilton, and communities in between, up to Toronto, and maybe even further out toward the London or Windsor area.

How you would do that would be the subject for the committee to look at. The idea would be, if I live in Hamilton and I have to go to Toronto for work every day, or if I have to come to Toronto or any other community in between, or past, you should make it as affordable to the rider as possible so that it is a disincentive for the person to utilize their car. That should be the first thing. We should say to ourselves, "If I'm living in Hamilton and I had to drive to Oshawa," or "I'm living in Hamilton and I have to drive to downtown Toronto and back," you should make it so that it's cheaper for the person to use the public system than it is to utilize their own car. That's the first thing you should do. Why? We want to encourage people off our highways.

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The second thing we would have to do is say, "We need to make this trip as convenient as possible when it comes to both schedule and comfort of ride." The person says, "OK, I'm in Hamilton and I have to go to downtown Toronto. If I take my car, it's going to cost me X amount of dollars in gas there, X dollars back and so much for parking." When you add all that up, whatever the number is—we'll say it's \$40—you should be able to say, "We could provide you with a much cheaper rate if you utilize GO Transit. Not only that, we're going to put in place a schedule that says you don't have to sit at the railway station for only one train that goes in the

morning, one that goes in the afternoon and one that goes at night.” You’d have to increase the frequency, because if you increase the frequency of the service, there are more people attracted to use it. The more you get the riders, the more revenue comes into the service.

The other thing you have to do is integrate when the interurban transit comes into the city of either Hamilton or Toronto. The person has to be able to say, “I bought a pass and it goes from Hamilton downtown to 15 Gervais Drive at the Ontario Federation of Labour,” so the person says, “I buy a ticket and it gets me all the way there.”

You do, for example, what they do in Hong Kong. I know when I’ve been to Hong Kong, you go in and you don’t buy one ticket. If you’re in Paris, I think it’s the same system, if I remember correctly. What you do is you say, “Here I am.” The machine where you’re buying the ticket says, “Here you are,” or you go to the person, and all you do is tell the machine or the person where you’re going. You buy one ticket that gets you from point A to point B. The person who’s getting off the train in downtown Toronto doesn’t have to fumble around for the two-dollars-and-whatever-it-is for the TTC. He basically takes the same ticket that he or she used to get on the train in Hamilton, uses it as a pass—because you can do that with electronic swipe—so when they get on the transit system in Toronto, it gets them all the way to where they want to go. If they purchase it before they leave, they’ve got their return ticket. Quite frankly, that’s how most of the systems work in Europe. If I’m in Paris, that’s the way it works. I know I’ve used it there. I certainly know that’s the way it worked in Hong Kong when I was there as well.

**Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation):** Fare by distance.

**Mr Bisson:** It’s fare by distance, and it makes sense for the end-user. It makes a lot of sense. I would argue, for the transits that are selling the tickets, it makes sense to them. Not that I like the idea of having less people, but it’s a little bit more efficient when it comes to being able to organize the ticket sales themselves. There’s also a return on investment for the actual investor.

The idea would be, you have an integrated fare-by-distance system where you go from point A to point B, you buy one ticket either one way, return or weekly—whatever way you want to do it—and it’s based on where you’re going; one ticket.

The other thing I was saying is you have to have a good scheduling system so that, if I’m the commuter who does it every day, I’m the person who’s coming into Toronto for the afternoon or whatever it is, you don’t need a system that says, “We’ve only got three trains per day.” You have to increase the service so that the frequency is up and up. I would be willing to guarantee that if you build such a system in southern Ontario—and most of the infrastructure’s there already. This is not a massive investment; this is just a matter of reorganizing what we’ve got and then increasing the services. We would probably have to buy some more rolling stock and increase employment levels within GO Transit and

others, but I would argue we would take congestion off our freeways. I think most commuters would say, “Hey, if I can get on a train in Hamilton and get downtown to where I’m going for cheaper, faster and better than I can with my own car, darn right I’m taking the transit system.”

That’s the other point I wanted to make. You also have to look at the schedules in regard to the commuter going from Hamilton to Toronto. You should have some better, more direct routes. Right now, if I get on that train, I stop, I think, seven stops before I get to downtown Toronto because we want to make one train pick everybody up. They’ve only got about a couple of sort-of-direct trains. What you have to do, in my view, is to say, “How many stops are appropriate in the given amount of time that you take from getting the person from Hamilton to Toronto, or from Oshawa to Toronto, in order to be able to make it so that the ride isn’t longer than it would be for them to take the car?”

I would argue that you take people off the road by doing that kind of approach. There’s an immediate saving, and a long-term saving, in my view, because if you take people off our highways, it means you don’t have to spend as much on the reconstruction cycle of the highway. We know that we have to rebuild highways not only based on their age but based on their usage, and if we’re using highways heavily, we have to reconstruct them far more often. Secondly, you wouldn’t have to build more overpasses, more roads and more on and off ramps if you did that particular model.

