



ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Fourth Session, 37th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Quatrième session, 37^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 14 May 2003

Mercredi 14 mai 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Copies of Hansard

Information regarding purchase of copies of Hansard may be obtained from Publications Ontario, Management Board Secretariat, 50 Grosvenor Street, Toronto, Ontario, M7A 1N8. Phone 416-326-5310, 326-5311 or toll-free 1-800-668-9938.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Exemplaires du Journal

Pour des exemplaires, veuillez prendre contact avec Publications Ontario, Secrétariat du Conseil de gestion, 50 rue Grosvenor, Toronto (Ontario) M7A 1N8. Par téléphone : 416-326-5310, 326-5311, ou sans frais : 1-800-668-9938.



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 14 May 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 14 mai 2003

The House met at 1330.

Prayers.

COMMUNITY LIVING DAY

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I ask if we could receive unanimous consent that each party might make a short statement on community living.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there a specific time for the short statement—any time requirement?

Hon Mr Galt: I'm asking for approximately 90 seconds per caucus.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): It gives me great pleasure to announce that today is Community Living Day. We have in the audience members of the community living community, and I am particularly pleased to sponsor their annual Community Living Day here at Queen's Park to promote awareness of the wonderful work the Ontario Association for Community Living does for those who are developmentally handicapped. I am particularly pleased and proud to recognize Community Living Day. Joining us today in the Legislature are guests from Community Living Ontario.

Community Living Month is an opportunity to increase public awareness about people with developmental disabilities and the significant contribution they make to society. It's also an opportunity to acknowledge all the dedicated people who work in the developmental services sector. I want to recognize our government's commitment to supporting vulnerable people in Ontario. I'm particularly proud to introduce all the members who are here today. I believe this House should join in welcoming them warmly.

Applause.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I am pleased to have an opportunity to rise and recognize that this is Community Living Week and today is Community Living Day. We are very pleased and honoured that various representatives from across the province who are part of community living associations in their communities have taken the time to come here to Queen's Park to speak with members of provincial Parliament to continue to press with us issues that are very real for the people they work with and on whose behalf they advocate.

I would say to the members of the government, as we recognize the very fine efforts put forward by people

involved with community living associations across the province, that it is time the government stepped up to the plate to provide some real assistance for people with disabilities, people with whom the associations live. The government has indicated in its throne speech that there will be an increase, but we don't know what that increase is going to be. We know that there need to be increased supports, assisted living supports, for persons with disabilities. We know that people living on Ontario disability have a very low threshold for savings. A parent came to me last night and suggested that they can't even prepay the funeral of their child because of the threshold. That's considered an asset for the person who is disabled.

We have a lot of work to do. Listen to what these people have to say.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I also want to offer my sincere congratulations, and the congratulations and thanks of our caucus here at Queen's Park, to Community Living Ontario and to all the community living associations across the province. I want to say to the workers in those associations that they deserve our thanks and our congratulations as well, because together you do a tremendous job. You have a sacred trust and you rise to the occasion in spite of the fact that you have less than adequate resources coming to you from this government.

I want to particularly pay respect today to my own community living association, Community Living Algoma, and the CUPE workers, who just yesterday resolved a very difficult labour dispute and will be back to work in the next day or two to provide the services that I know they all want to provide to my constituents and my citizens who live with developmental challenges every day of their lives.

I call on this government to also rise to the occasion. In Sault Ste Marie it was obvious that the reason for that strike was the lack of resources over the years to that association to provide the services, the accommodation and all the other things those folks deserve and need to lead lives of dignity and quality in the communities in which they live. They deserve every opportunity, the same as the rest of us, to work in the community and to have housing that's affordable and of a quality that speaks to their inherent dignity.

Today, again I thank those folks across the province who do this, such important work for all of us, for those very vulnerable and at-risk citizens.

MOTIONS

HOUSE SITTINGS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek the unanimous consent of this House to sit next week on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order, Mr Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Government House leader.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I need consent to adjourn this debate for the purpose of seeking unanimous consent to moving a motion to seek unanimous consent to sit Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday of next week, without debate, and immediately go back into the present situation.

The Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

A point of order, the member for Windsor-St Clair.

Mr Duncan: My point has been addressed, Mr Speaker.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 6(a)(i), the House shall meet on Tuesday, May 20, Wednesday, May 21 and Thursday, May 22.

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

CONTEMPT OF PARLIAMENT

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 13, 2003, on the amendment to the motion by Mr Conway arising from the Speaker's ruling of May 8, 2003.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Resuming the debate, the government had the floor. Seeing none, further debate?

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): I'm pleased to participate in this debate today to emphasize not only how this government has acted in contempt of this Legislature but in other ways beyond that. It ties into your ruling, Mr Speaker, very much so, on the lack of respect that the Harris-Eves government has for us as elected officials.

I'm going to start my presentation today with a quote from John Ibbitson's *Loyal No More*.

1340

"On the last day of the 1999 campaign, a handful of desultory Tory protesters greeted him at a party rally in Orillia. Harris appeared to ignore the jeers of the demonstrators as he made his way to his campaign bus, but, as he stepped into the coach, he suddenly turned and waved. The protesters howled in impotent defiance. Harris waved back, his ear-to-ear grin an unmistakable declaration of victory—and derision. This was the real Mike Harris: confident, arrogant, determined to win at all costs, contemptuous of his enemies."

I want to talk today a bit about some of the contempt that this government is showing for us in this Legislature

as democratically elected individuals. We hear over and over again about "the Eves government." This is not the Eves government that the 103 of us here are representing. This is the Ontario government. This is a government that represents, and a Legislature that belongs to, the people of this province, but unfortunately we've seen over and over again how the relevance of this most important building has been undermined. We've seen in your own ruling, Mr Speaker, how the relevance of this building has been undermined by the budget being taken outside of the Legislature. We've seen again the contempt of this Legislature and the contempt for yourself from the member from Oshawa. I think that that picture of that member is going to resonate with people all across this province because that's the attitude that this government has: sticking the finger out at the people of Ontario. It may have been directed at one of the honourable members in here, but it went beyond that. It was a portrayal of the contempt that this government has for the citizens of this province. It's the contempt of this government of, "If you didn't vote for us, be darned with you." It's a terrible attitude.

I want to talk, though, about some of our rights and something that every one of us in this Legislature should be concerned with: the contempt that exists for the democratically elected individuals here. I'm going to cite some examples.

The first one that I choose to cite is an issue that's in my riding right now. It deals with the deer hunt and whether or not to allow the use of shotguns. We've had a traditional hunt in this riding that only has allowed muzzle-loaders since 1978. Yet for some reason, the bureaucracy wants to allow the introduction of shotguns. I commend individuals like Dave Snook and Bob Bishop, who have come to me to make me aware of this issue and the concern that they have over the loss of this traditional hunting opportunity, and the concern that's been expressed out there by landowners.

As I've been dealing with this issue, I've been dealing with the minister's office, as I rightfully should be. A little over a week ago I had a call from an individual to tell me that the PC candidate has suddenly got himself involved in this. I thought it was quite odd. How could the PC candidate get himself involved? Lo and behold, I find out that Al Pyette, the MPP liaison, who is supposed to represent every one of us, picks up the phone, doesn't talk to the MPP who's democratically elected; he talks to the Tory candidate. That's wrong.

Then it continues on this issue of a letter that was written on May 1 from the Ministry of Natural Resources. The district manager writes to a constituent about an issue dealing with the change in designation in WMU 92. This is where I'm very concerned, and we all should be concerned, that the bureaucracy in this province is becoming politicized as well. Not only is this a political environment that we're in, but the bureaucracy is now becoming politicized, and it never used to be. It's wrong. The bureaucracy should not be political.

I'll quote from this letter: "The district has identified concerns...in your letter...The Ontario Conservative

government has spoken out against the federal firearms legislation.” Not the Ontario government; the “Ontario Conservative government.”

I’ll continue with this letter, which really troubles me when I look at who it’s cc’d to. It’s cc’d to Steve Peters, MPP, Elgin-Middlesex-London; rightfully so. It’s cc’d to—I won’t even name his name—to the PC candidate, Elgin-Middlesex-London. Cc’d on a piece of government document. I just find that a terrible undermining of my democratic rights.

I want to talk about another issue, again how they undermine us. Last Saturday, Minister Hardeman was in my riding to make a very important water announcement. Did this government have the courtesy to contact the democratically elected individual? No, again they showed their contempt for this Legislature. If it hadn’t been for a little birdie who called me on Friday night and said, “Are you going to be at the announcement?”, I wouldn’t have known about it. I think that’s contemptuous of this government, that they would direct that at an individual member and not invite a member.

We’ll continue on. This one’s a real kicker. Again, contempt for the Legislature: a funding announcement in my riding sent to the Elgin County Public Library announcing \$29,000 for the Early Years child fund, congratulating the county on the money and saying how the candidate strongly encouraged the honourable minister to approve this money. This is the Tory candidate on his own campaign literature announcing government money, and I think that’s contemptuous of this Legislature and all of us as individual members, that we as individuals are being bypassed.

Here’s another media release from the Elgin-Middlesex-London Provincial PC Association, welcoming the grant to support the victims of domestic violence in St Thomas-Elgin—a press release announcing a \$30,000 donation. But what really troubles me is that now this starts to show the contempt not only for the elected officials, but the contempt that is existing within the bureaucracy of this province, because the bureaucracy of this province didn’t notify the local member of this grant. The bureaucracy is using a Tory candidate as the vehicle to make a government funding announcement. I think that is extremely wrong.

I want to point back to the Early Years challenge fund. The county of Elgin was so disturbed by this letter that they sent it to me so that I could be aware of it, because they were not impressed that the government would bypass a local member and go through a Tory candidate to make a funding announcement.

Let’s cite some other examples of contempt that exists of this government. We saw recently the announcement in Scarborough of the hiring of 1,000 new police officers. Who is standing in the background of that photo opportunity? Not elected officials who represent the Toronto area; there were some elected officials—no opposition members—yet there were Conservative candidates standing in the background.

Let’s talk about another example where this government shows its contempt for the democratically elected

individuals in this province. In April, the Minister of Tourism visits the riding of Sarnia-Lambton and goes to announce a grant of money. Do they have the courtesy to let the honourable member know that they’re coming to town? No, they don’t. Again the contemptuous nature of this government, again how it ties in with the ruling that you made and how we’re seeing this very fine and most important facility undermined.

Let’s look at the nutrient management hearings that took place back in February in the municipality of Leamington. This is the final speakers’ list of those individuals who could make presentations for those hearings. This is a speakers’ list that was not determined by people on the ground; this is a speakers’ list that was determined by the ministry’s staff.

We’ve heard the Minister of Agriculture stand up and talk about how much they consult and how hard they work at consultation, yet when you hear this it will just blow you away, how they’re prepared to put the interests of the PC party first and the interest of the farmers of Ontario second. Who’s listed on this list produced by the government? One of the presenters is a gentleman—I won’t name his name either—listed as the PC candidate, and the PC candidate bumps out such organizations as the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Kent Federation of Agriculture, Ridgeway College, concerned citizens, vegetable growers, farmers, farmers, farmers. PC candidate—two candidates there, plus two elected members who were disregarded; another example of the contempt that exists in this province.

1350

Let’s talk a bit about this so-called throne speech consultation that took place. Again it shows the contempt that exists out there. The Minister of Agriculture was in my riding doing throne speech consultation with my constituents, farmers I’ve developed a good working relationship with and who I believe have been in many ways abandoned by this government. Does the honourable minister have any respect for the democratically elected member when she comes into the riding? No, she doesn’t. She holds invite-only, behind-closed-doors secret consultation meetings—it sounds very much like the old Ontarians with Disabilities Act consultations. Do they invite the democratically elected member? No, they don’t.

The throne speech consultation continues when one of the honourable members, Mr Dunlop, visits the riding of Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington. Do they notify the local member and involve the local member in the throne speech consultations? Of course, they don’t. But they point out very clearly that the Conservative candidate for that riding was at those throne speech consultations—again, undermining her credibility.

Again, back in February—the sad politicking that takes place in this province—the Minister of Health puts out a press release talking about the Conservative members in the Niagara area and their efforts at working with the dispatch services in the Niagara area. He includes in his press release the sitting members, which is fair game.

But he includes in his press release the Tory candidate in St Catherines, undermining the democratically elected individual who represents the riding of St Catherines.

Here's another one, an event that took place back in February. This one is actually on the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines' Web site. This was an announcement of \$750,000 being put into the riding of Thunder Bay for agricultural research. In this big photo of the announcement is the local PC candidate. Did they have the courage and conviction to invite Michael Gravelle, the democratically elected member? No, they didn't. Did they invite Lyn McLeod? No, they didn't. But on their own Web site, they're prepared to put a photo of a Tory candidate; again, total disregard.

Speaker, I think this underlies much of your ruling, showing how provincial dollars are being used not only to make government announcements—and that's acceptable—but how provincial dollars are being used to prop up Tory candidates around this province. I think it's contemptuous of this Legislature that they would do that.

I would say to every one of you in this room: ask yourself, "Why am I here?" I think every one of us is here because we want to make a difference in this province. Some of us have come from different roots. Many of us, like myself, have served our apprenticeship at the municipal level; have gone through municipal government and come here because we want to continue to serve and represent the people of our province.

As a municipal politician, I had a lot of respect for this facility. I respected this place and the role the provincial Legislature plays in dictating policies and programs for municipalities in this province. Did we always agree with the provincial government? No. Quite honestly, I've lived through three provincial governments and all three of them treated municipal governments like dirt, and that's a real problem.

But we're here to represent our constituents. We get undermined, as we come to this facility, in dealing with such things as the budget. I think it's important that we understand the role of the Legislature. The important part of this job is to legitimize government decisions. When the elected representatives of the people meet in the Legislature and debate the issues of the day, the Legislature provides the outlet for the expression of different points of view and the opinions of the electorate we represent. The most important responsibility of this Legislature is to provide a public forum in which actions of the government are to be examined and scrutinized. Those opportunities to examine and scrutinize the government in dealing with this budget have been undermined by the fact that this budget was not tabled in this Legislature.

I would encourage the members—as we were elected, we all received this procedural briefing book. You should have a look at it, because some of you, I think, forget what we were elected to do. It talks about how a bill is introduced—it is introduced in the assembly for first reading—and the debate process that one follows. It talks about substantive motions that this Legislature needs to

deal with, and in talking about substantive motions, examples of such motions include the budget motion. Read the book that was prepared for each one of us as elected individuals.

We've heard a lot of attacks on the Speaker. I think it's appalling, the attacks we've heard directed at the Speaker because, my colleagues, we should realize that the Speaker is, in parliamentary terms, the most important member in the Legislative Assembly, as he presides over the debate and is the guardian of our historical rights and privileges. The Speaker is an individual whom we should be treating with respect, yet we see contempt day after day in this Legislature directed at the Speaker. There's something seriously wrong with that.

The loyalty of the Speaker is not to any political party; the loyalty of the Speaker is not to unelected backroom party hacks; the loyalty of the Speaker is to the 103 members here in this Legislature and to ensure that we do things in a way that is going to be in the best interests of the citizens of Ontario. That is being undermined. You are continuing to undermine the Speaker in the important role that the Speaker plays on our behalf.

Let's talk a bit about accountability. Some of you should spend some time going down to the legislative library. The legislative library does a wonderful job providing services for us as elected officials. In one of the papers that they presented, they talk about accountability and how the accountability of this House for the expenditure of public funds and the effectiveness and the management of government have been predominant concerns of politicians and public administrators for several decades. The question of fiscal accountability and how the government of the day is responsible for effective expenditure of public funds and ensuring that we get value for our money: that has been undermined.

We continue to see wastes of money with these propaganda pieces that continue to come out and flood into our mailboxes—\$400 million in propaganda. How many further millions in TV ads and newspaper ads? Quite honestly, I think the public is sick of receiving this and seeing the waste of taxpayers' money, and there's the latest one coming up right now: Maclean's magazine, Office of the Premier, 30 pages. Let's recycle it; let's recycle this government. It's time for a change in this province. It's time to put a government in place that's going to have respect, not only for the Speaker but for the Legislature, the citizens of Ontario and elected officials. This is a government that shows contempt for elected officials.

I want to close with some quotes from Hansard in 1993. This is about the so-called budget.

"I was rather astounded today, when ministerial statements were read, that there was not one by the Treasurer...of Ontario. I cannot recall another time in the history of the province of Ontario when a mini-budget has been introduced by a government and not introduced in the Legislature of Ontario."

Ernie Eves said that in 1993, how disgusted he was that the NDP government didn't introduce that budget in

the Legislature, and he has the gall to stand up and defend the process that's taking place right now. This government is bent on undermining the democracy of this province. Speaker, I thank you for standing up for this Legislature and standing up for the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: Just before we carry on, we have with us in the Speaker's gallery a former member of the House of Commons, Mr Jesse Flis. Please join me in welcoming our special guest and colleague.

1400

Mr Howard Hampton (Kenora-Rainy River): Today, by all accounts we should be debating the government's budget. We should be raising the issues and concerns of people across Ontario in the context of the government's budget. But the government didn't have the courage to present a budget in the Legislature. Instead, they produced a television infomercial in a car parts facility. So instead of debating the important issues of a budget—how money shall be raised, invested and spent in the province—we are in the fourth day of a debate over a motion regarding this government's contempt for the Legislature and, I would argue equally, its contempt for the people of Ontario.