For a community such as mine in northern Ontario, I think the model would be a little bit different. I’m going to stick my neck out. As I said at the beginning of this debate, New Democrats often take positions that I think are well reasoned, but from the public’s perspective they may say, “Where did that come from? I’ve never heard of it. I’m not sure if I like it or not.” I’ll propose this: what’s wrong with our saying, as a province or as the federal government, that we have a role in the airline transportation industry? If the private sector can’t provide a fare at a reasonable rate to the commuter—I’m a commuter. I commute every week from Timmins down here to do my job at Queen’s Park. There are a number of people in communities like Timmins and North Bay and Thunder Bay and other places around the province who have to come to Toronto or other places in southern Ontario on a very regular schedule for business or medical reasons or whatever it might be. So if the private sector, such as Air Ontario, can’t provide the commuter, the travelling public, a fare at a reasonable rate, maybe there is a role for the province to get involved.

Maybe what we have to do is get into the business ourselves by running a provincially owned and controlled system, or we have to find some way of being able to support or regulate the industry itself. Maybe it’s a combination of both. I wouldn’t advocate that we do that overnight, because it would be a heck of a lot of money, but we need to take a look at where it is. Then you can sit down, if you’re part of the people who are paying for the

service and regulating or running it yourself, and start making decisions about, "You know what? Not all transportation lines are north-south in Ontario. A person has to be able to get from Sudbury to Thunder Bay, as a person from Hearst has to be able to get from Hearst to Manitouwadge." You have to have those kinds of systems.

It may not be applicable to do all of those on rails because of distances. Maybe you've got to do them with the airline service. So an integrated approach, in my view, would include utilizing public policy and some public dollars that we now spend only on roads to develop a more integrated approach to being able to utilize airline services in areas of the province where there are large distances.

I've just got to make the plug for the James Bay. Communities like Peawanuck are having to fly their fuel into a community up on Hudson Bay to be able to supply the diesel necessary to run their generators. The reason for that is that we have a very poor system of transportation on James Bay. Either you put it up by barge in the summer or you fly it up by plane in the winter. That's basically the only choice the Hudson Bay communities have. So there is an argument, I would say, for public dollars to be utilized to be able to—yes, I'm going to say it—subsidize transportation costs in communities like Peawanuck, Attawapiskat or Moose Factory, because they have no other choice. The only transportation system for them north of Moosonee is airline services. People in Toronto think absolutely nothing of spending public dollars to support their transit system or to support the roads, but for some reason we think it's a bad thing to subsidize airline transportation on the James Bay coast. I would just say, what's the difference? The difference is, the only choice they have is airline services. If the province wants to go in and build a road, go and build it. I don't think they're going to build it in short order, so we need to be able to provide that transportation infrastructure.

The other point I want to make is that in northern Ontario you may, and I believe you should, take the position of keeping the ONTC public. This move by the government to privatize CN is, I believe, in the long run the wrong thing for northern Ontario. CN is trying to tell us, by way of the government, "Trust us. It's going to be better than it was before." How many times did I hear, when we privatized something, "Trust me. It's going to be better than it was before," and about five or six years down the road you find out that you don't have the services you should have? The government told us in 1996, when they privatized NorOntair, that we'd be better off. We now pay more than twice the price for airline tickets and we get less than half the service.

The point I make is simply this. If we're going to utilize, as we recommend in this motion, dollars from fuel taxes to build infrastructure, both transit and roads, I would argue we need to take a little bit more of a global approach and take a look at developing an integrated transportation strategy in Ontario. Why? Because at the

end of the day, the province, in my view, is responsible for providing a good transportation network so that either travellers, business travellers or goods that are transported in Ontario can be transported efficiently and cheaply enough so that, no matter where you are in the province, you have half a chance of being able to develop your industry and not just having it all basically centred around a place like the GTA.

So as I said at the beginning, we will support this motion. We think it's a step in the right direction. As I said at the beginning, I'm glad the Liberals have taken the view they have. We had put this forward about three years ago. We're glad to have them onside. We look forward to what will happen in this debate. I hope for the day that we do have a standing committee to take a look at the whole issue of an integrated transportation system.

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**Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford):** I'm very pleased to join in the debate with respect to the opposition day motion.

Let's be frank: redirecting a portion of provincial gas taxes to municipalities to increase the provincial investment in public transit could mean raising taxes, and this government has always been opposed to that approach.

In addition, linking tax revenues to specific programs simply doesn't work, for the following reasons: it limits the ability of the government to address its priorities; it can lead to an inefficient allocation of revenues; it may not provide enough money to fund the program adequately; in some instances, it may provide more money than is actually needed; and it is not accountable to taxpayers.

This is a Band-Aid solution that flies in the face of how this government has kept fiscally responsible to the people of Ontario by ensuring that all tax revenues go to the consolidated revenue fund, unlike the federal government, which also takes a gas tax from consumers and puts back a minuscule amount into our transportation network.

It has been reported that of all the monies the federal government takes, which is in the billions, about 5% of that goes back into our transportation system. On top of the hardship that's placed on consumers with respect to the gas they buy, the federal government has a GST component on the tax, which is a tax on tax with respect to gasoline.

This resolution points to a motion with respect to provincial investment. We should also be looking for federal investment in our urban transit system.

I think the member opposite did indicate with respect to the federal government essentially getting out of the rail industry by their act in 1996, which allowed CP and CN to get out of the rail system in a number of areas. That may have affected my riding of Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford if we hadn't gone in with some significant monies to aid the city of Barrie to maintain the rail line between Barrie and Bradford. It was Minister Eves at the time, who was the Minister of Finance, now our Premier, who had the foresight to make sure that we invested significantly to maintain the rail system. The proof in the

pudding is that if you look at the rail between Barrie and Orillia, there are no rail tracks. That's a direct product of what the federal government did with our rail system.

The Ontario Legislature decides how money is best allocated to fund priority projects by putting all tax revenues into the consolidated revenue fund. Under the Financial Administration Act, all public monies are to be deposited in the consolidated revenue fund unless explicit legislation is enacted to override this provision. This is a safeguard to ensure that the government remains fiscally responsible to the taxpayers of Ontario. We can't simply reallocate taxes to satisfy a whim of the opposition.

Our government recognizes the need for a balanced, integrated transportation system. Our government is taking a leadership role in developing a coordinated approach to transit. We have announced \$3.25 billion over 10 years for transit expansion and renewal. This includes up to \$1.25 billion for transit expansion projects in the Golden Horseshoe and up to \$250 million for cities outside the Golden Horseshoe. This also includes \$100 million in 2002 for the Ontario transit renewal program to assist municipalities in replacing and refurbishing transit fleets. We have assumed responsibility for GO Transit, which frees up over \$100 million per year for municipalities within the current GO service area to reinvest in transit.

I'd just like to say to my constituents that unfortunately we were not able to keep GO Transit because the provincial government of the day, the NDP government in 1992, discontinued the service from Barrie to Toronto. I have been meeting diligently with GO Transit, and the Ministry of Transportation has been involved, to return GO Transit to the city of Barrie. That would be a very expensive undertaking in terms of being able to return that to the city of Barrie.

We've seen expansion in GO Transit in the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury, up to three trains per day. Certainly that has enhanced the transportation system. We've also seen an increase in the number of GO buses out of the city of Barrie. I believe it's in the neighbourhood of about 10 per day. But returning GO Transit to the city of Barrie, in my view, is one of the fundamental requirements of what this government needs to do with respect to urban transit, because of the tremendous volumes of traffic and transportation on Highway 400. But it would also provide an opportunity for the citizens of Barrie and surrounding areas, in Innisfil and Bradford West Gwillimbury, to go to downtown Toronto, whether it's for work or for health services, and that's very important. So I'm working very hard for the return of GO Transit to the city of Barrie, and I know that our transportation policies are directed to making sure that will happen by working with municipalities.

The \$100 million that's been freed up for municipalities within the current GO service area could buy municipalities 200 buses or 55 subway cars. David Bradley, president of the Ontario Trucking Association, has said he's extremely pleased that transportation issues are at the forefront of the government's economic

renewal strategy. We also heard in the throne speech of the federal government in January 2001, when they said that the government of Canada will co-operate with provincial and municipal partners to help improve public transit infrastructure.

While the one-time federal announcement of \$76 million for the city of Toronto is a good first step, the federal government must make a long-term commitment to funding transit nationwide. We have come to the table with long-term funding. Why can't the federal government? The government is assuming about \$1 billion in GO costs over 10 years. Our government is making a significant commitment to GO Transit. This has freed up \$500 million in Toronto over 10 years, which could buy 1,000 buses or 275 subway cars.

For the GTA municipalities and Hamilton, some \$500 million has also been freed up. We are cost-sharing up to 33% of eligible fleet replacement costs. We have also announced up to \$1.25 billion for eligible strategic transit expansion projects in the Golden Horseshoe, such as transportation hubs, and another \$250 million for cities outside the Golden Horseshoe.

On September 27, 2001, the provincial government announced a bold new visionary plan for transit that provides for a 10-year, \$9-billion plan to ensure the province has a transit system that will help strengthen the economy and protect the environment. The investment is made up of \$3.25 billion from the provincial government in investments to renew and expand transit. Ontario has challenged the municipalities and the federal government for matching contributions. However, the federal government has yet to respond with full matching funding.

The provincial 2001 budget announced the creation of the Golden Horseshoe Transit Investment Partnerships, also known as GTIP, by allocating \$250 million from the millennium partnership fund. GTIP has now increased to up to \$1.25 billion to support the expansion of transit infrastructure, along with the new \$250-million transit investment partnerships, also known as TIP, to support transit expansion in cities outside the Golden Horseshoe. The GTIP funding will support interregional transit infrastructure such as commuter rail, light rail and dedicated transitways.

It also supports new rolling stock, signals, station infrastructure, and advanced fare collection. Passenger information systems will also be eligible for funding, provided they create region-wide network service benefits.

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The Ontario transit renewal program targets \$100 million in 2002 for replacement and refurbishment of municipal transit fleets. It reduces a municipality's share of capital investment in these fleets by sharing up to one third of the cost of ongoing vehicle replacement. Municipalities receive their allocation based on the number of riders using their system and ensuring a minimum support of up to one third of fleet renewal needs. Sixty-five municipalities are eligible to receive funding to renew their transit fleets this year. Our government is

committed to build a transit system that meets the needs of the people of Ontario. Safe and efficient transit is a vital part of a seamless and integrated transportation network province-wide.