Today, in the context of this debate, I want to raise one of the issues that we really should be debating and which I believe this government has shown contempt for, not only through its television infomercial but through its unwillingness to tackle the issue. Today I would like to introduce the members of the Participating Co-operatives of Ontario Trusteed Pension Plan, who are in the gallery. These former employees of farm and dairy co-operatives located all over Ontario worked hard all their lives and thought they could count on a modest income in their retirement years from their employers' pension plan, but, tragically, that is not turning out to be the case. Their pension plan has been fatally damaged by a risky investment strategy gone terribly wrong, accompanied by an almost complete breakdown in the regulation of pensions in this province. In fact, just this month all members of the plan have seen their already very modest pension benefits cut in half, while an actuarial consultant decides on the best way of legally winding up the plan and distributing the remaining assets left in the plan.

Last February, Gilles Bisson and I alerted the Conservatives to problems with Ontario pension plans and the legislation that regulates them. We called for a royal commission to examine the current state of pensions and what was needed to strengthen them in the future. Our aim was to provide stability for retirees. We believe that people who work hard all their lives and contribute to pension plans in good faith should be able to enjoy a secure and dignified retirement. The Conservatives ignored the issue then and, from what we saw of their television infomercial, they intend to ignore the issue now and show contempt for these retirees and other retirees across the province.

This is a government that has ignored the growing problems in pension plans, and we see the result here

today. The collapse of the Participating Co-operatives of Ontario Trusteed Pension Plan has affected 2,300 people in every part of Ontario. Some 2,300 retirees have seen their pension incomes cut in half, while other costs such as hydroelectricity, gas, rent and food continue to climb. The co-operative plan now has \$64 million in assets but has pension obligations of \$120 million.

The Financial Services Commission of Ontario, the government of Ontario's pension regulator, had ample warning of the problems with the pension fund's investment strategy but did nothing.

This government made mistakes, the plan trustees made mistakes and the investment manager made mistakes, but it is the people in the gallery today and thousands of others all over Ontario who are now paying the price. These people worked hard and played by the rules and they are paying for the mistakes of this government and its refusal to undertake the needed and meaningful pension reforms that we need to see in this province.

Pensioners have little recourse when this happens. This is especially a problem with multi-employer pension plans such as the Co-operatives pension plan because they are not covered by the pension benefits guarantee fund. Without a backup, they are sometimes at the mercy of incompetent investment managers protected by inadequate regulations. The government knows this, and yet they have refused to act, and in doing so have shown contempt for these very retirees, people like Don Slinger. Don is 81 years old, worked for United Co-operatives for 32 years and retired in 1982. It's because of this tragedy that today I repeat my call for a royal commission to look at all aspects of pension plans in Ontario.

New Democrats have some practical ideas for pension reform that can be implemented now. First, there needs to be pension backup for all pension plans in Ontario, including multi-employer pension plans such as the Co-op pension plan; portable pensions from job to job, so as people are forced to move from one employer to another, their pension plan travels with them, vesting from day one—that's what they have now in Quebec; the day you go to work is the day your pension plan vests and you carry it with you as you move through the workforce—and pensions geared to cost-of-living increases. These would be good first steps, but much more needs to be done to protect seniors, retirees and all those people who look forward to a secure retirement.

What exists now is a government pension regulatory disaster, because there's no backup for these kinds of multi-employer pension plans. People deserve the security of knowing that a pension will be there for them when they retire. New Democrats would reform pension laws and prevent pensions from being robbed by employers or inflation. We would implement pension backup for all Ontario pension plans and ensure that multi-employer plans are covered by the pension benefits guarantee fund. We would remove the contempt this government has shown for pensioners like our visitors today who are here from all over Ontario.

I want to elaborate for just a minute on what happened here. The investment manager in this particular case

engaged the pension fund in a very risky derivatives investment. Everyone knows that derivatives are risky at the best of times. Here was a pension plan that had a large number of people who were already retired and a large number of people who were slated to retire. Anyone would know that in that context investing in derivatives is especially risky.

What is worse is that the Financial Services Commission of Ontario knew this was happening. They knew, in the context of many people already being retired and many more people about to retire, that the investment manager was investing in possibly the most risky form of investment, and the financial services commission of this government did nothing. This happened between the years 1997 and 2000. That's when these very risky investments were made.

I know the government will say, "Why didn't some of the trustees of the plan take action?" Well, some of the trustees of the plan didn't know the risky nature of the investment that was being undertaken. So here we have several million dollars, of people who have worked hard all their lives, people who observed their responsibilities as citizens and taxpayers, who believed their pension investment was going to be financially supervised by the financial services commission and who believed, as this government has said, that if you play by the rules you should do all right. And what did they find out? A risky pension investment plan and the financial services commission of this government did nothing, even though they knew for over three years that this was happening.

1410

This is why we should be debating the government's budget here today. We should be holding the government to account for not including in that budget new pension reforms that would adequately protect these retirees and adequately protect retirees and those who look forward to retirement across this province. I just want to say in passing that this is but one symptom of the issues this government has shown contempt for and, frankly, has tried to ignore.

When I looked at the television infomercial that I saw announced, what did I hear the government saying they were going to do? They're going to provide property tax relief to Frank Stronach, who had an income of \$56 million, who lives in a \$10-million mansion. This government believes Frank Stronach needs government help to pay his property taxes. I say to this government, I think Mr Stronach has enough money to pay his own property taxes. If he wants to live in a \$10-million mansion, then he can certainly pay his own property taxes.

Where were you when these pensioners, these people who have worked hard all their lives, who played by the rules, who paid their taxes, who met their responsibilities, asked you to show some responsibility and take some accountability for an investment scheme that had clearly gone wrong? Where were you? Where were they? They were in a car parts facility in Brampton producing one of those made-for-TV infomercials, trying to spin out how a tax giveaway for Frank Stronach was somehow going to

address the needs of seniors across this province. How completely contemptuous.

I say to this government, I don't know why you haven't used the last four days here to once and for all bring in a budget and allow us to examine that budget. Why do you insist on, first of all, showing contempt for the Legislature, and then showing contempt for the people of Ontario? Instead of saying, "We made a mistake; we shouldn't have done this; let's get on with the real issues," you drag out this farce. You drag this out.

I suppose we should have noted from the documents that became clear yesterday that the government's real plan when they launched the television infomercial was to do the television infomercial and then call an election without ever facing any scrutiny in this Legislature, without facing any scrutiny from the media. That apparently was the plan: to produce a television infomercial, to spend \$36 billion of the public's money without submitting to the scrutiny of a budget or a budget process.

I say to the government, if you're not prepared to observe the rules, the conventions of our Constitution, if you are not prepared to observe the parliamentary process, a process that has been put together over generations by people who think long and hard about how we protect democracy and how we enhance democracy, then why don't you call the election tomorrow? Go out there and explain to these people and to other people across Ontario why it's more important for you to pay Frank Stronach's property taxes on his \$10-million mansion than to look after the legitimate needs of pensioners who've paid their way, who've lived by the rules and who've worked hard.

These pensioners have been treated unfairly, unjustly. I say to the government: in the time you have remaining, would you at least meet with this group of pensioners, would you at least look at the arguments they've put forward, would you at least consider the arguments they have put forward pointing toward alternatives that will give them a better result, a fairer result, a more just result than you're prepared to foist on them now? It seems to me that that would at least address some of the contempt you have shown so far.

Then you can argue your point on the hustings—that you believe it's really the Frank Stronachs of the world, the Steve Stavroses of the world, the Eugene Melnyks of the world who need help paying their property taxes—rather than address the legitimate needs of these retirees and other retirees like them for better pension regulation and pension reform in Ontario. Speaking for all New Democrats, I would be happy to take you on in that debate, because the Eugene Melnyks, the Steve Stavroses and the Frank Stronachs don't need your help; they don't need government's help; they don't need taxpayers' help. They've done very well, thank you, according to the regime that you've already put in place. But what about fairness for these retirees, and what about fairness for all the other people in this province who are trying to plan now for a retirement that has some income security? You've been silent on that issue. In fact, you've disappeared on the issue. You've tried to ignore the issue.

I say again to this government, what you should have brought forward, instead of your television infomercial, was pension reform that would have allowed Ontario to catch up to where other provinces are at already. Other provinces already provide for immediate vesting. Other provinces already provide for pension portability. Other provinces have already put in place at least partial indexing to protect pensions against inflation. Other provinces have already put in place pension governance legislation which would require the Financial Services Commission of Ontario to take action when they see this kind of risky investment scheme. Other provinces have already put in place other regulations which require better, fairer, more just pension governance. Where have you been? Looking after Frank Stronach; looking after someone who owns a \$10-million mansion, has a \$56-million income and wants more tax cuts. That's where your priority has been.

I just want to say I still think it's not too late for this government. It is not too late for this government to stand up and admit that you made a mistake. You made a horrendous mistake: your idea of defying 800 years of constitutional convention, your idea of ignoring 800 years of parliamentary process, to not present a budget before the people, to not present a budget before the elected representatives of the people and instead present a television infomercial in a car parts plant. It's not too late to say, "We were wrong." It's not too late to say, "We should never have done that." It's not too late to say, "We would never do that again." And it's not too late to recognize your real priority, the priority that we should be taking care of now: the needs of pensioners like these pensioners here today, the needs of other pensioners, the needs of other hard-working Ontarians who want to contribute to a secure pension fund, who want to know, when they retire—and most of them want to retire earlier rather than later—that they will have a secure income, who want to know that that income will be protected at least to a certain extent against the vagaries of inflation.

I wish the Minister of Finance were here today. In fact, I wish the Minister of Finance were prepared to meet with these pensioners. I wish the Minister of Finance were prepared to recognize the legitimate aspirations and the legitimate arguments that these pensioners have put forward. But I see that this government still hasn't learned its lesson. It still believes that it can listen only to the wealthy and the powerful. It still believes that it doesn't have to listen to the voices of ordinary people. It still believes it can show contempt for constitutional convention. It still believes it can show contempt for 800 years of British parliamentary development. You still believe that you can make the rules as you go along and that you can ride roughshod over the law, roughshod over constitutional convention and roughshod over the legitimate aspirations of ordinary people like this who have paid their taxes, who have worked hard and now deserve your legitimate attention.

1420

Hon John R. Baird (Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs): I am pleased to

have the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment to the motion. At the outset, I would like to acknowledge, as did the capable member for Scarborough Centre, Community Living Day in Ontario. There are a lot of our friends here. The member for Scarborough Centre and I were able to attend a fundraising event for the Toronto Association for Community Living the other day, and I see Agnes Samler, Cay Shedden and Jesse Flis from the Toronto association, so I would like to particularly welcome them, as well as Chris Grayson from the Campbellford and District Association for Community Living, a pretty innovative group in Northumberland county, which I was able to visit with my colleague Doug Galt. So I say hi to them.

Hon Ernie Hardeman (Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): There's a great group from Oxford, from Tillsonburg.

Hon Mr Baird: I'm sure there are a lot of good representatives from Oxford, from Tillsonburg, as the minister tells me.

I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak in this debate. I think we can have a fair discussion about the evolving role of Parliament. It has changed in a very big way. There is a huge influence of mass communications, not just in Parliament and how it affects Parliament but also in how it affects government. We live in a 200-channel universe. We have more daily papers than we've had. We have instant access to the Web. We have 24-hour newscasts. We have 24-hour radiocasts. No longer is there a 24-hour news cycle; there is in fact a news cycle that demands instant reaction, almost to the hour, if not the minute. The media have tremendous power in this place, as do non-parliamentary groups.

This challenges Parliament's role, and that's not a reflection on either opposition party or on the government. I think we have to ask ourselves: is Parliament as effective a body as it could be? I think you could say yes and no. There are not enough free votes. I think we can look at both sides of the House. How often is there a member of the government who votes against his or her own party? You could look just as equally at the two opposition parties and ask how often one of their members stands up and votes on a controversial issue against their party leadership. I don't think you'd find a substantial difference. You might even find a number of instances where people have stood up on principled grounds, like the member for Stoney Creek. But I don't think that's a comment on the opposition or the government; it's a reality of how our parliamentary system has evolved, not just here in Canada but specifically in the province of Ontario.

I think there is a fundamental challenge, when you have the legislative body and the executive branch together, when you have them co-located. I think we have seen the growing instance of politics turning into a "gotcha" politics. I once saw one of the reporters here at Queen's Park do the intro to his story, and he made a few mistakes. In fact, he stood there and I think taped it eight or nine times until he got it just right, exactly right,

exactly what he wanted to communicate to his viewers. Mr Speaker, you don't have that chance, I don't have that chance, no member of this House has that chance. But if one member on one occasion makes one bad judgment: gotcha. Those of us on this side of the House will scream, "Gotcha!" and those in the opposition will scream, "Gotcha!" I don't think that's good for the process. It's a game that all of us, if we're honest, would admit that we've fallen into, and I think that's too bad.

Too often, people are more concerned with the politics than they are with the legislative issue in front of them or of sound public policy. I think of the issue of time allocation, where we now have to time-allocate bills in this place where all three parties agree. When all three parties support a minor bill, we have to go through the full legislative debate and process because, come hell or high water, one member or one party will want to slow the whole place down. When we have a consequential bill that's meaningful to all members, we'll sit here and have to debate it for just three or four days, but if there is an inconsequential bill where everyone agrees, it has to be debated for the same amount of time. We can't debate one bill longer than the other. I don't know whether that's the fault of the third party or the government, or perhaps both of us and the official opposition. But that's what Parliament has come to. I think that's a sad statement about all of us.

There is this dial-up indignation where people can simply press a button and explode with outrage. We heard the leader of the third party speak earlier about the lack of respect for Parliament on the side of the government. He was the Attorney General and a front-bench member in a government where the House only sat for 15 days in the course of an entire year. Where was the indignation there? Fifteen days in a single year, but no indignation. I certainly think that's the pot calling the kettle black.

I think we have to reflect on how this place has changed and look at what we can all do as individual members. I had the opportunity to appoint a new chair of the Ontario Energy Board. I went out and recruited someone of the highest calibre, someone of the highest integrity, someone who has a huge amount of experience as an advocate for consumers at the federal level, someone who served as a federal court judge, someone who served as a reform agent at the Ontario Securities Commission, someone whose past was absolutely impeccable as a public servant. We went to the legislative committee and, to their credit, Mr Bryant and Mr Conway supported it, but the NDP said no, despite this man's unquestioned ability for the job, despite his unquestioned character. It's the game; they'll just vote against it. I don't think that serves this place well.

Routinely, members in this House—opposition members—will ask questions of the government on behalf of their constituents and then scream and yell hysterically while the answer's being given. Why did they come? Why did they ask the question if they don't even do the courtesy of listening? I'm not going to be dishonest; I'm

sure it was the case when the other two parties opposite were in government, from members of my party. Again, it's dial-up indignation. That brings the whole place down. I think we've all got to acknowledge that.

I've been listening with great interest to Mr McGuinty, the leader of the official opposition, talk about the democratic deficit in Ontario, how there's got to be more democracy, how there's got to be more of an opportunity to expand the right of all citizens and legislators to participate. But what did they do in my friend the member for Ottawa-Vanier's riding? An individual stepped forward to run for the nomination, spent one year campaigning. This was someone with degrees from Harvard and Oxford, an outstanding public servant. What did they decide? They weren't going to have it. They cancelled the nomination meeting. Like any Third World dictatorship, "The vote is off; I will impose which candidate will be here." But again that same individual comes into this House and seeks to lecture those of us on this side of the House about a democratic deficit. It's absolutely disgraceful.

The member opposite dials up his indignation because he doesn't want to listen. He thinks that's acceptable. Cancel the nomination meeting and impose one man's iron will on the riding association members in Ottawa-Vanier. The candidate that's appointed couldn't get the nomination meeting.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Baird: You should heckle. You should be embarrassed. An outstanding individual who wanted to represent his community was sloughed aside when they cancelled the vote. I'll tell you, Ernie Eves or Mike Harris or Larry Grossman or Andy Brandt or Bill Davis would have none of that.

I notice there are a lot of uncomfortable members over there. Who's it going to be next? We saw that in the riding of Scarborough Centre with my colleague Marilyn Mushinski. I don't have anything against Brad Duguid, but they cancelled that. It was absolutely wrong. We have confidence in the ballot box, not in the pen to slough aside democracy, to cancel votes. I think it's regrettable.

1430

I say there is a lot of blame to go around for the way this place has changed, but you've got to ask yourself, is the leader of that indignation without doubt?

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: Oh, they're going to win the seat, one of the members says. So it doesn't matter. "We can end democracy because we're going to win the seat." Not a single ballot has been cast and yet that party says, "We're going to win the seat." That's shameful; that is absolutely shameful. They should never take for granted the votes of people in this province.

You should hear what the Ottawa-Vanier Liberal association is saying about your party. You should hear what they're saying in Scarborough Centre.

Hon Brad Clark (Minister of Labour): What are they saying?

Hon Mr Baird: "The dictatorship of Dalton." It's shameful.

There is, among all members of this House, a common respect that we all have as we enter the front door. It's that we all had to seek election; we all had to stand for nomination of our party. I may disagree with the member for Windsor-St Clair, I may disagree with the member for Nickel Belt, but I know they had to get in here the same way. They didn't get appointed; they didn't get the seat by acclamation; they had to stand for nomination and had to stand for election, and there is a fundamental respect that we all have.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): Call an election.

Hon Mr Baird: "Call an election." I'd like you to call an election in Ottawa-Vanier. I'd like to you call an election in Scarborough Centre. Let the people decide. But no, there won't be a nomination meeting in Ottawa-Vanier. There won't be a nomination meeting in Scarborough Centre because the vote was cancelled and a candidate was appointed. I think that is disgraceful.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): One vote. There was one vote.

Hon Mr Baird: One vote—Dalton McGuinty. We've gone from first among equals to first and only.

I'm not suggesting for a moment that there is not a lot of blame to go around on all sides of this House for the changes that have taken place in this Parliament over the last 25 years. But I do question the rightful indignation of some members of this House.

Interjection: Shame and indignation.

Hon Mr Baird: The "shame and indignation," one of my colleagues says.

Too often members of this House on all sides don't work together, but sometimes they do. I can say as minister of francophone affairs that I've had an excellent relationship with the member for Ottawa-Vanier. If she has a problem, she comes to speak to me, as does the member for Timmins-James Bay, as does the member for Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. If there's a problem, they want to solve it, and I think that's rare. You don't see that enough on all sides—when we're in government, when the Liberals are the government or the New Democrats are government. I think that's a pity and I think that's a shame.

I think of the years when I was social services minister. Members, like the member for Nickel Belt or the member from Wilson Heights, would come to you with a problem to want to solve it. But too often other members will just choose the political route. They only care about getting the media headline that they're out there fighting for something, and I think that's regrettable. So I guess in this House you do see the best and the worst, and that's too bad.

The members opposite were talking about recent special warrants. The member from Renfrew, whom I have a tremendous respect for, got up yesterday and, I don't think it's unfair to say, deliberately wanted to leave the impression—just on the size, because he was clear in

pointing that out—but that special warrants were somehow never used. He absolutely wanted to—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): It's the amount of the special warrant.

Hon Mr Baird: I realize it was the amount. I said he recognized it was the amount, but he clearly wanted to leave the impression of just the use of it, that it was secret. Of course something in cabinet is secret. But he deliberately wanted to leave the impression that this was somehow extraordinary and had never been used before.

So I said to my friend Stockwell, "Stockwell, how could this be the case?" My friend Stockwell came back to me: the warrant that was brought forward in 2003-04 was, indeed, for the largest amount, \$36 billion. As a percentage of the estimates, it's 50%. So I said to Stockwell, "Stockwell, is that the highest ever in Ontario's history?" Stockwell didn't know. He probably had to ask Pete Hardie. Back in 1995-96, because the House had only sat for 15 days of the previous 365 days, 60% of the budget was signed by special warrants—60%. Again, where's the indignation for that? Did one member of the cabinet say, "No, I'm sorry, the House hasn't come back in a year, so I'm going to step aside"? Not one.

People said that these were sometimes done for one or two years in a row, but special warrants had never been done three years standing in a row, except for three years: the three years from 1985 to 1988. Three years in a row, special warrants were brought in by the Liberal government—three years in a row. Did Richard Patten say, "That's wrong"?

Mr Gerretsen: How much?

Hon Mr Baird: How much? It was 29%, 20%, 25%—we're talking \$9 billion. That's chicken feed for you, I suppose—\$9 billion. Three years in a row. I suspect that's the first time in Commonwealth history that special warrants had been issued three years in a row. Alas, where's the indignation?

Don't talk about that, though. It's all our fault; it's all the Conservatives' fault. The Liberals and the NDP are clean. They've never, ever done anything to contribute to that. They're pure as the driven snow. No wonder they want an election. They thought that there should have been an election two years and 10 months after the election.

I can see some of the Liberals members leaving. They're in shame. That member, I know, served as a member of the Peterson Liberals.

Hon Mr Clark: With their heads down.

Hon Mr Baird: With their heads down.

Hon Mr Stockwell: Three years in a row—never in the Commonwealth.

Hon Mr Baird: Never in the Commonwealth, the former Speaker says.

My point is this: this institution is only as relevant and as meaningful as members on all sides of the House want to make it. I think we can all share a degree of responsibility for the changes that have gone on in this place and can work to try to make it more relevant. That's certainly something that I'm committing to do.

I did appreciate the time that we had to consult on the throne speech. It was an excellent opportunity for members to get out in their constituencies and talk to people. I had the opportunity to meet with members of the Ottawa-Carleton Life Skills board—they're a board which helps people with developmental disabilities in my riding—to get their thoughts on the direction. I appreciated the chance to meet, on a number of occasions, with Dr Jack Kitts and Gino Pucciano of the Ottawa Hospital—a real turnaround success story. It was the second-biggest public sector deficit in the entire province of Ontario. Now they've got a balanced budget, more hope and a big expansion underway. If you talk to any nurse or any worker in that hospital, they'll say the hospital is in solid shape.

I had the chance to talk to people from the Queensway-Carleton Hospital and talk about the new MRI, the expansion going on and the huge, gigantic \$30-million budget increase that they've had in recent years; to go to the Montfort Hospital and see the new long-term-care beds open; to look at the success at the Osgoode Care Centre, where they've raised money.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Baird: Grace Manor is a lovely place. It's a new long-term-care centre. It's a good opportunity.

If you look at home care in Ottawa-Carleton, I had the chance to work with Graham Bird and others. Hospitals in Ottawa are better today than they've been in years. There are more long-term-care beds, no lineups at the community care access centre for medical services. We see a growth going on at all of the hospitals. We're finally able to expand the Queensway-Carleton Hospital. It was cancelled back in 1989, a year when they didn't bring in any special warrants.

I appreciated the opportunity that we all had to work hard in our constituencies, to listen, to bring those priorities back and have them reflected in the provincial budget and in the speech from the throne.

1440

Mr Dave Levac (Brant): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to bring to the attention of the House, in the west gallery, the co-op students from my riding: Ashley, Kamila, Jill, Elizabeth and Holly, who are in my constituency office and at the Brantford Expositor learning about democracy. I'm glad they're here, and I'd like us to welcome them.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I am pleased to join the debate and to remind the public of what we're debating. On May 8, Mr Speaker, you said, "From where I stand, the 2003 budget process has raised too many questions for the House not to reflect on them. In order to facilitate that exercise, I am finding that a prima facie case of contempt has been established. I want to reiterate that while I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do." That is what we are debating.

I want to say that I found your comments well developed. Particularly, I found the three paragraphs before your ruling important to the public. I honestly think that

if all members in this Legislature reflect on your decision, you made the right decision. I honestly believe we need to step back and calmly look at what you are trying to do on our behalf, Mr Speaker.

You said, "I have a lingering unease about the road we are going down, and my sense is that the House and the general public have the same unease. Let me summarize it by posing the following questions:

"First, what does the planned presentation of a budget speech outside the House suggest about the relevancy and primacy of Parliament? It is one thing not to make the traditional budget speech in the House because the government is backed into such a decision by an ongoing House process, or a budget leak; it is quite another for the government to have a deliberate plan not to do so."

I honestly believe—and I think members do—that there is no more important document than our budget. It's the basis on which the Legislature says to the public, "Here's how much of your money we are going to spend, and here's how we're going to get it." Surely none of us here cannot agree that the budget document is an extremely important document, and if it does not have to be presented here, what document does?

Your second point: "... if left unchallenged, will this incident not embolden future governments to create parallel, extra-parliamentary processes for other kinds of events that traditionally occur in the House?" I've seen a creeping diminution of the role of Parliament since I've been here, since 1987. It took what I regard as an egregious breach, one that no one could ignore and one that, in my opinion, Mr Speaker, allowed you to say for all of us, "No more; we cannot go any further."

Finally, you said: "Third, why is an extraordinary parliamentary process needed if there is already a process in the House?" I really think that the public understands this issue, in many respects far better than perhaps we do here when we get into a partisan environment, where if that side says one thing we'll take the other side. It was up to you, Mr Speaker, and I know how difficult it was—we're all members of political parties; our Speakers are chosen from among us. It is important, when that decision is made, that the Speaker step aside and try his or her best to provide balanced impartiality.

Mr Speaker, I think if we all were to be objective, you've done an admirable job, and your ruling, objectively—forget the partisanship—was the right ruling and was a well-reasoned ruling. I suppose one might expect I might say that, because I agree with the ruling. I do know how difficult and challenging it must have been for you because of your deep roots with good friends in the Conservative Party, but you stepped aside from that.

What I want to say to the public is this is not an insignificant, minor debate that's going on. It's a debate about the role of Parliament. It's not an exaggeration to say that wars have been fought and lives have been lost over this issue, about what role the public should expect from democratically elected Parliaments. I once again compliment my colleague Mr Conway, who I thought put it in well-researched language to remind us of how we

arrived at a parliamentary democracy and the importance of it.

Just on the face of it, Mr Speaker, if we all step back, your ruling that there was a prima facie case of contempt of the House is, in my opinion, exactly right and does require us to stand back and reflect on it and take the appropriate decision.

My colleague Mr Conway moved what I regarded as a very balanced motion. He simply said, and I'll quote it just so the public is aware: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario."

I actually believed the government would say, "You know, we made the decision to present the budget outside the Legislature because we thought it was appropriate; we decided to do it. But we understand the Speaker's ruling, and we accept that ruling." I really thought that's what they would do. In my opinion, that would have put this matter behind us, to a very large extent. But the government has chosen, for whatever reason, to say they're not going to accept that.

Therefore, I go back to your reasoning, Mr Speaker. If the government is saying, "No, I'm not going to accept Mr Conway's motion," what they're essentially saying is, "And furthermore, we'll keep doing these sorts of things." Therefore, the contempt ruling will essentially be null and void because the government says, "We have decided we are not going to accept the contempt ruling." So I say to the public, where does it end?

You laid out your concerns, which I think the public would agree with: "What does the planned presentation of a budget speech outside the House suggest about the relevancy and primacy of Parliament?" If the government is saying they'll continue to do it, it says a lot about their interpretation of it. If left unchallenged, what next? Indeed, what next? If the budget is not something that should be presented here first and that we have it, where are the boundaries? Your final point, Mr Speaker, is that if this was the right process, why in the world did we not have a process in place here for dealing with it?

In many respects, my larger concern is as a result of the government's decision that they are going to defeat Mr Conway's motion. I say to all of us, where does it lead in terms of the role of Parliament? This process has been long developed. The public has had confidence that there was a system of checks and balances in place, where a process was being followed and a parliamentary democracy was dealing with it. The government has chosen not to follow that and, worse still, to say, "Not only did we not follow it, but we're making a conscious decision that we'll do whatever we want in the future as well."

1450

Mr Speaker, I've read your finding several times. It was well done. The final few paragraphs caught the essence of it for me. I think the public must be wondering what the government's thinking is here. Are they not even remotely sorry for what they did? The Liberals and

NDP are offended, but that may not matter to the government. Did the government not see that the public is offended by this? Does the government not recognize the will of the public? Believe me, the will of the public is, "Don't do it. Admit you made a mistake and don't do it." That is essentially Mr Conway's motion. But the government has said, "No. Frankly, we didn't make a mistake." Maybe it's difficult for them to say, "We made a mistake." I think the public in many respects has been hit twice. When I heard that the budget was going to be at Magna, I thought somebody had pulled a joke on the media. I thought, if they're not presenting it here in the Legislature, what would be the worst thing they could do? And they did that: they made that huge mistake of not presenting it here. But now we find that they're simply going to ignore your finding, Speaker, to which I think, had they accepted the motion, the public would have said, "All right, they've learned their lesson and let's move on."

My colleague Mr Conway raised in the Legislature yesterday a further step of my opinion of contempt, with the special warrants. The public should recognize that December 12 was the last time the Legislature met until we came back here in May. I find that in many respects contemptuous. I live in Scarborough-Agincourt, an area dramatically affected by the SARS outbreak. I would have appreciated the Legislature being in session so the public could see us grabbing control of it and dealing with it in a public way. But from December 12 to May we didn't even meet. That was the government's decision.

I remember, right after the 1995 election, when Mr Eves appointed the Ontario Financial Review Commission, this is what he said: "In July our government established the Ontario Financial Review Commission. I asked them to look at ways to restore confidence and credibility to the province's financial reporting and planning practices." He went on to say, "In taking these steps ... I want Ontarians to have confidence that their government's financial planning is open, realistic and credible." He was responding to concerns about the way the finances were being reported, so he appointed this commission, and one of the things he said was, "We are going to present the budget to the Legislature before the fiscal year starts." I took him at his word in 1995 that he was serious about bringing what he called in this document, "I want Ontarians to have confidence that their government's financial planning is open, realistic and credible."

This commission was appointed in July 1995, literally days after the election, because they wanted the public to feel that the process was going to be open, transparent and credible. But what have we found? First, a budget that was not even presented here in the Legislature, and, as you have found, Speaker, a prima facie case of contempt; and the Legislature not meeting from December 12 until May 1. The public is incredulous when they find out that during all these challenges we were faced with we didn't even meet. And then they're aware that Mr

Eves, when he became finance minister, was going to improve the openness and credibility of the process. Then we found yesterday, because of Mr Conway's awareness, that there was something called a special warrant, where the government went for—I think it was \$32 billion—

Mr Gerretsen: Thirty-six billion.

Mr Phillips: That's right, \$36.2 billion, secretly, behind closed doors. Frankly, there was virtually—well, not virtually—no public notice of it. My colleague was aware of it because someone informed him of it. So here we are now, as the public is making an assessment of the government and the Premier on how they treat the people we are here to serve. All of us, I hope, try to remind ourselves on a daily basis that we're here to serve the public, but firstly the Speaker, with a well-reasoned finding, says to the government, "Listen, you've made a mistake. You are in contempt of the Legislature and I, the Speaker, now look to the Legislature to find a redress to this."

There's a solution put forward that any fair-minded person would say—I thought—is a reasoned motion: henceforth, the budget would be presented first here in the Legislature. I've listened carefully and I do not understand the logic of the government saying they're not going to agree to that. To me, that is particularly contemptuous.

Part of the background of all of this was the Legislature was due to sit in mid-March and the budget could have been presented, should have been presented, right there. There was no need for the government to go for these special warrants. Nothing, nothing, nothing other than the personal and political agendas of the government prevented us from meeting. Was there any single reason why we could not have met in March? None. Other than the political and personal agendas of the government, there was no event that required delay. There was no reason why we should have been delayed.

Part of my opinion that the government was treating the public with contempt was, "We simply won't meet. We've decided we won't meet, even though we agreed when we left in December we would meet in March," even though, frankly, if you reflect back to mid-March, there were major issues facing the people of Ontario—major issues—that we should have been here dealing with. But there was not a single reason other than political. This was all about the election. That's why we didn't meet. It was all about the election, so that the Premier would not be subject to one of the treasured parliamentary traditions, and that is question period, where the opposition, on behalf of the public, get to ask the government to defend and to answer legitimate public business.

We see a series of what I regard as contemptuous moves. I see no reason, other than political, why we did not meet in March. Frankly, it's embarrassing and the public should be aware of it. On December 12, we left this place and we did not come back until May. There's no reason why, other than political. We found yesterday, because of Mr Conway's work, that over \$36 billion of

money was appropriated; in other words, the government got authority to spend \$36 billion of taxpayers' money without even coming before the Legislature for that; all done behind closed doors. Some members may say, "Well, warrants have been done before." But why in the world—they're done when there is no other recourse. But the government, once again, created this. All we had to do was come back in March for our normal session.

1500

Mr Speaker, it's with sincerity that I say I know how difficult it was for you to do this. You did the Legislature a service. It is a finding that, I think, will be quite historic. My regret is that the government could have dealt with this in a statesman-like way and put this matter behind us by simply agreeing to the motion that henceforth budgets will be presented first here in the Legislature. I cannot, for the life of me, understand why the government doesn't agree to that.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton Centre): I listened carefully to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, for whom I have a great deal of respect in his thought process. He is a bulldog when he thinks he is right, and you can't criticize someone for being that. He is also an individual who will truly apologize when he is convinced that he was incorrect or didn't have all the facts. I'm not asking that the member do that at this point. He's right that comments in this Legislature are often made in a purely, clearly partisan nature. His thought is that any fair-minded person should support this particular motion.

I will say that I feel that I am probably a reasonably fair-minded person. I grew up in a small town in northern Ontario, in Sault Ste Marie. My father was a lifelong railroad worker, a member of the union.

Interjection.

Mr Spina: It was Steel City, Sault Ste Marie. I often listen—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton West): Hey, hey.

Mr Spina: Well, the other Steel City, yes, I say to the member from Hamilton, with respect. Hamilton carries the crown.

We learned and we grew up with a very grassroots appreciation for life. We all tried to get the best education we could. We tried to raise our families, just as everyone does, in a good, compassionate manner, and make a contribution to our community and to our society. And then some of us got elected.

But I will say that even though I consider myself a fair-minded person, as the member indicated, I will not be supporting this motion. I fundamentally disagree with the motion, for many reasons. I'm not going to get into that.

What I am going to talk about is the comment that the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, and others, have made regarding these special warrants. The minister earlier spoke about special warrants—and they admitted that this wasn't a precedent.

Mr Gerretsen: He did it in secret.

Mr Spina: There is nothing secret about special warrants. A warrant in fact is put forward—and its effective time—by the secretary to cabinet. The civil service then bases the amount on the amount of money that they feel they need to meet the business needs of operating government. So it's not a political decision. When you're going into an election year, it is necessary for the public service to be able to pay the wages and to pay the normal, everyday bills of government. These are our nursing homes, our transfer payments to hospitals, our payments to the doctors across this province who bill OHIP, the funding programs that are put forward to the municipalities in this province, the Ontario Works recipients, our welfare recipients, our social service agencies, children's aid societies. All of these people could not have been paid without a special warrant. So why was a special warrant requested? As a normal course of doing business. You're facing an election year and when the public service isn't certain when that specific election will be called, it's a matter of course to request a special warrant.