I know the city of Barrie is benefiting from this program, by our investments in their transit program. The Ontario transit renewal program demonstrates that this government is listening to municipalities. The number one concern of our municipal partners was the replacement of aging buses. The Ontario transit renewal program will mean more reliable and more efficient transit systems, lower maintenance costs, increased accessibility and, most importantly, reduced vehicle emissions for a cleaner environment. In short, this funding will give the people of Ontario a better quality of life. I know that the city of Barrie has benefited from this in terms of their transit fleet in the past. I know they are benefiting from it also this year.

Those are all my comments with respect to this motion which I don't support with respect to the gasoline tax.

**Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls):** It's a pleasure for me to rise and add to the debate on this opposition day motion brought forward by the Liberals. I want to start off by saying the motion itself is convoluted, not clear, poorly written. I looked through the government of Ontario telephone directory for this year and I just happened to find about 160 people under the official opposition, office of the leader of the Liberal Party—members and all their staff, 160 people. They don't get to put forward many opposition day motions, they don't have a lot of opposition days, so when they put something forward I thought that they'd take the time to do a clear and concise motion, but apparently those 160 employees couldn't quite get it right.

All day we've talked about this motion and assumed that what the motion meant was that we're going to take two cents from the provincial gas tax and give it to municipalities and then they would, of course, spend it on public transit. But that's not what the resolution says. That's not what the motion says at all. This has caused confusion throughout the debate. The member from Timmins was confused. He talked at length about this gas tax money being revenue that they could use up north on roads where they needed more money for roads, but that's not clear from this. What it says is that, "The Legislative Assembly of Ontario directs the Ernie Eves government to commit to directing two cents of the existing provincial gas tax to municipalities, which will double the provincial investment in public transit." But it says nothing about forcing the municipalities to use the money that they get from the gas tax for public transit. The members opposite have talked about it all day long as if that was the case, but that's not what the resolution says. As I said, the member for Timmins was confused about this. He believed that the money could be used for roads. One would assume that from listening to what the Liberals said, that somehow this resolution would force municipalities to spend it on public transit, but in actual

fact it does not. There's no commitment in the resolution that says that.

I'll tell you another thing that's confusing about this. Let's just assume that that is what they meant. The member from Timmins, when he got up, made another interesting point because there are all kinds of very small municipalities around the province of Ontario that have no public transit, that aren't interested in having public transit. So if they collected money through this gas tax, how could they spend that money? Their arms would be behind their backs. They couldn't spend it. They don't have public transit. So it's a very poorly drafted resolution at the outset.

Another thing I find strange is that they say "two cents of the existing provincial gas tax." By the way, there's a provincial fuel tax. One is not sure if they want to include that or not, so we'll assume it's just the gas tax—two cents a litre on the provincial gas tax. The members opposite use the number of about \$300 million. This would mean municipalities could then spend that on, I guess, public transit. Over the last seven years we've been spending, on average, about \$450 million on public transit in Ontario. So that's passing strange. We spent over \$3 billion in the past seven years on public transit in Ontario; on average, about \$450 million over that seven-year period. Now, it's come in spurts but that's the average. This says, "No, it'll be dropped down to \$300 million." That's strange.

Another thing is that if the province takes two cents of the provincial gas tax and passes it on to municipalities, that's \$300 million—I'll use the member opposite's figures. That's close, I think, if you look at the books right now. Well, what do we do with a \$300-million hole in our budget? They haven't said that. Are they no longer going to fund Visudyne in the province of Ontario? Maybe the \$100 million for new nursing care and long-term care—maybe they want to eliminate that three times.

**Hon Dan Newman (Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care):** I hope not.

**Mr Maves:** I would hope not, too.

Recently we gave a little bit over \$300 million for hospitals. Maybe they'll eliminate that. They haven't said what they're going to do to make up the shortfall in the revenues that this has for the province itself.

Mr Smitherman, the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, got up after one of our members and said, "Well, there's the difference between the Liberals and the Tories." He said, "There's gridlock and you guys would build roads to solve the gridlock. We, the Liberals, won't build roads." They won't build roads. Well, that's interesting. We spent a billion dollars this year on roads, and I know there are people up north who really are appreciative that we're going to do some work on widening Highway 69. Is it the Liberals' position that they're not going to do that? The Queen Elizabeth widening through St Catharines, the mid-peninsula corridor, Highway 11, Highway 17, Highway 400—I know the folks in Barrie want to have that widened; they need that

widened. But the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale said, "We won't spend money on roads; it's bad for the air. We're going to spend it on our public transit."

As I said, they want to commit to spending \$300 million on public transit. We've been spending about \$450 million if you average it out over the past seven years.

The member made it sound like we didn't spend any money on transit. Several of the Toronto members got up in the Liberal Party and lamented a lack of spending on transit. Well, in 2002 funding alone the TTC is going to receive \$62 million for transit renewal. The province has taken back responsibility for GO Transit. That frees up almost \$51 million for the city of Toronto. Toronto receives \$13.3 million for short-term transit expansion projects this year and we're funding \$19.3 million for the second platform at Union Station. The total capital assistance to TTC this year alone is \$145 million. So for the members outside of Toronto it's tough to sit here and listen to the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale and other members complain and lament lack of funding.

Let me just tell you some of the amounts we've spent on TTC capital funding: in 1996, \$298 million; in 1997, \$275 million; in 1998, \$829 million; in 2001, \$50 million. So in total since 1996, \$1.8 billion at the TTC. So to hear the members complain about that, it's quite galling.