The strange thing is how special warrants are requested and put forward in a non-election year. The minister spoke earlier about three consecutive years of Liberal government, and some of those former cabinet ministers are sitting here today and don't want to talk about it. But they put forward these amounts: \$23 billion, when the average budget for three years was \$31 billion. That's 74%, for Pete's sake. That's unbelievable when you look at—

Mr Gerretsen: It is?

Mr Spina: And that's what the Liberal government did from 1985 to 1987.

Mr Gerretsen: That wasn't right, either.

Mr Spina: The information is available from Management Board. Take it out of Management Board. These are not concocted numbers; they come right out of Management Board. I say to the member from Kingston and the Islands, you sit on the estimates committee—or you did.

Mr Gerretsen: No.

Mr Spina: Well, you're close to it. I know, sir, that you are close, as the member from Scarborough-Agincourt is, to the financials of this government, and you're the critic for how this government spends money. I tell you, look in your own backyard. You have a lot of stones there. You have a lot of stones.

I say to the Liberal Party that I am stunned at their accusation of the undemocratic way that this government has been said to be operating. I bring not only the example of Ottawa that the minister indicated a few moments ago, but let's look at Brampton Centre. Let's look at Brampton Centre, my riding. There are many long-term, long-time responsible community people in Brampton who have been Liberals and would have been willing to run for the Liberal nomination, but what did the party president do? He didn't want any of those people. He wanted to choose the person that his leader could appoint—destroy democracy. Guys like Billy Bengal and Gus Grewal would have been good candidates for the Liberal Party to run against me. I'm not afraid to name names, like the member from Middlesex.

Mr Gerretsen: Name names.

Mr Spina: OK, Linda Jeffrey is a nice person; she is. She has been a friend. And do you know what? I will take most pleasure when the election is over to call you, Mr Sorbara, and gloat when that happens. But I will say that Linda Jeffrey is a candidate I have a great deal of respect for, and we will have no problem running an election campaign against each other. The people around her, I question. When some of the people around her campaign team disgracefully send out fundraising letters on city of Brampton letterhead—it is totally unacceptable to use city of Brampton letterhead for a partisan Liberal fundraising event. And Linda Jeffrey's people did do it.

Interjection: Isn't that illegal?

Mr Spina: I've been told that it was illegal. The CAO of the city of Brampton is looking into it. In fact, even Elections Ontario is examining this issue. It is absolutely improper, and even worse, when the signature on the letter is the chair of the planning committee of the city and the letter went to all the developers. My God, I've never seen such a state of coercion from the Liberal Party. It's totally unbelievable that this kind of coercion would take place in the role of provincial politics.

1510

Brampton is booming. We are doing well. We have business. We have \$2 million to Brampton Transit to buy 200 new buses, virtually doubling our fleet. We have increased the Peel District Board of Education budget by over \$188 million since 1997. That's a 22% increase that equals over \$857 million. The Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board budget has also increased by \$169 million since 1997, a 28% increase to total \$603 million. The improved, new school capital funding formula that began in 1997 helped to build or renovate more than 37 schools in Brampton. That, gentlemen and ladies, is the most construction that has taken place in the history of Brampton with regard to the construction of schools. This government is committed to education.

This government is also committed to health care. We are welcoming a new hospital that will be built using a P3 model which equals 100% universal public health care at its best. I say to my NDP candidate Kathy Pounder, "God bless her." She's a good candidate. She speaks for the health care coalition. And do you know what? I welcome her as a candidate because she at least is consistent. It's going to be very interesting to watch the Liberal candidate caught in the crosshairs when she believes in the hospital construction going ahead but her party leader says he'll roll back the P3 partnership. Won't that be an interesting debate, Mr Sorbara? You'd better prepare that little girl for that debate, let me tell you. But I'm very happy—

Interjections.

Mr Spina: She is a good friend. She is a bright woman and she is a good candidate.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Member, take your seat. Order. I'd ask all members to please remember that we do have some young people in the galleries here today who are watching. I apologize to the member from Brampton Centre.

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): On a point of order, Speaker: The member for Brampton made a reference to an adult woman as “that little girl.” I believe that is offensive and I would ask the member to withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: I’m afraid I was speaking with one of the other members during that and did not hear it, but I know all members, if they say something, they can regret it. We were chatting with one of the House leaders on another issue and I apologize; I didn’t hear it. But if any member does say it, I’m sure they will apologize. Sorry for the interruption again. The member for Brampton Centre.

Mr Spina: I withdraw, Speaker. That was not a fair comment. Thank you, member. She is a bright, intelligent woman. The member representing the NDP will be consistent. She is a good candidate. Kathy Pounder is a good candidate and I look forward to her presentation.

On Saturday, when I opened my campaign office and we had a celebration, I was very pleased to welcome Kathy and the NDP candidates. The health care coalition came with their placards, visited our office. We welcomed them. We shared soft drinks with the kids and said that there would be room for debate when it comes to the election. We look forward to that opportunity.

There is a concern in Brampton that even with the development of our new hospital, the 608-bed, largest non-teaching community hospital in this province, we will be redeveloping the current Brampton Memorial Hospital site to include 112 complex continuing care beds, a modern emergency and ambulatory care centre, an eye institute and an outpatient surgery and rehabilitation centre.

As far as public safety is concerned, I was pleased to speak personally with Chief Catney as early as today. We’ve provided \$14 million to the Peel Regional Police Service to hire 124 new front-line police officers so that Brampton may continue to be a safe and secure place for families to grow.

Brampton is booming thanks to this government, thanks to the economy that this government has brought. We’ve increased total new employment over this recent period 26%; total new business in the past year, 35%; the unemployment rate dropped by 1.4%; average active UIC claims dropped by 26.5%. If you want a job, folks, come to Brampton. We’ve got work for you. Our construction value has gone up by 72%; residential, 185%; commercial, 326%. Our housing resale activity has dropped 12% but the average house price has gone up 9% and housing permits and units have gone up by 135%.

Mr Gerretsen: So your point is?

Mr Spina: Our point is, sir, that this city is succeeding, and is succeeding well. The economy is moving forward because of this government’s positive economic activities and initiatives. We will continue to do so over the next mandate of this government. We’ve invested in health and seniors’ care; we are building over 1,100 new long-term-care beds in Brampton; we’ve increased health care spending—provincially, of course—by \$8 billion to

\$25 billion this year, as is declared in the estimates; and we’ve invested, in Peel alone, \$9.5 million for the Carlo Fidani Peel Regional Cancer Centre in Mississauga, which will serve all of Peel, and we’re very pleased. Because of that we will not be having to transport our patients from Brampton to Toronto as we currently do.

With respect to transit, it’s always a problem, particularly if you’re in the GTA. We’ve increased GO Transit service throughout the day, something for which we had been lobbying for 15 years, from when I was president of the Brampton Board of Trade, to try to increase GO Transit service on the northwest corridor. Why? Because we had people who had more flexibility in their hours than GO Transit was able to provide. We also needed to provide the opportunity for GO Transit people to come from Toronto out to the suburbs, where the jobs were, and we needed a good two-way commute throughout the day. We’re pleased that a few months ago we made that announcement. It is now a reality.

We have installed lights. We’re expanding the highway system. We plan soon to make an announcement to complete Highway 410 right up into Caledon. It’s amazing. When I got elected in 1995 we jokingly referred to it as Highway 205 because it was half of 410. I have no idea where the bureaucracy was in this government but, for whatever reason, they built half a highway and stopped it dead at Bovaird Drive. Now we will be able to complete it, finish Highway 410, and go all the way through into Caledon.

I’m very pleased to, as I said earlier, not support this motion, because I think it is wrongheaded. I think there are precedents in this government. Just because it is a precedent, doesn’t make it law. I will say that I think the entire parliamentary process ought to be brought into the 21st century—and it barely is, kicking and dragging, but nevertheless, we must continue to do so.

I’ve been a resident of Brampton for 28 years, and I can tell you that I’ve enjoyed the time that I’ve lived there, and I will continue to enjoy it. We welcome today the children from St Joachim school who are visiting us. We’re pleased. These children were very proud and happy to come to the Legislature and see where government works. Thank you for this opportunity.

1520

Mr Gregory S. Sorbara (Vaughan-King-Aurora): I’m pleased to speak, particularly after the remarks of my colleague on the other side of the aisle from Brampton Centre. I note, in passing, that on what I—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Could you reset the clock in a minute, please?

Before I get started, I just wanted to introduce, also in the east gallery, some of the students from Wallace Public School, close to the town of Listowel in the north end of the Perth-Middlesex riding. The only reason I wanted to take advantage of this opportunity to do that was that they were also recognized last night at the SkyDome for their participation and attendance at the ball game. If you wouldn’t mind welcoming all the visitors today, also in the west gallery as well as the east gallery.

The apologies to the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora. You'll now have your full 20 minutes.

Mr Sorbara: We all welcome the kids and hope they're enjoying the debates in this Legislature.

As I was saying before your introductions, sir, I was pleased to speak after the member from Brampton Centre, but I have to note, in passing, that—and I listened very carefully to his remarks—I don't think he addressed but 30 seconds to the motion that's before us today.

The reason why I'm here and speaking today is because I truly believe that the motion put in front of this House by my colleague Mr Conway, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, is perhaps, in a strange, parliamentary kind of way, one of the most important motions that this Legislature has ever considered. I say that because—and the thesis of my remarks will be quite simple—the *prima facie* contempt that you found in your ruling was a historic opportunity for this Parliament, and for this province and its political system, to start now, perhaps, to get its act together and to stop the outflow of respect that has been infiltrating and poisoning our political system for a very long time now.

We've heard, I think, some great remarks during the course of this debate. I want to particularly refer to the remarks of my colleague Mrs McLeod, the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan. In her remarks of yesterday, she said, "This government was in contempt of this Legislature because of what the Premier said. It was contempt to the people of Ontario because he said they don't care. He was in contempt of this place and of members because he said that ... to take the budget speech outside the Legislature because they wanted to communicate with the people. This is not a government that communicates; this is a government that advertises."

The point that Mrs McLeod was making is that there is a course of conduct of contempt by the Progressive Conservative government that has culminated in this Parliament stopping all its other business to consider an unusual and historic ruling by the Speaker, finding that the government, in its failure to live up to its obligations to account for its business, is in contempt of Parliament.

Maybe we should get rid of a whole bunch of the words surrounding this debate and tell the story pretty plainly and pretty simply. What does this contempt mean? What it means to me is that the government has bunkered itself behind a wall of advertising and spinning and management and manipulation of the public agenda that, if it continues, will bring the practice of politics in Ontario into huge disrespect.

I want to tell my friends on the other side of this Legislature that not only have you lost the respect of this Parliament; you are very quickly losing the respect of the people of this province, because you have taken the practice of governing and the practice of parliamentary democracy and transformed it into a system of manipulation and spinning and distorting and misrepresenting such that we've reached a point where all other business stops to consider your behaviour.

Frankly, during the course of this debate, I found it appalling that the members on the other side of the

House, the government members of this House, haven't yet been able to see the light.

The motion before us is quite simple. It reads: "That this House declares that it is the undisputed right of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario." That's pretty simple. The resolution here is that we're not going to do budgets at Magna any more; when it's time to present a budget, that budget will be presented before the elected representatives in this Parliament.

Yet I've listened to speaker after speaker on the government side—Progressive Conservative members—talking about anything but this resolution. My friend from Brampton Centre just spent 20 minutes talking about the great things that are happening in the city of Brampton—agreed. What does that have to do with the threat to our system of democracy that exists right now?

I don't want to pretend that we need to support and pass this resolution to protect cherished traditions. I'm not all that hot on cherished traditions. I think what this motion and this event and this contempt and this disrespect indicates is an opportunity to start down a new and better path, to start to look at ourselves and the way we have distorted politics in Ontario and set a new and better course.

At this point in the parliamentary calendar, we are supposed to be dissolving this Parliament and having an election. A year ago, the acting Premier, Ernie Eves, promised that if elected he would govern for eight, nine or 10 months and that we would have an election this spring. I hope he has the courage to actually call that election, but there is some doubt.

Interjections.

Mr Sorbara: Well, well, they've finally woken up over there. We've finally got their attention.

1530

The Deputy Speaker: Only one person has the floor. It happens to be the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, and you'll give him your attention if you're here. The Chair recognizes the member for Vaughan-King-Aurora.

Mr Sorbara: I appreciate that, Mr Speaker.

Whether or not there is an election this spring is up to one person: the acting Premier of Ontario.

Hon Helen Johns (Minister of Agriculture and Food): And the people of the province.

Mr Sorbara: No, my friend, not the people of Ontario. Right now, it's only the Premier who decides that question.

Talking about disrespect and the way in which our system has fallen into disrepair, in anticipation of the possibility of an election, we have found, in my view, some of the most scandalous manipulation and spinning that any government has ever indulged in in the history of this province. Every single Ontarian has been badgered, lobbied, polled by advertisements on television, radio, in magazines like *Maclean's*, in inserts that come in the mail—taxpayers' money in the millions and millions of dollars to try to use your money, sir, my money, and the money of 12 million Ontarians to try and convince the people that the government has done a great job. The

great news for me is that the more those leaflets come in the mail—and they're all the same, more or less. They've all been written by the same ad agency; they all have the same blue Tory colours; they all have the little inserts where you send them back to the government and say, "Yeah, you know what? These are my concerns." That's a nice way of doing a poll at the taxpayers' expense. You send in your name, your address, and your e-mail, and you probably get a nice letter printed by the same advertising agency saying, "Thank you," etc, etc. This is in the millions and millions of dollars. This is an abuse that we have to put an end to. This is yet another example of the government losing respect, holding the people in contempt.

There is a time to tell your story to the people, and that's during an election campaign. There are ways of paying for that, and that's by the money that is donated to political parties. That's the appropriate way of doing it.

But this theme of contempt and disrespect: I tell my friends on the other side, when the history of your time in office is reviewed by unbiased, objective historians, the theme of disrespect and contempt for the voters will touch everything and be a theme in everything that you've done.

In the public education system: contempt and disrespect for teachers, for the quality of our system. Where does the action go? Where does the good stuff go? The good stuff goes to the private schools. We don't have enough money to fix our public education system, but we have \$500 million to support the private education system.

Contempt and disrespect for our health care system: six years ago, this government summarily, with its spending power, sent 15,000 nurses packing. They spread all over North America. They left Ontario; some of them left the profession. Contempt and disrespect for professionals in the health care system.

On the environment: contempt and disrespect for the high standards that Ontario used to maintain in making sure that we could drink the water from our water systems in the province. Do you remember the early days of Walkerton? The Premier of this province stood up and just brushed off the problem. "It's no problem. It's a couple of guys that were screwing around with the system."

Contempt and disrespect in the public transit system: six years ago, the Premier of this province, the predecessor to Ernie Eves, said, "We have no time for public transit and we have no money. Cities and towns want to have public transit? They'll pay for it themselves"—contempt and disrespect for the needs of the general public.

In my own riding, a great toll highway was built. Actually, Highway 407 was started under a Liberal administration. At that time, Ed Fulton was the Minister of Transportation. Our government was succeeded by the NDP government. They decided to build it more rapidly.

Hon David Turnbull (Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation): Excuse me; the Conservatives started planning that.

Mr Sorbara: God, that voice just grates in this place.

The construction of the highway was started in 1987, while Ed Fulton was the Minister of Transportation. Our government was succeeded by the New Democratic party government. In 1990, Bob Rae decided that, to speed up construction, it would be a toll highway with fascinating new technology, an all-electronic toll system. It worked pretty well. In 1999, the government of the day, the government that was led by Mike Harris, the government in which Ernie Eves was the finance minister, sold that highway to private foreign interests at a pittance of its value. They promised the people of Ontario that under this contract, tolls would only go up by 2% above inflation, whatever that might be, for 15 years. In that regard they misrepresented the contract, and what they did there showed contempt and disrespect for the public of Ontario and, in this case, the driving public that uses that highway. Can you imagine a government negotiating a contract, selling a very valuable public asset, and not putting in that contract one word about consumer protection?

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Why don't you read the contract?

Mr Sorbara: Contempt and disrespect, I tell my friend from Mississauga South, for her constituents and everyone else who uses that highway. I want to tell you that after the next election, should our party be successful, we will do everything we can to roll back those rates and put in reasonable rates that respect the interests of consumers in Ontario.

So it has gone over the course of eight years: an increasing degree of contempt and disrespect for the people. You see it more and more in government activities, this business of listening to the spin doctors say: "Don't worry. You don't need to go back to Parliament. I think we've got a great idea. I think we can do the budget in a place where we can control everything. We can control the audience; we can control the spin. There will be no opposition replies. There will be no debate for a long time, and we'll tell them, 'Yeah, yeah, yeah, we'll present it all in Parliament as well when we come back after a throne speech.'" Contempt and disrespect for the systems that we have in place in Ontario to hold the government to account.

Now I say to you, sir, there's further contempt and disrespect in this very debate, where speaker after speaker from the government party, the Conservatives over there, refuse to stand up in this House and explain why they are not going to support this motion.

But I think there's a bright light in all of this, because when things get so bad—and recently a marvellous book called *Tipping Point* was written about this very idea, that stuff gets worse and worse and finally it gets so bad that we have the capacity and the energy suddenly to change the system. Our parliamentary system is in drastic need of repair. Our parliamentary system, particularly for the last eight years, isn't working well. Maybe we should thank the government for doing what they did, because finally we have the courage to stand here, and authors and reviewers and political columnists have the courage to say, "It's not working and it needs repair."

1540

I am thrilled that our party, in anticipation of the next election, whenever the Premier finds the courage to call it, will bring forward a package of democratic reforms that I believe can start us down a better road.

First among those is to take away from the Premier, whoever he or she is, the power to manipulate the timing of an election. A simple change in our constitution will provide fixed dates for elections so that after the next election, should we be successful, from there on in elections will be held on a date that everyone knows about from the moment the results of the last election are counted. Some people have said, "Oh, my God, what about responsible government, and what about the Parliament falling as a result of a vote of non-confidence?" All of that has been taken into consideration. We can do that. We're going to do that by way of allowing for an extraordinary election should a government be defeated on a vote of confidence in this House. That's just one provision.

We're going to transform the way business is done in here. We're going to make the lives of parliamentarians relevant again, whether in committee or in this Legislature. We are going to make what we do here relevant again and we are going to try to regain the respect that we believe we deserve as parliamentarians sitting in this great House. It's not going to be easy. The agenda will be difficult, and those of us who are returned here after the next election are going to be tempted to fall into old ways.

But I want to say that the ruling of Mr Speaker Carr, in finally saying out loud from that chair that the government has shown a prima facie case of contempt, may just be the best thing that has ever happened to this Parliament if we can change the way we do business and set ourselves a new course. That's the result I would like to see and that's why I am urging not only members on this side of the House but on that side to support this motion.

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I stand to speak to the amendment made by Mr Bisson to Mr Conway's motion. Further, I now move an amendment to Mr Bisson's amendment to Mr Conway's motion. I move that the amendment to the motion be amended by adding the following thereto: "and its members."

Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Maybe you can advise the House. This would then be the second amendment to the main motion?

Mr Kormos: No, an amendment to the amendment.

Mrs Marland: All right, an amendment to the amendment. It would be the third motion on the floor, correct? There is the main motion, Mr Conway's motion. You already have an amendment, I believe, and this would be a second amendment. That would be three motions on the floor. Mr Speaker, can you advise us whether that would be in order?

The Deputy Speaker: I just want to clarify that that is a legitimate question but it's not a point of order. There are other means you can go to to find out the answer to

that question. The answer to your question is that of course it is in order to have this amendment to the amendment to the motion. But to stand up on a point of order and ask a question is not a point of order.

Mr David Caplan (Don Valley East): Are you going to reset Mr Kormos's time?

The Deputy Speaker: This is not question period, either.

Mr Kormos moves that the amendment to the motion be amended by adding the following thereto: "and its members."

From now on, that will be the central topic of debate.

The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: I appreciate Mrs Marland's interest in our amendment and her enthusiastic participation in my having moved it.

Mr Caplan: I tried to get your time back, Peter.

Mr Kormos: There were other members who tried to get my time back. Gosh, I remember a member, yesterday or the day before, who did get his time back and, notwithstanding that, responded in a somewhat objectionable way.

First, let's understand that this amendment to Mr Bisson's amendment is designed to make the motion in its broadest sense, as amended, perhaps more appealing to all members. The issue is contempt. The Speaker found contempt. Make no mistake about it. And make no mistake about it, Conservative members, that your defeat—

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton-Kent-Middlesex): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think that in the decision rendered, the Speaker explicitly said he cannot find the government in contempt; it's up to the House to decide on that. That is the ruling of the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes, that is what the Speaker ruled.

The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: I say to these Conservative members that they may somehow think they're going to reverse the Speaker's decision, the Speaker's finding of contempt, by defeating the motion put forward, as amended by—

Mr Beaubien: On a point of order, Speaker: The member from Welland-Thorold keeps insisting on saying that the Speaker ruled the government was in contempt. That is not the ruling of the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: You have a point of order, and you are absolutely correct. But this Speaker, the person occupying the Speaker's chair at this point, does not have the authority—you have not given us in this chair the authority—to make sure that what everybody says in this House is correct. So to continually get up and say the member is incorrect may be perfectly true, but it's improper for me to interrupt his proceeding all the time to remind him that that may be so.

Mr Beaubien: Speaker, on a point of correction: I called the member the member from Welland-Thorold; it's Niagara Centre. I would like to correct the record, please.

The Deputy Speaker: That is a point of order. I will give the member for Niagara Centre an opportunity to correct himself.

The Chair recognizes the member for Niagara Centre.

Mr Kormos: The Speaker's finding of contempt is not going to be overcome, is not going to be negated, is not going to be nullified, is not going to somehow be eradicated from the parliamentary record—

Mr Beaubien: On a point of order, Speaker: The member for Niagara Centre keeps insisting that the Speaker found the government in contempt. That is not the ruling of the Speaker. I would like that on the record.

The Deputy Speaker: That will be on the record. But let me be very clear: the member for Niagara Centre or any other member may get up in this House and say that black is white or, on the other hand, that white is black, and everybody may know that that is so. But it is not within the authority of the presiding officer to keep ruling that that is not so. It is up to you to indulge in proper debate and for people to take what they can and should from that debate.

I'm a little bit impatient. I would like the member for Niagara Centre to have the opportunity to continue debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion.

1550

Mr Kormos: There is nothing that the Conservative majority in this Legislature can do during the course of this debate or upon the vote on this amendment, or the amendment which it amends or on the motion as amended, hopefully, or unamended, to eradicate, to erase, to somehow reverse, to nullify or in any other way alter what was a clear finding by the Speaker, a finding that there was contempt by this government; contempt not only for this Parliament, I put to you, but contempt for the people of Ontario.

Mr Beaubien: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The official report of Hansard dated May 8, 2003, on page 234, quoting the Speaker, states, "From where I stand, the 2003 budget process has raised too many questions for the House not to reflect on them. In order to facilitate that exercise, I am finding that a prima facie case of contempt has been established. I want to reiterate that while I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do." That is the ruling of the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Let me be very clear. The member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, you are correct, and I would encourage the member for Niagara Centre to use the terminology of it, but it's not my purview; it will only become mine if it's cause for grave concern and a lack of decorum in the House. I know that you know better, but it is causing a little bit of concern to not only the one member but to other members. I would encourage you to bring your language within the confines of good debate, but I give you your time in proper debate.

Mr Kormos: Thank you, Speaker, and I appreciate your observation that I in fact know better. I certainly know better than Mr Beaubien. Mr Beaubien somehow thinks that his caucus and their majority can alter history,

can change the ruling. The fact is that in Erskine and May, decades from now, if you look up "contempt" in the index, there's going to be a reference to Speaker Gary Carr and the Conservative government of Ontario, year 2003. Look up "contempt" in Beauchesne in the index, and there will be a page on which there's going to be a clear reference to Premier Eves, to the finding of the Speaker. The Speaker established a precedent that this House can't erase, not in any way. The only thing this government can do is purge its contempt. Rather than purge its contempt, what has it done? It has aggravated its contempt—one member with the now-notorious, nationally advertised, middle digit raised in contempt for this Parliament and the people of Ontario—a Conservative backbencher.

Another Conservative backbencher, reported in the press as voicing the most vulgar of obscenities—

Mr Caplan: Who?

Mr Kormos: One Mr Spina, I'm told in the newspapers, expressed the most vulgar of obscenities here in this House.

Mr Sorbara: Oh, you can be more vulgar in Italian.

Mr Kormos: It wasn't in English, but it happened to be a non-English word that even I know the translation of.

Then we have Mr Beaubien, who shows contempt—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Go outside the House and say that, Peter.

Mr Kormos: Oh, inside the House, outside the House, you're all being contemptuous of this House. In fact, you're contemptible. I've said it outside the House, I've said it inside the House, I've said it on television, I've said it on radio, I've said to the newspapers. Don't be silly. Go hire your lawyer. Maybe it'll be the same lawyer who helped Mr O'Toole draft his peculiar speech the other day. Maybe you can hire the lawyer who was paid to write opinions for you, however brief they were.

Mr Sorbara: Vacuous.

Mr Kormos: Indeed, as Mr Sorbara indicates. Mr Sorbara is a lawyer as well as a developer and a politician. It can't get any worse, really, can it, Mr Sorbara?

Mr Sorbara: Now, I just got the dictionary for you.

Mr Kormos: You did. I'm just making an observation.

The contempt is not just by this government; the contempt is by every single member of this Legislature who stands up and defends this government, who tries to vilify the Speaker, who condemns the Speaker both inside and outside the House, who suggests that somehow the Speaker isn't impartial. That's contempt.

You see, this government had every opportunity, from day one. I was at the press conference. I was at the stand-up outside the Premier's office when the Premier, to the shock of everyone listening, announced that this government was going to ignore the House calendar, was going to ignore the adjournment date, and that this House was going to be prorogued. They didn't prorogue it back in December but waited until March to prorogue, just days before the House was scheduled to come back. Not only

did he say that, but then he announced that his bogus budget, his buy-a-Chia-Pet, just dial 1-800-NOW commercial bogus budget was going to be up at Frank Stronach's Magna corp instead of here in the Legislature. From that very moment New Democrats, amongst others, pointed out that that budget would be illegal, that that budget would be contemptuous, that that budget would be a violation of parliamentary tradition—from the very minute the Premier made that speech outside his office. Fair warning, I say.

There are rumours—albeit rumours but not beyond belief—that the Ministry of the Attorney General prepared an opinion about the constitutionality of the Chia Pet budget at Magna corp, the Ginsu knife budget down at Frank Stronach's auto parts manufacturing centre. Again, the press reported the rumour. But is it that difficult to believe that the Attorney General would have been called upon in consultation? I say to you, no, that's one of the jobs of the Attorney General. That's why he's paid the big bucks. Oh, not the Attorney General. Look, the Attorneys General of this government have such a pathetic record in court and otherwise. They haven't won a case yet, have they?

Mr Sorbara: No.

Mr Kormos: And indeed have embarrassed themselves. Or maybe the Supreme Court of Canada appears, by one long gone—he's not long gone; he's simply not the Attorney General any more. I recall some rather unfortunate conduct by yet a prior Attorney General. See, the Attorneys General haven't had a good track record here. But is it beyond belief to think that an Attorney General would have been called upon by this government for an opinion? I'm not sure which Attorney General, which person. One suspects it's the current Attorney General.

But contempt? You guys are contemptuous. "Contempt: the action of contemning or despising; the mental attitude in which a thing is considered to be of little account, or vile, or worthless." This government perceives this Parliament, its members, to be of little account, worthless. The problem with you Tory backbenchers is that your Premier's office is as contemptuous of you as he was of every other member of Parliament. Now it's time to defend yourselves from an executive board, an executive office, a Premier and a cabinet—very, very inner-inner-circle—that treat you with contempt, that find every one of you to be nothing more than little voting machines. Here's a Premier in a government who bullies the occasional dissident.

1600

I heard from one dissident yesterday who told me he had been told he'd have to resign from caucus if he voted with the motion. What a stupid bit of advice to that backbencher. That backbencher was told that if government members voted for this motion and against their colleagues, it would be a vote of non-confidence. What a stupid observation. What a stupid comment. Whoever made that comment—I know who made it; I won't name the person—knows nothing about parliamentary history

and parliamentary procedure, and certainly has no idea of what constitutes a vote of non-confidence.

The problem is that the contempt this government shows for Parliament, the contempt it shows for taxpayers, for every single resident, it also shows for its own backbenchers, who are treated as mere voting machines, who are told in caucus meetings, "Don't worry. Just follow the Premier. He will lead you on to victory."

Well, I tell you, you've been Edselled. You've met the Edsel factor. You've acquired a brand name that couldn't be sold even if it was built on a Cadillac chassis. Mind you, there aren't too many Cadillacs out there in the Tory parking lot area. They're mostly Lexuses and any number of foreign cars; I've taken a look myself. Here are people who aren't great fans of cars their neighbour builds, North American cars that maybe Canadian workers have had a little bit of input to.

But this is about contempt, contempt that occurred when the bogus budget—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Steve Peters): That is not a point of order.

Mr Kormos: That's contempt. That's a member of the Legislature who, after how many years, hasn't read the standing orders and doesn't know what a point of order is. It's contempt not to have read the standing orders so you can stand up—Mr Beaubien shows contempt when he stands up on non-points of order. That's contemptuous. If he were a novice, if he'd only been here—

Interjections.

Mr Beaubien: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I think the member from Niagara Centre is out of order. He certainly shows contempt and no respect for this House. The Speaker who preceded you, Speaker, ruled that I was in order.

Mr Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. I'd like some time back. It's in your power.

Mr Beaubien shows contempt when he tries to interrupt with non-points of order. That's contemptible.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I'm very pleased to join in the debate today on the motion arising from the Speaker's ruling earlier in the week, and I'd like to just clarify what the Speaker's ruling was.

The Speaker said, "From where I stand, the 2003 budget process has raised too many questions for the House not to reflect on them. In order to facilitate that exercise, I am finding that a prima facie case of contempt has been established. I want to reiterate that while I have found sufficient evidence to make such a finding, it is now up to the House to decide what to do. As I have said, only the House, not the Speaker, can make a finding that there has been a contempt of the House."

The Speaker ruled that the House must decide. From the Speaker's ruling came the motion by the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, and I'll read that; it's sort of a motherhood-and-apple-pie motion. He put forward that this Legislative Assembly has the "undis-

puted right ... in Parliament assembled, to be the first recipient of the budget of Ontario," certainly a motherhood-and-apple-pie motion that would be very difficult to vote against.

At least the NDP has amended that motion to make a little clearer what we're talking about by adding, "and not to present the budget in this way constitutes a clear contempt of the House." Really, what we're talking about is the issue of contempt. I think the answer to the question, "Is the government in contempt of the Legislature?" is, "No, it is not."

Let's talk a bit about the budget process. The principal difference in this year's budget process was the location of the actual budget speech. The budget papers were deposited with the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. There was a pre-budget lock-up, at which time members of the opposition and members of the media had pretty much the whole day to analyze the budget and to be questioned by the media on the budget.

Then, the actual speech was the thing that was different: it was delivered at a location other than the Legislative Assembly. However, the budget motion will still be moved. Once we're finished with this debate and once the debate on the speech from the throne is over, the budget motion will be moved in the Legislative Assembly, and following this debate, then, any bills needed to enact the budget will need to be introduced in this Legislative Assembly and pass first, second and third readings and receive royal assent.

Traditionally, the actual budget motion is normally voted on as the last order of business in December. In fact, there were many times in the NDP years when there was no budget vote held at all. But the key difference this year was the location of the actual speech.

I would say there were some merits to the process. Certainly with this year's process, there was an unbelievable amount of consultation that went on prior to forming the budget. Over 1,300 groups, individuals and organizations were consulted all across the province in the process of writing the budget.

Contrary to what was popular in the media, representatives of all those groups were invited to the location at Magna as well as to the many other locations across the province, whether it be North Bay, Thunder Bay, Ottawa or London, to actually watch the budget speech, and I'd just like to point out that that is different from the normal, traditional method of delivering the budget speech. Usually, it's delivered here in the Legislature, and it's mainly Tory invitees who are here, and usually, there is a nice, cozy little reception that goes on after the speech. My father was Treasurer for five years, and I certainly enjoyed coming to many of the budget presentations when he would be here in his nice plaid jacket, delivering the budget. I know the one thing he would be very envious of of this government is that this was a balanced budget, the fifth balanced budget in a row. I know he was working toward that, until the Liberals got back into power and started spending in their usual fashion.

From the perspective of the minister, I'm sure Minister Ecker would much prefer the traditional method, because after she had finished delivering the budget speech at Magna, she then faced 34 tough questions from groups that were involved in the process, from groups that had their specific issues, whether it be regulated child care or teachers' unions or other various interest groups that have a very specific interest and have gone to the budget consultation, usually, because they're looking for more money for their specific interest. They know their interest, they know their issue, so as soon as the budget speech was over, they had the opportunity to ask some very tough questions of the Minister of Finance. There were in fact 34 quite challenging questions for the Minister of Finance to immediately answer, so I think that was an interesting innovation in this year's budget speech.

Part of the reason this budget was done the way it was, outside of the Legislature, was that the Premier had made a commitment. He had made a commitment to deliver the budget before the end of the fiscal year: March 31, 2003. As we know and as has been the case with Conservative governments of the last few years, a promise made is a promise kept, and Ernie Eves, our Premier, is one who keeps his word. He had made a promise to deliver the budget before the end of March, before March 31, 2003, and in that, he was also promising to bring multi-year funding to the budgeting process.

I come from small business myself. I was surprised that government doesn't budget more in advance, so I think this is the way we should be going, and it's a commitment the Premier had made. He also decided that it was time for a new throne speech. He wanted to get input into that throne speech, so he started consultations through the month of March on that throne speech. In fact, there were 10,000 participants who gave their opinion of what they thought should go into the throne speech, what legislation and ideas would make Ontario a better place.

I know I went around my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka at that time, met with different groups and got input into the throne speech.

So the Premier kept his word and delivered the budget prior to the end of March, and multi-year funding was announced in the budget. Will the government deliver the budget speech outside of the Legislature again? Not likely. Was the process followed in contempt of the Legislature? No, it was not. What we should be talking about are the contents of the budget and the throne speech.

1610

Just to sidetrack for a second, though: if we want to talk about democratic processes, I think we have to take note of the Liberals' nomination process, which, frankly, I find very undemocratic, where you have a candidate who wants to run in a nomination race, as he should, to become the candidate of the Liberal party. He or she has been working hard, supported by the riding association, getting around, meeting people, getting their ideas together, and then they're told by Dalton McGuinty, "No,

you can't run as the Liberal candidate in this area." I think that's very unfair and undemocratic, and I'm amazed that the Liberal Party is doing that. They've done that, I believe, in at least five ridings around this province. I think that's unbelievably undemocratic.