When I first heard about this resolution I was somewhat surprised. I thought maybe the Liberals were, for the first time in seven and a half years, going to stick up for Ontarians against their federal cousins. We all know in the House how the Ontario Liberals, the Dalton McGuinty Liberals, are the only party in all of Canada to refuse to stand up to the federal Liberals with regard to health care funding. Every single government, every single party in Canada, every stripe—Liberal, NDP, Conservative—they all agree that the federal government spends 14 cents on the dollar on health care. But only the Dalton McGuinty Liberals refused to take them to task. They help the Liberals and they push forward this tax point argument, which is a foolish argument. There is a study for the Romanow commission that said, "It's a terrible argument. The Liberals shouldn't be advancing it any more." In actual fact, everybody agrees that they're only spending 14 cents on the dollar on health care except the Dalton McGuinty Liberals. They refuse to stand up to their federal Liberal cousins.

**1730**

I digress, but I thought that maybe in this resolution they were going to go after their federal cousins and say to them, "You take nearly \$2 billion a year out of Ontario alone on gas taxes." That's right. The federal Liberals, with the GST involved also, take out nearly \$2 billion a year on gas. So I thought maybe the provincial Liberals are finally going to stand up to them and say, "Spend some of that on roads." No. That's not what this is all about. They absolutely refuse to do that.

I have some statistics for you. If you look at capital funding for transit, the total investment for transit since

1995 in Ontario, federal and provincial, is \$3.178 billion. That's not bad. How much of that came from the province? It's \$3.171 billion. That's right. Only \$7 million, a fifth of a percentage point, came from the federal Liberals and they take \$2 billion a year in gas taxes from Ontarians. So I thought maybe these guys would finally stick up for Ontario. No, they failed to do that again.

We look across the border at some of our American cousins. Ohio has a very similar population base to ours, 11.5 million. They have spent only \$900 million since 1995 on transit; \$205 million of that came from the state government and \$700 million from the federal government, or 77%. In New York state, their population is a lot higher than ours; it's 19 million. Since 1995 they've spent \$13.5 billion on transit. The federal contribution was \$4.7 billion; 35% came from the federal government. So of our American cousins around us, the federal government gets it; the federal government makes that contribution.

Here, we just can't get it. We can't get it in health; we can't get it in transit. The member for Kingston and the Islands will not ask his federal cousins to pony up. He says to them, "You keep taking money out of Ontario. You keep nailing us on gas taxes and then you refuse to give us any money for our roads or for our transit." He supports that.

I thought the resolution would say, "Let's get this House to say that the federal Liberals should put back some of that \$2 billion a year they take out of Ontario gas taxes." No, they didn't want to do it. They had an opportunity and they failed again. It's very disappointing. Not only, as I said at the outset, is it a very poorly drafted resolution, but the Liberals had an opportunity to stand up for Ontario and they refused to do it again.

Some people ask me, "Why don't they ever stand up to Chrétien? Why are they the only party in all of Canada that refuses to stand up?" I don't know. It could be that the only way they have successful fundraisers is by having a federal minister there, and if they start standing up to them, maybe they won't come any more. I don't know. That's something I've heard but I'm not going to say that's the case. I'll leave the members opposite to talk about that.

You really can't trust them across the aisle when they tell you something. An example of that came up the other day on the Agricultural Employees Protection Act. This was really interesting. I believe they abstained, as an entire caucus. That's right. Members are looking at me incredulously, but they absolutely abstained, as a caucus, on introducing the bill. Then I think they voted for it on second and third reading. Then, the other day, what comes out from Greg Sorbara, the president of the Liberal Party and one of the front bench members of the Liberals, is, "If the Liberals form the government, I think we'll have to repeal it and do something different down the road."

They abstain. They vote in favour. And I'll never forget second and third reading votes. I think it was the second reading vote we voted on. As soon as we said we



were going to vote on it, half a dozen of the Liberals left the room. Yes, they all scattered. It was actually closer to eight or nine. I remember jotting down all their names. Then three or four came back in. I saw some of them being escorted back in by Mr McGuinty's staff. It was very interesting; comical almost, if not so sad. But they ended up voting for the bill. Then the president of the Liberal Party, Mr Sorbara, says, "If the Liberals form the government, I think we'll have to repeal it." That's right, they will repeal the Agricultural Employees Protection Act. So they vote for it, and then they tell you they're going to repeal it. You can't figure it out. You just can't trust what they tell you.

One of the things they've been telling Ontarians now for several months is that they're going to fund all kinds of promises. They are going to change the Family Responsibility Office and add staff. They're going to add money to colleges and universities. They're going to add money to roads. Oh, one person says he's not going to add money to roads. Mr Smitherman today said no, they're not going to build any more roads. So they've got a problem there. They said they are going to spend billions on education. They're going to spend more on long-term care. They're going to spend more on health care. They're going to spend money on the environment.

Where are they going to get the money? Well, the interesting thing is that they keep claiming they're going to spend \$2 billion from a corporate tax cut, and there isn't \$2 billion in a corporate tax cut, but that's what they keep saying.

They have now spent that money, by our count, nine times. They've spent the money nine different times. And so, people around the province of Ontario, just be forewarned. You know what? I think the people of Ontario are already on to them. They know. They know when they hear a Liberal promise, when they go into a meeting with a Liberal, the Liberal will nod their head in agreement, "Yep, we're going to do it. We're going to fund it. Where are we going to get the money? Oh, we'll get the money from corporate tax." At the same time there are probably about 36 other Liberals having meetings with other people around the province of Ontario, nodding their heads, saying, "Yep, we'll do it. We'll do it. We'll do it. I know where we'll get the money. We're going to get the money from this corporate tax." They've spent it nine times.

I've got quotes from every one of them. We could give you quotes from Hansard like you wouldn't believe of all the different members opposite telling the public how they're going to spend this money on education, long-term care, family responsibility, colleges and universities. It's all the same money they keep spending over and over and over again. We're getting a little frustrated. The NDP's even getting a little frustrated, if you can believe that.

So I can't support this resolution. Not only was it poorly drafted by the 160 Liberal employees—they couldn't get it right—it has caused confusion in the House. I'll mention the member from Timmins is very confused about it. It appears they've got no way to

replace the revenue. They want to rip it out of the Ontario government treasury. They're going to spend \$300 million a year. Well, we've been spending about \$450 million a year. So we can't support their resolution.

I'm actually going to conclude my debate, because I know Minister Turnbull wants a few minutes. I'm going to leave him that opportunity.

**Hon Mr Turnbull:** I wasn't supposed to join this debate, but I just couldn't help putting on record a few of the facts which come to mind.

The provincial Liberals are proposing to add two cents to the gasoline tax, which would be dedicated revenue.

**Mr Bradley:** No, not add.

**Hon Mr Turnbull:** Oh, now they're saying it's going to come off the existing tax.

**Mr Bradley:** Exactly.

**Hon Mr Turnbull:** Well, this is very interesting, because all of their promises they've been making to date show that they are spending more money than the province brings in, several times over. We know the last time they were in government they raised taxes 39 times, and that was the thing that drove inflation in Canada more than any other factor in the whole of Canada.

It was very interesting. I was at the opening of the new Sheppard subway the other day. The cost of the new Sheppard subway was \$934 million, of which the Ontario government paid approximately 60%. The federal government's representative was Jim Peterson. You may recognize the name, Mr Speaker. That's the brother of the former Liberal Premier of this province, David Peterson. He got there and he proudly proclaimed that they put \$7 million into it. Out of the \$934 million it cost to build the subway, we put in approximately 60%, and he said they put in \$7 million.

1740

Let's just compare this with what happens in the US. The US federal government actually gives at least 83% of every federal gasoline tax raised in the US back to the state to spend on roads and transit. That isn't the only sum they give for roads and transit, but that is dedicated revenue.

Let's just look at this. Our federal government is raising in excess of \$2 billion a year in gasoline tax, but we're not getting anything back. We got \$7 million toward building the Sheppard subway, and they had the cheek to show up. I'm reminded of the fact that David Collenette, the federal transportation minister, has spouted so many times about how money should be spent on transit and building roads, but there's no money coming from them.

What happens? The provincial Liberals have never, ever spoken up about the fact that the federal government should be at the table. They vote against every effort we make to try and get the federal government back to the table. If you were to put in 83% of the over—

**Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming-Cochrane):** The first thing I'd like to say to the member across the way is that the federal government should be back at the table

discussing this issue for sure, because public transportation is a big part of the—

**Hon Mr Turnbull:** Are you going to help us?

**Mr Ramsay:** Absolutely, we'll help you. The federal government should be here in dealing with urban transportation problems right across this country.

If we are as interested as Michael Colle, the member for Eglinton-Lawrence, is in solving two problems that are big problems here, gridlock and the environmental concerns in the Golden Horseshoe area, then all three levels of government have to be working in partnership on that. Yes, the federal government should be at the table, especially when they have the Kyoto accord. We should be doing that.

**Hon Mr Turnbull:** We put money in roads. You guys didn't spend any money in roads when you were the government.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm going to warn the minister.

**Mr Ramsay:** Thank you, Mr Speaker, for protecting my right to speak in this House. I appreciate that.

I want to salute the member from Eglinton-Lawrence for bringing this motion forward. As the members know, this is a very simple, straightforward proposal that basically we would dedicate two cents of the existing tax against gasoline toward public transportation.

This government has underfunded urban transportation in all our towns and cities. That is a big mistake, because we need to make sure that not only is the population in our urban centres able in an affordable way to get around their municipalities; we also have to make sure that we develop integrated transportation systems that are seamless and low-cost to encourage people, to compel people to use a transportation system. You should be able to walk onto a GO train in Hamilton, maybe just put a toonie in the box and end up in North York. You should be able to do that in a seamless way so that it's fast and convenient and saves the environment. That's the type of system we need. The governments should be partners in that, both the provincial and the federal governments.

A week ago I was speaking to an elementary school up in Cochrane, Commando public school. When I talk to schoolchildren, as I know most of the members do from time to time when they get back to their ridings, what really beats in those children's hearts is a love for the environment. They look at a person like myself, an elected official, and wonder why we aren't doing more to save the environment. We need to be doing that. I thought that the people of my generation were going to be the ones to save the environment, and that really hasn't happened. We've still let it go and we've got to do much more to do that.