Before I talk about the budget, I'd also like to talk about the first item of business since we got back here, and that was the SARS bill and the handling of the SARS issue. I'd like to commend the Premier on the excellent job he has done in dealing with the SARS issue. Within an hour of finding out about the first case of SARS in this province—within one hour—he had activated emergency measures and also made it clear that money was not a consideration. He gave full authority to health officials to deal with the problem, and they did an excellent job of doing so. Our front-line medical staff have done an unbelievable job of dealing with the SARS issue.

It's just amazing to me sometimes how the media makes stories that they want to make. The Premier, who has been working awfully hard and has a tough job at any time, was trying to have a couple of days off over Easter weekend, which I think any reasonable person would say is a reasonable thing to expect: that he might have some time off when he's working such long hours and so hard for the benefit of all of us here in Ontario. He happens to enjoy golf. I personally enjoy golf myself, but I didn't know it was a crime to play golf. The media made it sound like the Premier spent Easter weekend golfing. In fact, when he came to caucus he made it clear: "By the way, I haven't golfed in eight months." So this is the media making a story. "I haven't golfed in eight months. I was trying to take a little bit of time off Easter weekend, but I spent eight hours a day, the whole weekend, in touch with people, dealing with the SARS issue," and he did such an admirable job at that. It's amazing to me how the media sometimes make their own stories and don't validate the facts. I think it's unfair.

I also want to commend Minister Clement, who I think has done an excellent job with the SARS issue, especially in taking it into his own hands to head to Geneva to question the World Health Organization's ruling on the travel advisory to Toronto, which is so significant in terms of the economy of this province. I think he needs to be commended for the hard work and the great job he did on that issue. He's dealing with the West Nile virus issue now, and I know that in the budget there's \$100 million over five years directed toward the West Nile virus issue.

Talking about the media creating stories and not really doing their homework, today's stories in the newspaper had to do with special warrants and member Conway raising the issue of a special warrant that was put through March 26, as if it was something unusual; the media just printing that and making stories about it and not really doing their due diligence, if you ask me, on the issue.

Governments of all stripes have used this process to make funds available to deliver services to the people of Ontario. There is nothing unusual about the process. Without this approval, nursing homes, hospitals, doctors, municipalities, Ontario Works recipients and children's

aid societies could not have been paid. The amount of the special warrant reflects the cost of meeting the priorities of the people of Ontario, including the unknown cost of dealing with the SARS emergency. Special warrants and their effective times are put forward by the civil service, based on the amount of money required to meet their business needs. This was not a political decision. I'm sure the civil service took into account the fact that there is going to be, at some point, an election. They would be unsure of when the Legislature might be sitting, because there might be a spring election, there might be a fall election, there might be an election next spring. So they have to take that into account in terms of the amount of the special warrant.

The approval process and the legislative review of special warrants is the same as it was under the Liberal and NDP governments since 1985. The order in council was published in Votes and Proceedings, which is distributed to all members and is available to the public on the assembly Web site, on May 1. It has been in the legislative library since April 30. So it sounds like it has really been a big secret, as was reported in the media and as was the accusation. To suggest this was secretive is absolutely ridiculous. Special warrants are still subject to scrutiny by the public or the Legislature. They will be subject to review by the standing committee on estimates, the same as always.

It is certainly interesting to note that in 1995-96, the year that the NDP government met, I understand, only 15 days in the whole year, 60% of their spending was achieved through special warrants. In 1987-88, in 1986-87 and in 1985-86 the Liberals used special warrants for their spending. So for them to be so surprised about this process and for the media to report it without questioning it is not very responsible.

Getting back to the substance of the budget, which is what I think we should be talking about, and I'll look forward to when this debate is over so we can get on with the budget debate and with the good things that are happening, certainly the budget dealt with continuing tax cuts, completing the additional 20% reduction in personal income tax by January 1, 2004, providing about \$900 million in additional tax relief; reducing the corporate income tax rate for small business to 5% in 2004 and to 4% in 2005—and I think of the many small businesses around Parry Sound-Muskoka, the heart of our economy in Parry Sound-Muskoka, the thousands of small businesses that generate all the tax dollars that we use for all the spending on health care and education that is so important to the people of this province—reducing the corporate income tax rate for manufacturing and processing firms to 10% on January 1, 2004, 9% on January 1, 2005, and 8% on January 1, 2006. I think about the larger businesses like Tembec, the hardwood flooring plant in Huntsville, whom I was talking to the other day. They were concerned about exchange rates and some other cost pressures. We have to make sure that the tax system is competitive so there will be those jobs there in Huntsville, so there will be jobs at Dura Automotive in Brace-

bridge, so there will be jobs at Connor Industries in Parry Sound, where they make these fantastic Stanley aluminium boats that are so popular around the world and, of course, in our beautiful section of the world on Georgian Bay as well.

It's worth noting just how well the Ontario economy is doing. The Ontario economy has done unbelievably well the last six or seven years. I don't think we should take that for granted, because I think sometimes we can forget just how well the economy is doing. Ontario's economy leads the G7 in manufacturing job growth, and not just by a bit, but significantly leads the G7. From 1996 to 2001, we've led the G7 nations in manufacturing job growth—and those are good jobs.

We're also eliminating the surtax for people earning less than \$75,000 per year by January 1, 2005. We're introducing measures that would benefit seniors, families, people with disabilities and their caregivers. We're planning to reduce the capital tax rates by 10% on January 1, 2004, with an intention to eliminate the capital tax by the time the federal government eliminates the capital tax. The capital tax is a very non-productive tax. It's a tax on the assets of a business, whether you make money or don't make money. It is a tax which we wish to eliminate. So as I mentioned, the small business tax is being reduced. Also, the threshold below which the lower, small business tax rate applies will increase from \$360,000 next January 1 to over \$400,000 in 2005.

1620

It's also important in the budget that municipalities are going to be receiving a significant increase in multi-year funding: an 18% increase in municipal funding from 2005-06 over the 2002-03 budget level.

Also, there is a program to invest \$40 million over five years for municipal fire services in small rural communities, to assist them in purchasing new emergency fire equipment. I know I heard from Stephen Hernen, the chief in Huntsville and Lake of Bays, asking about that program just a couple of days ago. I've certainly had the pleasure of going around the riding, where at least half a dozen fire departments have purchased new fire trucks through the NOHFC funding—in Kearney, in Britt, in Whitestone, in Georgian Bay township and many others. The government continues to invest in the north through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund. In fact, there's going to be \$100 million in projects flowing in this year's budget to invest in economic development projects and critical infrastructure projects around the north.

I met with municipal officials at the rural Ontario municipal conference and at the NOMA conference and the FONOM conference, and they've made it really clear that the small northern municipalities need help with those big-ticket items. I'm very pleased to see provincial investment in such things as the new Bracebridge Centennial Centre—I think there's a couple of million dollars in that; in the Rosseau waterfront project; in arenas in Port Carling and Bala; in the Bala sports park, where there are going to be soccer fields and other recreational facilities; in the Huntsville civic centre—I had the pleas-

ure of being there last week, and some \$2.6 million is being invested in this new downtown civic centre, where they're regenerating the downtown of Huntsville; in the Stockey centre in Parry Sound, which is also the Bobby Orr Hall of Fame; in Gravenhurst, in the Muskoka wharf project. So we're seeing some pretty significant investments in northern Ontario.

Unfortunately, I'm running out of time, so I don't have time to talk about other great initiatives like the northern tax incentive zone, which was announced by the Premier last week to such applause.

Hon Mr Turnbull: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to correct my own record.

The member for Don Valley East was shouting across the floor some totally misinformed things, and unfortunately I responded by calling him an idiot. I'd like to withdraw that, and say he's just misinformed.

The Deputy Speaker: We appreciate the opportunity anyone wants to take in correcting his record.

Further debate.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): A lot of people were shocked and surprised at seeing this government present a budget in an auto parts warehouse. What I'd like to do today—we were upset, naturally, but many other people were outside. What I'd like to do today is establish that this is not a new attitude on the part of this government. In discussing this with my staff, they said, "You know, you wrote a paper on democracy in Ontario when you were pretty upset about things two and a half years ago. Why don't you share some of that, lest some people think this is a single act of presenting a budget showing that to ignore the Legislature is A-OK?" I would like to do that.

I recall at the time feeling that most people were aware of the many changes—remember, this was two and a half years ago—in the province over the last few years: restructuring of hospitals and health care, massive changes in our educational system and in our tax structure, municipal amalgamations and downloading—all very important issues, to be sure.

But at the same time those changes were being made, changes were happening also in our Legislature. I think the public would be shocked—and I wrote this two and a half years ago. "I believe many of those changes were indeed for the worse, and they've made us by far, in my opinion, the least democratic jurisdiction in this whole Dominion, substantially substandard amongst many parliamentarians and many Parliaments in the world."

The thing which stimulated that thought two and a half or three years ago was what happened on the evening of December 16, 1997, when "the Mike Harris government was trying to quickly wrap up the ... inaugural session of the 36th Parliament. That night they proceeded with a motion that grouped together five separate bills from different ministries that had been before the House and attempted to move time allocation"—limiting time on debate—"on all of them together, at the same time. It was a radical departure from the procedure of the House, even by their standards. Despite our protests, the Speaker of

the House agreed that they could proceed with what became known as the omnibus time allocation.”

Frankly, “I was stunned. In a matter of moments and with an apparent wave of the hand, the government had been able to shut down debate on five separate, important pieces of legislation. As an opposition MPP I questioned what my purpose of even being in the Legislature was. In my previous political experience, I had naively assumed that all parties in the assembly had to agree to amend the standing orders ... of the House. Apparently a simple majority” of any government “was all that was required,” which means that any government with a majority can change the rules and procedures of this particular House, which is exactly what the Harris government did.

“There can be no mistaking the timing of the motion that night. It was the end of the session and the opposition and the press were weary,” so they rammed something through in a flash. This was apparently what the Common Sense Revolution was all about. I was most distraught, to say the least.

I want to talk about the tools of the official opposition: what do they have available to them? They’re “fairly common to most parliamentary jurisdictions: every sessional day, there is a question period where the opposition will hold the government accountable. As well, there is debate on second and third reading of a bill that has come before the House. Further, the opposition participates in the various committees that are formed to scrutinize and possibly amend legislation, or monitor government management and procedure. Another feature that is useful for members outside of cabinet”—on all sides of the House, by the way—“is the once weekly debate on private members’ bills.

“On the government side of the aisle, the instruments of power are” far more ominous, powerful and “concrete: the formulation and implementation of legislation,” especially if it’s a majority government, “a large and well-trained bureaucracy, large executive staffs and budgets, the ability to make appointments to agencies, boards and commissions. Once in power there are a few trends that are true of duly elected governments in democracies. Most political observers know that governments will attempt to consolidate their power and streamline” ways of doing business in order to “control the agenda.” That’s a natural inclination. “If they are flexible they will also be retooling parts of their program as they move through their term in office. Sometimes we see this happen once the so-called ‘honeymoon’ period is over....

“In my experience at the executive level, one of the hardest tasks for a sitting government is to prioritize its agenda. To ensure that it is properly consultative in forming policy and legislation, and still tailor the whole package to fit into a legislative schedule and timetable. There should be no underestimating how difficult this can be”; there’s no question about that.

1630

With all of these powers, it is very difficult for the opposition and very frustrating when the opportunities to challenge the government are taken away. “The truth is

that when faced with a fixed legislative timetable, governments have to streamline ... their agenda”; there’s no question about that.

“Governments counteract the problem in a number of ways. Often they try to bolster public support by ‘educating’ or providing educational programs. “Many governments will lean towards centralizing their powers. Rarely will a government, like this one has, play fast and loose with rules and procedures of the Legislature in order to expedite their agenda without the nuisance of having to call the assembly into session.”

I use the word “nuisance” because I believe that is reflective of the attitude of the Harris-Eves government: that the Legislature is basically a nuisance. “You voted us in. You gave us the power with a program. Step aside and let us implement it.” That is the attitude—very little appreciation or understanding of the role that the Parliament has to play. That’s the kind of thing that you might see in other parts of the world but that we have not been so used to here in Canada.

What “is becoming apparent”—and I said this two and a half years ago—“is a growing contempt for the Legislature and an attempt to stifle debate when they are there. That is hardly all. It is merely a symptom of a more problematic attitude by this government: the Legislature gets in the way.

“Perhaps it would be instructive for us to take a closer look”—and I outlined a number of the changes to legislation this particular government has made since 1995.

“The unprecedented, constant usage of time allocation”—limiting time—“to cut off debate on legislation: a tool put into the rules for use on the odd occasion”—the odd occasion—“when legislative debate is bogged down; it is now in everyday use by the government. Both the total number of times it has been used and the percentage of times it has been used as per the government’s total legislative agenda are staggeringly high. Debate was terminated over 70% of the time in the last session.” I made that comment in 1999, and it still continues. “This is far beyond the bounds of any previous government in provincial history. It is in excess of the combined total of all other provinces’ use of it. The government does not want to sit in the House, but they proceed to stifle debate when they do.

“The frequent use of omnibus legislation: the grouping together of what are essentially many bills under the banner of one bill; this is a popular way” in which this government has rammed through a variety of things. It was done with Bill 25, with the amalgamation of a number of cities in Ontario, which included Ottawa, Haldimand-Norfolk, Toronto, Hamilton, and there was one other—I forget which one it was. It provided for the formation of a restructuring commission and the reorganization of many of these cities. “It was a massive, sweeping bill that had different aspects for five very different” geographical “areas. It was introduced as one bill, time-allocated and rammed through without any amendments for its many flaws. We do not sit all year—and then we

have several weeks' worth of work put in front of us to do"—sometimes in hours. "In the case of the so-called mega-week a few years back, we were faced with the prospect of massive omnibus bills every day of the week that basically restructured the province." It rendered not only members with an inability to respond appropriately—because there was no time to study the implications of what this was; it made it very difficult for the media and the press likewise to get into that kind of a venture.

I said question period, when the Premier and often the finance minister are seldom here. That's a tool of holding people to account.

Hon Mr Turnbull: Where's Dalton?

Mr Patten: He's not the Premier yet.

The number of committees, as you well know, has been cut by almost 30%. "The committee hearing stage represents an important opportunity for both expert witnesses and other interested parties to speak to ... the bill in question. I can tell you that from my experience much meaningful input and many worthwhile amendments have come from this stage" of truly listening to those who are most affected and want to share what the impact of a particular bill may be and suggest some ways it could be stronger, have less damage and do the job it was intended to do. "There has been a steady reduction in the use of committee as a legislative tool. Oftentimes detailed legislation (the kind that is best subject to review) is being ordered to bypass the scrutiny of committee and straight to third reading where it will carry with the government's majority. Committees now rarely travel outside Toronto, further reducing their ability to sound out" the full range of Ontarians and the range of input.

"The rigging of sessional days": most people don't know this, but I think they should. "In order to further expedite the process and avoid the nuisance of the Legislature, the government has redefined what ... we would normally call a working day. In their haste to get bills through, they found that there were precedents in the standing orders that prevented them from moving a piece of legislation through several readings in what was commonly regarded as a single sessional day. So they broke the day in half at 6 pm" and forced the legislation into an evening session, and then redefined the evening session "as a different sessional day." It's one calendar day, but now they could call it two days, and when you're required, at second reading, to have at least four sessional days of debate, that means they can get something through second reading in two days and away you go to third reading, and it's happened on more than one occasion.

Sometimes members of the press have said, "Hey, was there a bill that went through last week? It went through so quickly." It's another way to try to make things more efficient in the eyes of the government.

"The politicization of previously non-partisan aspects of House business"—private members' business, as it should be called, and should be exclusively for private

members—the increased whipping of votes. The government has the power to prorogue the House, which means that anything on the order paper is dead unless the government chooses to recall it, and seldom do they do that.

"Clauses in large bills which de facto eliminate the Legislature from the process: the government has, on several different occasions, attempted to eliminate the need to come before the Legislature to move amendments on their large and controversial bills. Amendments would be made in cabinet and passed by regulation. It was first done with Bill 160, the massive restructuring of education, and then on several subsequent occasions. In early December"—1999; I wrote this three years ago—"we watched in vain as they built a 'sledgehammer clause' into the aforementioned omnibus Bill 25 on municipal amalgamation," which meant that "the cabinet grants itself wholesale power to redraw municipalities with their amendments and we, the elected opposition" and backbenchers on the government side "watch as spectators—no discussion, no debate, no voting, no questions."

In other words, with these pieces of legislation they continue to build into the legislation that henceforth cabinet, by regulation, would have the power to do many things that realistically should come back to the House for amendment. But, no, they wanted to do that.

The government we in Attawa have experienced for most of the last eight years "has been a paradox. On the face of it," they always want to be saying they're about decentralization: "tax reductions, downloading of responsibilities on municipalities, deregulation and privatization. In this and other ways, they prefer to portray themselves as the average Ontarian"—on the outside of "a monolithic structure."

Premier Harris used to say, "We are not government; we are here to fix it." Well, if he as Premier wasn't the government at the time, I don't know who was. They claim to have made it more accessible, sensible and accountable.

"In the Legislature, however, a different picture emerges. The government has enacted procedural changes that reflect a clear desire to move the process away from the open scrutiny of the Legislature and the people who elect them. Many observers feel that power has even moved away from the executive ... and more directly into the hands of the unaccountable, inaccessible few in the office of the Premier—the privileged few on the inside, the rest of us, elected representatives and Ontarians, on the outside, mere witnesses at the scene. The government of Ontario is far less accessible and far less accountable than it was five or 10 years ago, or than it has ever been."