I would recommend to the members across the way the release the Ontario Liberal Party put out on Monday, Growing Strong Communities, because in that we have quite a comprehensive program to reduce pollution in Ontario and protect the environment. Jim Bradley, the member for St Catharines in our caucus here, an ex-Minister of the Environment—

**Mr Caplan:** The finest one we've ever had.

**Mr Ramsay:** —the finest Minister of the Environment in this province, is a very strong advocate and pushes all the members in this caucus to do more and more for the environment. We listen to him and we have a very good policy on the environment. I encourage people to go to the Ontario provincial party's Web site to look at that policy and to send in to us their e-mails and comments on that, because we want to start that dialogue now. Now is the time to do that, when we have some time before the election, so that people understand where we stand and where we want to go, and we're still willing to work with people and entertain new ideas on how we can improve the environment in this province. It's very important, and Mike Colle's resolution this afternoon I think is a very important first step to that, to dedicate two cents from the gasoline tax, the existing tax, toward public transportation for our municipalities.

*Interjection.*

**Mr Ramsay:** Yes, to the member across the way, we should make sure the federal government is a partner in that. I think the federal government needs to be a partner in the public transportation system and also a partner with the province in rebuilding our Trans-Canada Highway system. I think the feds should be a partner in all our transportation endeavours in this province. They have a national vision with that, and it's time, as they do with the Maritime provinces, for them to be a partner with us.

Again, I'd like to salute the member from Eglinton-Lawrence for the hard work he has done on the environment in presenting this motion. I certainly hope this resolution passes today. It deserves the support of all members of this House, and I ask members to support this resolution.

**The Acting Speaker:** That completes the time allocated for debate.

Mr Colle has moved opposition day number 4. 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.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

*The division bells rang from 1746 to 1756.*

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

#### Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Conway, Sean G.	Levac, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Cordiano, Joseph	Martel, Shelley
Bisson, Gilles	Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Curling, Alvin	Patten, Richard
Boyer, Claudette	Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Dombrowsky, Leona	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Duncan, Dwight	Pupatello, Sandra
Caplan, David	Gerretsen, John	Ramsay, David
Christopherson, David	Hoy, Pat	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Kennedy, Gerard	Smitherman, George
Cleary, John C.	Kwinter, Monte	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	

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

**Nays**

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Newman, Dan
Baird, John R.	Hastings, John	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Hodgson, Chris	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Beaubien, Marcel	Jackson, Cameron	Runciman, Robert W.
Chudleigh, Ted	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Eves, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Flaherty, Jim	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Galt, Doug	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Gilchrist, Steve	Murdoch, Bill	Young, David
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	

**Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers):** The ayes are 35; the nays are 50.

**The Acting Speaker:** I declare the motion lost.

*Interjections.*

**The Acting Speaker:** Order.

**ADJOURNMENT DEBATE**

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** Pursuant to standing order 37, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made. The member for Parkdale-High Park has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer given to his question by the Minister of Education.

**EDUCATION FUNDING**

**Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park):** It is a limited pleasure to rise tonight and to address the inadequacies of the Premier's response. In a sense, my question yesterday was directed to the minister, but also today I asked a similar question to the Premier. It was a simple question.

It was the Premier and the minister who said, "We will appoint someone to take over the Toronto school board and we will balance their budget." They said that a number of weeks ago. They said that about Ottawa and Hamilton as well. Then there were the events of the last number of weeks. They spent a lot of money. They hired new people. They hired public relations people.

When the day came to provide what they called a balanced budget, they put this out—this isn't available unless there's a big zoom for the cameras in the Legislature—a cut-and-paste number of columns. This is what they released to the public. On this release are net expenditures and gross expenditures mixed together. What this release did was permit the Premier of the province to say categorically last week that the classroom expenditures, the artificial category that even this government concedes are important expenditures to students, were being increased. The Premier said that; so did the minister. The minister said these cuts had not materialized to the classroom. The supervisor opened his presentation and said that. The government in fact

hitched its entire credibility to the fact that it had cut the budget and saved money for the classroom and protected children.

Instead, we learned that these figures do not tell the substantive story, the important story, of what was happening at the Toronto board, that in fact there's another \$110 million that was spent last year that was deliberately omitted from these figures—and I say that carefully. We have now had five days in this House where no one on the government side—Mr Arnott is here on behalf of the government to remedy this, I hope—has produced an official set of figures to show the degree and the depth of the cuts to children in public schools in this city.

Should Mr Arnott or anyone else in the government show up without that, then I'd say it besmirches this House, because to me it is fundamental that when we're talking about things like children's education, there are certain things on which we can rely. This government would be happy to have this debate dissolve into one about numbers, but it is instead about important areas.

For example, the government tried to say that there would be more money spent on textbooks. In fact, by the best figures we were able to obtain from the school board, there is less money being spent on textbooks. Further, teacher assistants, \$2.4 million; fewer teacher assistants, not a \$640,000 increase. Supply teachers, a \$2.8-million decline.

The government tried to say today and yesterday that somehow the figures we were using weren't fully accurate. What we found and confirmed with board officials is that the figures I was provided with by the school board, which were confirmed by them, are far closer to the reality of this government.