1640

In a column written two and a half years ago Ian Urquhart said: "... there is a worrisome trend here: the presidentialization of Ontario politics, with all the power concentrated in the Office of the Premier." And he concluded, "The pendulum has swung too far. Unfortunately, few seem to care beyond the precinct of Queen's Park."

He wrote that two and a half years ago and I know he feels even more strongly today.

Jim Coyle, who is a columnist in Toronto, says:

"It looks as if one of the choicest pieces of real estate in all of greater Toronto—owned by the same family for generations, lovingly maintained, recently renovated, with old-world charm and all modern conveniences—will soon be on the market.

"Hurry. It won't last. Not this oasis in the heart of the city. Not when eager homebuyers get a look at some of the features.

"Stunning centre hall. Spacious principal rooms. Ideal for entertaining. Many upgrades. Steps to park. Overlooks sunny south garden" etc. Of course, he is speaking of the Ontario Legislature.

"The government of Premier Ernie Eves may have heaped the final indignity on the old Pink Palace this week when it announced plans to release a budget on March 27 outside the Legislature at a made-for-TV event broadcast by satellite and on the Internet.

"What will come next in the Conservative government's relentless debasement of this province's institutions?

"Elections in which MPPs are chosen by scratch-and-win tickets? Bills passed according to which section of the studio audience cheers loudest? Courts in which the convicted learn their sentences by rolling up the rim?

"It is just the latest act of disrespect for parliamentary tradition from an administration that has systematically emasculated the Legislature and which says outright it doesn't think the public gives a fig for such stuff.

"But it might just be that this is a gambit too cute by half, one of the bigger miscalculations since Joe Clark failed to get the math right before a vote that toppled his government in 1979.

"Coming as it does on the eve of an election," treating this in such a fashion is truly contemptuous.

My time is up. I support the motion that henceforth all Parliaments receive budgets first that are developed by government and presented to the people of our Legislature. The budget, in no way kindly, even condemns the government for this kind of action.

My hope today was to illustrate that the attitude of this government is nothing new, that there is this built-in, I don't know why, disdain and discomfort and a sense of the Legislature as simply a nuisance; that we should be able to proceed as quickly as possible with our business plans in order to enact why we were elected in the first place, with no understanding of what it means to operate in a democratic Parliament in which all the people of Ontario—which means some of them are not from the government side—have a chance to voice their opinion and be respected and that this House be respected as well.

Ms Marilyn Mushinski (Scarborough Centre): I'm particularly pleased to be able to add a few words with respect to this whole subject of what I think is the term "democracy."

It's interesting, because a lot of people don't know my background, but I am actually celebrating my 20th year

in public office, and very proudly so. I am not one of those professional politicians; I actually got elected I think quite by accident. I was attending university. I went back to university as a mature student, and one of the requirements of being accepted into university was that you needed to take four 100-level general ed courses, and one of them was in humanities. So I got a very quick lesson while I was working full-time, trying to raise children, and going to university, sometimes four nights a week. They were tough days, but I learned very quickly how to analyze the material that was required reading in order to pass those first courses.

It's interesting, because we've heard the opposition talk quite vigorously against our government's decision to present the budget directly to the people of Ontario, yet they fail to talk about the prevalence of what I would consider to be highly questionable democratic processes within their own party.

Democracy is a deeply rooted tradition in western society, as we know. The members on this side of the House are adamant about protecting the democratic values that are what I consider to be the foundations of the parliamentary system, and I think it's important that we do perhaps visit the historical origins of today's modern parliamentary system. You really need to understand not only its history but its development. This is why I actually found the education that I got in a Canadian university as a mature student 20 years ago—a little over 20 years ago, actually—extremely interesting. I have therefore volunteered to help members opposite learn and appreciate our democratic tradition. I think it's really important that they listen to this, because as many of us know in this place, the first practice of democracy can be traced back to the cradle of western civilization, which is none other than Greece. I know most certainly that the member for Davenport will be particularly interested in this particular interpretation of democracy.

It was indeed the city-states of ancient Greece, such as Periclean Athens, that first governed by democratic rule.

Interjection.

Ms Mushinski: I will be getting to oligarchical complexes in a minute, Mr Kormos.

It is there that the democratic tradition first took root, as far back as the fifth century BC. Greece, as the birthplace of democracy, holds a unique place in history. It's the Athenian belief in democratic principles that was so strong that they not only allowed but they expected eligible citizens to participate in the governing process, something that I think some members in this House, especially on the opposition benches, seem to have forgotten, or maybe they didn't learn when they took History 101. Greece has emerged as the ideal example of the people's right to self-determination and self-government.

I'm sure many of us have noticed that there is hardly a discussion or debate on the subject of democracy that doesn't include references to ancient Greece, and well it should be, because Greece will always be held up to us as an example of a successful and fully functioning direct democracy—a very important distinction.

Although the western world has witnessed many forms of government since that classical period, democracy has become—and I think this is important too—a continuously re-emerging theme for newly developing as well as established states across and around the world.

The term “democracy” itself is very telling. It is, I believe, the reason why nation after nation, state after state, country after country, converts to its practice. It is also the reason why so many people choose Ontario and Canada as their home. The word “democracy” is actually made up of two Greek words: “dēmos,” which means “people,” and “kratos,” which means “power.” In the dictionary definition, “democracy” is referred to as government by the people, in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system.

1650

It's enough to turn to Abraham Lincoln to summarize the rather dry dictionary definition. In his words, a democratic government is a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The concept is complex, yet simple, and it's beautiful at the same time.

As members of an elected assembly—and I know you jest, Mr Kormos, but it is an important lesson to be learned—I believe that we should all reflect on the meaning of the most compelling word in this place: democracy. We should remember that the responsibility that is placed on our shoulders is by the people of Ontario.

Greek or, to be more specific, Athenian belief in the democratic idea was so strong that the practice endured for 200 years after oligarchic attempts to suppress it, Mr Kormos.

I believe I am joined by all of my colleagues on this side of the House when I say that our belief in democracy is equally strong. Athenian democracy sparked centuries of debate on the right of the people to participate in the political process. The most famous philosophers and political scientists in western culture—Plato, Aristotle, and later Locke, Hobbes, Rousseau, to name but a few—have contributed greatly to this debate, and I learned all of this in Humanities 101 as a mature student at a Canadian university in Ontario. It is their influence that steers our understanding of the political process and our own form of government.

As this debate expanded over the centuries, other ideas, surprisingly enough, began to surface—ideas that truly shaped our understanding of our communities, our society and in fact our perceptions of the world. Ideals such as freedom, equality and human rights became virtual synonyms for the word “democracy.” These ideas have evoked some of the most moving expressions of human will and intellect. It is, after all, the democratic idea that sparked Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence in 1776 and motivated Poland's solidarity movement in the 1980s.

Democracy became much more than just a system of government. It has inspired people to fight for it and often to die for it. History is filled with too many examples of people braving tanks, armies and facing

brutality, all for the right to vote, to speak freely, to think freely and to be free. This was certainly true of the Hungarian uprising in Budapest in 1956, where thousands were killed while protesting the practices of the totalitarian Soviet regime.

Examples of human courage in the name of freedom and democracy span the globe. They are seen in student protests in the Far East and in the democratic reforms in Africa; they were present in the work of missionaries in Latin America, where authoritarian regimes undermined the people's right to self-government; and they are present in art, music and literature.

I believe that as members of this House, we have a responsibility not only to our constituents but to all those who have fought to protect the democratic traditions born in Athens so many thousands of years ago; traditions that, I am reluctant to say, we sometimes take for granted.

Here in Ontario, we have had the luxury of living in the certainty that our rights and our freedoms are protected. They have become an innate part of who we are. Our government is built on the pillars of democracy. We believe in the sovereignty of the people, we believe in government based upon the consent of the governed and we believe in the rule of the majority with full protection of minority rights.

We ensure free and fair elections at every step of the political process. We value equality before the law, respect limits on government and we govern to ensure social, economic and political pluralism. The government encourages tolerance, co-operation and compromise, and it is committed to sustaining all these values upon which the province of Ontario and this great country are built.

This government has fought for greater accountability and transparency at every level and in all policies. We believe that Ontarians have a right to know what is being done on their behalf and that we, as government, have an obligation to our citizens to always, always include them in the governing of our province.

Many of my constituents have come to Ontario from places where the term “the government's obligation” has absolutely no meaning, where the political freedoms of speech, expression, equality, right to vote and freedom from persecution were unattainable dreams. They have come from places where political participation meant publicized acclamation of candidates already appointed by those in power—now, does that sound familiar?—where elections were staged and the media, under the government's control, manipulated. I doubt that any member in this House could argue that we have been able to manipulate the media in Ontario.

They have come from places where the government told them, the people, what to do rather than ask them, “What should we do?” They have come here to start a new life, to experience all the rights, all the privileges and all the responsibilities of citizenship. They are ready and willing to take on those responsibilities.

I consider it my duty as the member of provincial Parliament for Scarborough Centre to ensure that the

political freedom they yearn for is protected and that they indeed are entitled to the rights that inspired so many to travel halfway around the world to obtain. My constituents want to hear, furthermore, that they have the right to know what this government is doing for them. That is why I am so proud of our government and its commitment to ensure the people's full participation in the political process.

From the public's participation in the nomination of candidates for provincial elections to public consultation on policy and legislation, we have shown our commitment to democratic values. Can every party in this place say the same thing? I think not.

The 20th century has seen many strides made for the practice of democracy. North and South America are virtually entirely democratic, new democracies have sprung up in Asia, and the Middle East is calling for its own turn to take a chance at democracy. For decades, Ontario and Canada have been the promised land for those living on the other side of the Iron Curtain under the fist of a totalitarian regime. The policies of glasnost and perestroika in the USSR in the 1980s have resulted in the breakup of the Soviet regime, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the first democratic elections in Russia and the old Soviet republics.

Taking a step back in democratic development is not an option. We are committed to continuing the spread of democracy, to get closer to the model that etched Periclean Athens into the mind of every scholar and every student of history, political science and philosophy, something, again, that was inculcated when I was a student of political philosophy at a university in Canada, in Ontario.

1700

To quote Samuel Huntington of Harvard University, "The two most decisive factors affecting the future consolidation and expansion of democracy will be economic development and political leadership." I know that our government has worked tirelessly to ensure economic growth to the people of Ontario. I know we have the leadership that fully and unequivocally believes in democratic principles and nurtures the rights of the people to participate in the political process. We believe in the power and the right of the people to decide whom to charge with the responsibility of being elected as a representative to the Legislative Assembly. I can't say the same is true of the opposition Liberals.

This government has invited and encouraged the people to be a meaningful and vital part of the political process. I have always believed in participatory democracy since the first day I decided to run for election. We ensured that the people of Ontario had a real contribution to the way in which their province is governed. We ensured that it was the people's will that became the government's agenda. And this government took the agenda directly to those to whom it is responsible.

Over the weekend, I decided to leaf through the Liberal platform. There were many points that caught my eye but a recurring theme was particularly interesting: the

leader persisted in referring to "divine right." How appropriate, I thought. Isn't the leader infused with the power to bypass the people by appointing, rather than electing, its own candidates? I think so. I find once again that the Liberals are much like Hippocrates: strong in theory but very weak in practice. In fact, they criticize the government's decision to present the budget directly to the people while they shamelessly continue to bypass the democratic process in their own practices. It is saddening to see the democratic traditions born in Greece stumble over the Liberal Party practices in Ontario.

I believe that in delivering the budget to the people of Ontario, the government acted in the best interests of this province. We delivered the budget directly to those whom it affects most: the many groups, organizations and individuals who, through the public consultation process, contributed to its content. That the opposition doesn't like it is of no surprise to me or, I believe, any of my colleagues. After all, they have made it their life's work to oppose change. Two hundred and eight tax cuts, and in every budget since June 1995, the Liberals have opposed every one. I can anticipate that they will oppose the additional 17 tax cuts that have been announced in this year's budget.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Davenport): I'm delighted to participate in this very special session on Mr Carr's decision, as the Speaker of this Legislature, when he found a *prima facie* case of contempt.

Let's look at what the previous speaker, the honourable member from Scarborough Centre, just indicated. She gave us a pretty good definition of democracy when she started to talk about the Greek model. But we also know that the Greek model was the beginning of democracy; it evolved. It's the beginning of democracy because at that point it was still an elite institution. Who had the power to vote? Only those who had land. In the meantime, of course, we had other issues to overcome, such as a certain amount of education. At one time only those who had a grade 10 education were able to vote. Even today, in some countries women do not have a chance to vote. So democracy is an evolving model. I'm just hoping, when she began to talk about Greece and the beginning of democracy, she did not mean that the model has evolved to such an extent that the Legislature becomes irrelevant.

Today, that surely has to be one of the main issues of debate: has this Legislature become irrelevant to the functioning of the government? I've listened very carefully to Richard Patten, the member from Ottawa, who gave many historic examples. He gave examples of many newspaper editors and assistants who said in fact that too much power has evolved into the Office of the Premier. We agree to that extent: too much power has evolved; too much power has been placed in the hands of one person, who is then able to manipulate the system to whatever ends he or she sees fit.

Our thinking is—and my leader, Dalton McGuinty, has indicated in our change to democracy, our proposals for democracy—that this evolving model where we place

so much power in the hands of one person must be changed. I'm going to be speaking about this in a few minutes, but certainly I'm saying to the member that if there is so much power in the hands of one person, then that person, if he or she is a corrupt person, is going to cause us a major problem. He or she will take away, at his or her whim, the right of the Legislature not only to debate but also to look at the budget and say, "I don't like this item. I'd like to scrutinize another item but I can't, because the Legislature has decided, or the person has decided, to attempt closure on a certain debate."

For instance, how many closures have we seen in this Legislature? We've seen that 60% of the bills that came through here have been closed in terms of discussion. That is really too much power in the hands of one person, who can then decide what issues come forward, what issues can be debated, and the very fact of how long debate can last.

As you can see, we are in real danger of becoming irrelevant when so much power has evolved into the hands of one person. Irrelevant why? Because, I might simply say, if we don't agree with the Speaker today, if we do not vote for the Speaker's contempt ruling, then we are really in danger of becoming puppets in the hands of those who wield power in Ontario. In fact, we become puppets as well in the hands of those other Parliaments that have unlimited power. We must have a system of checks and balances. When the member for Scarborough Centre says, "Yes, the Greek model is great," she surely does not include the lack of a system that wanted to include checks and balances.

We can refer to the great democratic philosopher, Alexis De Tocqueville, who came to America from France. He looked at the American model and said, "Really, is there democracy in America?" He then describes the model of checks and balances. I would submit to you that the question to all Ontarians should be: have we seen a system of checks and balances as it is promulgated here in Ontario today? Where is the system of checks and balances? Are there checks and balances here if the Premier gets unlimited power in his office, in his hands? Surely there can't be checks and balances if one person decides what to do and has you to do it. He tells you how to vote. He scripts every speech of each minister. The ministers are becoming simply puppets in the hands of those who are wielding this unlimited power.

1710

Alexis de Tocqueville said there can only be real democracy if there's a system of checks and balances in place. If we're looking around Ontario today, my question is this: where are the checks and balances? Surely there has to be a judiciary that is totally separate from the government. The Legislature must be separate from the executive. This kind of a model is checking each other—one arm of the government must check the other arm of the government. But of course we, as members, who have been empowered by the residents who are voting for us, have a special responsibility. That responsibility is to

ensure that we represent our residents right here in an unhampered way. What's happened with this budget is simply that the government decided they were going to call an election and they needed the warrants.

That leads me, of course, to another issue that's so important in terms of a lack of checks and balances. I have a letter here from Michael Bryant, one of our colleagues, and he says that to prorogue the House and then execute a special warrant for an amount exceeding half the annual budget surely runs afoul of our century-old supply process. What's the ground for that? He lists the Legislative Assembly Act, and sections 53 and 54 of the Constitution Act of 1867, which is very clear that one minister has a special statutory and constitutional obligation to ensure the legality of all actions of this government. That cannot be really legal, when you think about it. Well, I'll take that back; it may be legal, but it certainly cannot be ethically moral. That's not possible here. You can't think to call an election, to prorogue the House up to April 30, and in the meantime say, "Well, wait a minute. We need money to run this government because we're going to call an election before the 30th. We need this money. We need special warrants." Of course, you can only fool some of the people some of the time. The press is not stupid. The residents who voted for us are not stupid.

What do we see today as the reflection of what happened here? I'm just looking at Christina Blizzard, who is a very independent journalist. She says, for instance, "Are Tories caught in their own web?" Well, they certainly are. The other section in the Toronto Sun also says, "MPP decries 'secret' fund." They know there was a secret fund. This is a slush fund for the election. But imagine this; when you think about it, it really makes you mad: the government decides to take \$37 billion and run it through without any scrutiny. They want to spend \$37 billion and run it through this House without us having had the chance to scrutinize the budget.

At the beginning, of course, they didn't even want to come here. They did not wish to come here. They took it outside of the House so there would be an unbalanced situation. They decided at that particular time that they could control the environment and that there would be no scrutinizing questions asked about this budget. We know why. Yes, we know why: they wanted to have a budget without scrutiny.

Mr Gerretsen: No.

Mr Ruprecht: Yes. We all know it on this side of the House, and you know it on the other side of the House, because there is a \$2-billion shortfall—

Mr Gerretsen: Two billion dollars?