I say again to the public of Ontario and I say to the honourable members opposite, they need to release these figures to have any honour in this House. This House would deny them any reasonable credibility if they can't tell us what their handiwork has done. The only people in this province who are elected democratically who can respond to the needs of the children in Ontario, in Toronto, Ottawa and Hamilton, are in this House. Should this government show up tonight without a set of figures, with just more rhetoric, without being able to tell us exactly and precisely how much harm they're doing to education in Toronto, I say shame on them in a way I've never felt in this House before. Should that be their deliberate response, the one I asked for by being here tonight, then that is the government prepared to go, without reservation, to no shortage of space to deceive us. I put that forward not as something I'm implying, but I would say there's a set of conditions here under which the government needs to provide to the people the very rudiments of their ability to judge its performance.

I say on behalf of students in Toronto—and I understand in Ottawa we have learned now that they can't balance the budget, that that supervisor has been able to find less than half of the savings that this government promoted and promised would take place.

This government needs to come clean with the students of Ontario. It needs to provide to this House and these only elected officials the information and the assurances to reconcile statements made by the Premier of this province, the person who should be able to be depended on when he says children are not going to be harmed.

**Mr Ted Arnott (Waterloo-Wellington):** It's a pleasure to respond to the member for Parkdale-High Park. Let me start off by placing into historical perspective the issue of the appointment of school board supervisors, an issue which is paramount to this debate. We appointed a supervisor because, "The Education Act is very clear. No school board is allowed by law to plan for a deficit; that is simply not permitted."

Those words were spoken, I'm told, by an honourable member opposite, the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who is here in the House tonight, when he made this statement in the House on June 14, 1990, when he served as Minister of Education in the Peterson government. The member was quite right when he said that.

Now that this is on the record, it's equally imperative that we clear up any distortion or mistaken information instigated by the member for Parkdale-High Park. As of late, the member opposite, through exaggerated conjecture and rhetoric, has tried to infer that the Toronto District School Board's balanced budget is somehow askew. Well, the member opposite is simply incorrect. This House is well aware of this member's tendency to embellish and his unwillingness to put information in its proper context or, in other words, his fearmongering—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown):** Stop the clock. A point of order?

**Mr Kennedy:** On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member opposite is using the word "embellish." There are facts that I have put on the table here and—

**The Acting Speaker:** That's not a point of order, and I'm not permitted to allow points of order.

**Mr Arnott:** For the record, allow me to correct the member opposite with respect to his claims. You see, the member for Parkdale-High Park is on record trying to fearmonger by saying that the supervisor's budget would "cut all the pool programs, all the recreation programs, all the special-needs programs." This was Gerard Kennedy on CFRB radio, August 27, 2002.

As he so often does, the member for Parkdale-High Park, much like his leader, the leader of the Liberal opposition, claimed that the sky would fall. But the sky isn't falling; in fact, quite the opposite. The member said that the pools would close. I say to this member, his dire prediction was wrong. The pools will be open. The member for Parkdale-High Park said that recreation programs would be cut. Well, he was wrong again. In fact, the programs in place when the supervisor arrived

stayed in place. Not only was he wrong about the supervisor cutting programs, the supervisor announced new investments in key areas such as teachers, technology, textbooks and classroom supplies. The member said that special education in Toronto would also be cut, and he was wrong yet again. The supervisor protected special-education funding and ensured that the needs of the students would be met.

The supervisor recently passed a good-news budget for the students and people of Toronto, and it's utterly shameful that the member opposite would try to distort the reality of the situation at the TDSB. That budget showed that tough decisions could be made while still protecting key programs in the classroom.

I'm advised that the budget plan also included some of the following highlights: the budget increased spending for classroom teachers by \$5 million; increased spending on textbooks and classroom supplies by \$500,000; increased spending on classroom computers, while still achieving significant efficiencies, by \$2 million; and so on and so on.

The Liberal leader and his education critic continue to employ the Liberal version of accounting, which, as we all know, is somewhat lacking, to say the least. You see, their methodology is fundamentally flawed. The other day, the member for Parkdale-High Park tried to make comparisons on spending in the TDSB by comparing total expenditures in the fiscal year 2001-02 to net expenditures in 2002-03, which, as we know and as has been established in this House, is an apples-to-oranges comparison.

I'm told the member for Parkdale-High Park's expenditure comparison that he released regarding total expenditures against total expenditures in 2002-03 was a fair comparison, and it supports the supervisor's claim that funding under this budget is going up in four key areas.

At the end of the day, regardless of how you look at the numbers, the supervisor's budget has put the board back on the road to financial health. The supervisor has been successful in finding \$90 million in savings. The programs that were in place when the supervisor was appointed are still in place, such as swimming pools, heritage language, outdoor centres and parenting centres.

It's time that the member opposite stopped fearmongering and admitted that his doom-and-gloom predictions did not happen. With sound fiscal management—

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. The motion to adjourn is deemed to have been carried. The House stands adjourned until 6:45 of the clock.

*The House adjourned at 1811.*

*Evening meeting reported in volume B.*

**ERRATA**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Page</b>	<b>Column</b>	<b>Line(s)</b>	<b>Should read:</b>
61A	3191	1	26-27	Memorable learning experience. There are also volunteers there who wear light blue coats, as the member for



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