Mr Ruprecht: Two billion dollars. The Dominion Bond Rating Service says \$2 billion. The Toronto Dominion Bank says \$1.5 billion. But surely, it's certainly around a \$2-billion shortfall.

They took the budget out from here and into a place where they would not be found out, where they would not be criticized. They took it out because there is this big hole in the budget. Every one of you sitting here

today, every one of you is fully aware that these facts and figures are correct. In fact, we could quote you more of the authorities who decided that, "Yes, we looked at this budget of the Conservatives and it's very clear that this budget has a big hole of \$2 billion."

You didn't want us to discuss it. You didn't want the people of Ontario to find out about it. You wanted to be sure that this was not scrutinized. That's why you took the budget out and that's why your ministers signed those special warrants, because you are getting ready for an election campaign.

Democracy is a great thing and it is evolving. We know that in 17th-century Britain a great writer appeared whose name was Hobbes, and he wrote an interesting book. Mr Hobbes says that government is a leviathan. What is a leviathan? It's an eye-bulging beast of which you've got to be afraid. You've got to be afraid of a government that manipulates. In Britain in those days, life, he says, was nasty, brutish and short. It is up to us in the 21st century to try to ensure that life is not short, that life is not brutish, but that people are being helped.

What kinds of models of government would we like to emulate? What are the kinds of models that we would like to see perpetuated? It surely can't be a model where powers evolve to the point where a tyranny can exist, where dictatorship can experience democracy and where there can only be the dictatorship of the majority. The majority is sometimes tyranny, and that to me is very important. We have to set up our institutions to the point where there are checks and balances so that the tyranny of the majority cannot affect people's lives every day.

It is important that we have conventions. It is important that we have traditions. I'm asking you, do not destroy the conventions, the traditions and the agreements that have evolved for a better system of democracy than we have had in the past. Democracy indeed is evolving, it is true, but while it is evolving it must become better. Democracy must become better. How do we make it better? Democracy is better if there is more people input, if we are all-embracing, if every resident is embraced by this system of democracy. Democracy cannot be for the elite, as it was in Greece. Democracy today must increase and include all groups, whether it is ethnic groups or special interest groups; it cannot simply be for the friends of the government.

Herein lies the big difference. We are a system of government which promulgates inclusiveness. We want to embrace everybody. We know that if one person hurts, the rest of us hurt. If one person has SARS, the rest of us might get it. But this government doesn't get that idea. This government doesn't understand that idea of inclusiveness. No, you don't understand that, because what I've seen here over the last few years is not inclusiveness; it is exclusiveness. It is only including a certain group and favouring them.

Our system of democracy must evolve so we have respect for the traditions and the very aspects where we can enter into discussion to at least debate the major items of a government's budget. That has to be an idea

that should have been taken for granted. We should not be here today to discuss the very basis of democracy, the very basis of discussing a budget which is so vital to every person who lives in Ontario. That should not be the focus of discussion. We have been pushed into it. We have been pushed into discussing this because we have a government that is going to face contempt of this Legislature. I challenge even one person in the government to say to us today, "Is it not true that we could have done better? Is it not true that we should not have had this budget away from this Legislature where we could control it? Is it not true it would have been better for everybody concerned," including the residents which you represent?

1720

It would have been better for everybody to bring the budget here. Is there not even one person who understands the ethics of those facts, that you come here with a budget? Is there not even one person among you who understands the morality of this fact that we should come here first to discuss the budget because it affects every resident of Ontario? Is there not one among you who understands the very morality of this principle?

I challenge this government. I challenge them to find in their own hearts what we're saying must certainly be true to some extent, and I would only hope that there will at least be one person who can see, "Yes, the Speaker's ruling was right."

In fact, Mr Conway, who made the original motion, did not necessarily say, "We condemn all of you." No, he simply reasserts the right to have the budget read where it should have been read the first time. It is such a basic lesson in politics; it is Administration 101. It's such a basic idea.

We know that when you look around this chamber, there are gargoyles that are staring down at you and me. These gargoyles were placed there in the first place to take away the arrogance and to take away the mean-spiritedness that sometimes emanates from each member. Mr O'Toole is as much an example as you and me. He is nobody really different. It slipped out of him. He's a human being, and when he's aggravated enough, something happens; sometimes something snaps. He cannot really be condemned for it, because Mr O'Toole is me; Mr O'Toole is you. Mr O'Toole is every one of us, because we're in a system of confrontation. But our job is also to mitigate that confrontation, because our job is to be very inclusive. That's why I ask you the question, which system of government do you admire most? Do you admire the system of government which has more power, which evolves the power to the hands of only one person, or do you admire a system of democracy where there's input, where there's discussion, where there's compromise, even for the fact that there are problems and there consequently could be some discussion between the two of us so we cannot agree?

We're asking for an open system. We must have a system that is open. We admire a system that is not ethnocentric. We don't admire a system that is revenge-

ful. No, we don't believe in, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." If that were the case, we would have evolved a different kind of system.

Let's not be ethnocentric. Let's not only help our friends who are helping us, but let's be all-inclusive. This system of democracy which we have proposed, under Dalton McGuinty, is all-inclusive; it includes everybody, because that's what it says.

Consequently, I say to you, Mr Speaker, I am in agreement with Mr Carr's ruling and I would hope that this government will find—

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): I'm happy to have 20 minutes to speak to the amendment introduced by my friend Gilles Bisson from Timmins-James Bay. It really is hard to believe—for those of you watching—that you're paying us to make these kinds of speeches that we make here every day, but it's true. For the last four days I don't know what you've been listening to, but I get the sense that most of you are wondering, what is it that we're debating?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: That's what I'm saying, about the fact that people are paying us to debate God knows what, because just the other day, or last week, the Premier, Ernie Eves, said he would never, ever do this again. So if he admits that he would never present the budget outside of this place again, why are we debating this issue? We've got so many speeches by so many members saying so many things, including the member for Scarborough Centre, who must have consulted some Greek oracle that told her we should be talking about Greek democracy for 20 minutes, for God's sake.

I think we should be listening to what the Premier said: he learned from his mistakes and would never do it again. If you listen to the Premier, you would think the other members would indeed repent, as I believe he did. You would think that the remarks by the Speaker would encourage the members to repent or that there would possibly be an act of contrition or maybe a little prayer. But the arrogance of each and every one of the members: I remember last Thursday after the Speaker made his ruling and we went immediately into the debate, most of the Conservative members were so angry at the ruling that they went after the Speaker, one after the other. I couldn't believe it.

Ms Mushinski: Name names.

Mr Marchese: The member for Scarborough Centre says, "Name names." I'd rather not do that, because names have already been named and been made quite public. So what we expect from the members, once the Speaker has ruled, is that they show some humility, some remorse for the mistake they made, and move on. Dispense with this debate we're having about whether the Speaker was right or wrong and move on to question period, because I really believe the public would love to see question period here every day.

I know that if we had question period, there would be some different kinds of articles written about this

government. There would be articles that would probably attack this government once again, because the questions we in the opposition ask are clearly not very nice to the government. Sometimes we are very unkind, and rightly so, because of the things they do. They're trying to avoid question period. Three days this week, no question period; one day last week, no question period—four days without question period. They are clearly afraid to face the opposition, or to face someone. You would think they want to get on with the business of this House and immediately get into question period.

We say the ruling of the Speaker is unquestioned. We rarely, if ever, question the Speaker's judgment. And if we do, we don't do it in this House. We might disagree, but in this House we never say publicly to the Speaker, "You're wrong." We never do that. And while we might question the decision of the Speaker, if we do so, it's not in this place. But each and every one of the members who stood up last Thursday attacked the Speaker. They were so angry at Gary. They were so angry that one of their own would make a ruling that would contradict what they were doing outside this place.

I say that when the Speaker makes a ruling—at least to make a ruling that the current Speaker made, that he felt so strongly about the offence that was committed by this government, that the budget would be presented outside of this place, that a Speaker should feel so strongly and render the decision he made, tells the government members how strongly the Speaker feels about the contravention of conventions of this place.

The Tories don't like it. I presume they would expect one of their own never to rule against the government. They would want the Speaker to be quiet, even if he disagreed with what they were doing. They would want to silence him as they tried to do last week, although this week they've moved on. They've decided they ought not to be attacking the Speaker any more.

1730

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): No. O'Toole did that on Monday.

Mr Marchese: Mr O'Toole from Durham—true, that was Monday. Yes. Well, maybe after Monday they moved on. Quite right.

Thankfully they moved on to other issues, other than trying to attack the Speaker for the ruling. Rather than attacking the 35-year-old whiz kids they have in their offices for coming up with the great idea of democratizing this place by presenting democracy directly to the public and not to this Legislative Assembly, rather than attacking those highly paid young men and women who clearly made a serious error in deciding, "We have a novel idea; we're going to take democracy directly to the public," they attacked Gary Carr, the Speaker of this place. Go and attack the young people behind the Speaker's corner over there. Some of them say, "I surrender. It's not me." OK. But there are others. I am convinced the young people in the Premier's office thought, "Premier, we have an idea for you and we're going to sell it. Don't worry, it's going to go well."

It didn't go very well. The journalists, the editorials, the public and their own Tory members were attacking this government one after the other. I would have loved to have seen the whiz kids go, "Oh, Jeez, what did we do here?" I would have loved to see their faces. I'm sure Ernie Eves's face wasn't looking too pretty then—day after day, the attacks on him and his government for doing what they did. I wouldn't be paying these whiz kids the kind of dollars they're paying them to come up with bright ideas like that, which resulted in nothing more than two weeks of an assault on this government for assaulting the democratic conventions of this place—two weeks.

Mr Sorbara: I would be humiliated.

Mr Marchese: You would be humiliated, Greg. You would probably say, "Sorry, we were wrong. We made a mistake. We'll come back. We'll present it to the Legislature."

Mr Kormos: What did Tom Jacobek say?

Mr Marchese: About this?

Mr Sorbara: Don't confuse him.

Mr Marchese: That's a different story. It's a municipal issue really.

Greg Sorbara said he would have apologized. Many of us probably would have said immediately, as an act of contrition, "We made a mistake. We're human." Ernie Eves is human, he claims. If that were so, I would quickly abandon that terrain and just move on. The best way to neutralize your enemy is to say, "You're right. We made a mistake." It's true, you neutralize your enemies. When they attack you on a point, whether you're right or wrong, you have to say, "You're right." That's how you defang the enemy and move on.

But this government doesn't do that. Every time they get attacked, they feel they need to attack back, and more strongly. Ernie felt personally slighted by the Speaker. A couple of weeks ago when this debate was raging, he felt as if the Speaker ought not to have made the comments he made, which were that he felt the budget should have been in this place, read in this assembly and not outside of this place. He felt the Speaker should not have made that statement or other statements related to it. Gary was right; the Speaker was wrong.

Ms Martel: What? No, Gary was right. The Speaker was right.

Mr Marchese: Gary was right, the Speaker was right, the Premier was wrong. That's the way it goes. That's the way it works.

Now in the last couple of days all we are hearing are people attacking, making comments. I was just listening to John Baird, the minister of such and such—I don't know what—talking about free votes. I thought, OK, is he going to bring forth a motion that's going to deal with the issue of free votes? Maybe they are. He said, "Well, too many people have the ability or the strength or the power or the something or other to be able to vote according to the way they want." I say to John, are you bringing something forward? Because I don't see any of your members that often—if rarely—stand up to vote

against this government on anything. Not that I disagree with the idea, because I personally, in my own time in our government, felt that members should have the right to—

Mr Kormos: What standing order do you have to change to facilitate free votes? What law do you have to change? There is no law requiring change.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Timmins-James Bay): Whose debate is this, Peter?

The point is that free votes can be good for democracy in this place, and a lot of people are talking about it, I've got to tell you. I'm a supporter—

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: I beg your pardon? So then the Liberals chime in. All right. Anyway, when people get to the other side, the government benches, they change. Isn't that true, Greg? They do. Then all of a sudden they forget about what they did in opposition. Mercifully, some of us have been there long enough for us to remember what we did—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): In government.

Mr Marchese: —while we were in government to be able to say, "Please don't play the public in any way." They know that when the Liberals were in power, they made their own appointments of Liberals, when the Tories were in power, when the New Democrats were in power—

Ms Churley: We appointed Liberals and Tories.

Mr Marchese: I know. We appointed a lot of Liberals and Tories. I don't know why we would do that.

Mr Sorbara: How many are there? There aren't enough.

Mr Marchese: I've got to tell you that's a bad one.

John Baird talked about the idea of how nasty the NDP was in opposing some person—

Ms Churley: The new chair of the energy board.

Mr Marchese: The chair of the energy board—and he said, "It wasn't nice; the NDP opposed it. The Liberals were nice" and they supported him. Of course he doesn't know because he wasn't here, but when we were in government they had sniff dogs at the door in I think room 228 or committee room 2 to smell any person who could be remotely connected to the NDP, and when they did, you had five or six media people lining up, saying, "We got 'em." That's the way it was. It was terrible.

We appointed so many Liberals and Tories because we wanted to be different. I say to myself these days, why did we do that?

Mr Sorbara: It was really stupid.

Mr Marchese: I admit it was dumb. Instead of supporting your own supporters, we went out and supported the Liberals and Conservatives.

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I just wanted to mention to one of the members who is turning away from me, I can't tell when you're talking or not, but I did want to say that I give a little bit of latitude to members of the speaker's caucus that I will not give to anyone else's caucus.

The Chair recognizes the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Sorbara: I'm going to have to move over.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, come to order.

Mr Marchese: I defer to your judgment, Speaker, as always, and thank you for the intervention.

Greg, I've got to tell you it was not a very intelligent thing to have done, because then the Tories come and they say—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. I'd like you to address the Chair with your comments. That will help me a little bit.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Vaughan-King-Aurora, please come to order.

Mr Marchese: Thank you, Speaker, for your second intervention.

He's trying to derail me, I know, but he won't succeed.

When the Tories were in opposition they said, "Ah, we're going to appoint people solely on the basis of merit." It was the funniest thing, because I knew that once in power, "merit" meant Tory. That's what it meant.

Ms Martel: Tory membership.

Mr Marchese: Tory membership, that's what it's all about. They make no bones about that, because when you raise this issue they say, "Yes, you're right," because they all have merit, right?

Ms Churley: Donations help too.

Mr Marchese: Donations, are you kidding? These guys are so deep into the pockets of the Ontario—I was about to say some people—rich people. Yes.

This kind of debate is a free-for-all. I just heard Tony Ruprecht, the member for Davenport, have an opportunity to talk about the fact that this government is not going to be able to balance their budget and, Greg, you agree.

I worry, and let me tell you why I worry. If the Tories are unable to balance their budgets, I argue that Liberals will be unable to balance their budgets too. Let me explain why.

Liberals, at every meeting I go to, when asked, "How are you going to raise the money for your promises?" say, "We've got \$2.2 billion when we take back the corporate tax cut that they have made."

Mr Caplan: Actually, \$3.2 billion.

Mr Marchese: You guys say \$2.2 billion. Are you saying \$3.2 billion?

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Oh, now it's \$3.2 billion. They're adding. So they say \$3.2 billion—

Interjection: It went up.

1740

Mr Marchese: It keeps on going up, right. Here's the problemo you have, Liberals—

Mr Sorbara: Il problema.

Mr Marchese: We make fun, certo. The problem is that there is no \$2.2 billion or \$3.2 billion. Why, for those of you who are asking? Only \$700 million has been

spent thus far. At the completion of the corporate tax cuts, it would be \$2.2 billion, and now the Liberals are saying \$3.2 billion. But if there is an election next week, as I anticipate, all they've got is \$700 million that has been spent thus far. But in the Liberal mind they say, "Uh, uh, we've got \$3.2 billion." Then, they say—

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): I wouldn't talk about math if I were you, Rosario.

Mr Marchese: All I say to the public is, please ask the various accountants in the Liberal caucus to explain it to you in the event that I'm not doing a very good job of it. There are some accountants over there who say, "Rosario, I wouldn't talk if I were you." That's fine, but please hold them to account, especially the accountant, whose riding I don't remember. But say, "Tories, have you spent \$3.2 billion?" Because as people often tell you, you haven't; you've only spent \$700 million.

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: Hold on, David. So you've got \$700 million and all the tax credits—

Mr Caplan: Whoa, Nellie.

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Whoa, Nellie.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Don Valley East, come to order.

Mr Marchese: Sisters and brothers, take it easy. I'm here. I've got two more minutes.

Then you've got, they say, \$500 million more from the tax credit. They are going to take that back. The problemo is that they've only spent, we estimate, about \$50 million of that tax credit. At its completion it could be \$200 million, \$300 million, \$500 million, we say, but there's only \$50 million. If you add up the accountants' math and the Liberal caucus's math, they've got \$3.2 billion, plus \$500 million from the tax credit; they've got \$4 billion already for the \$7-billion promises they've made, and that's how they are going to balance the budget.

Ms Martel: A bit of a shortfall.

Mr Marchese: You follow my math, because I think it's simple. My math is simpler than the accountants' math; I don't know how they're going to add it up. But they say, "No new tax increases, \$7 billion or more in service increases, and we're going to balance the budget."

Mr Ruprecht and all the Liberals shouldn't play this game of attacking the Tories about not being able to balance the budget, because I've got to tell you, good listeners all, good citizens all who are watching this program, they won't be able to budget either—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Member for Scarborough Centre, come to order.

Mr Marchese: —unless they increase taxes, which they are touchy about; decrease services, which, oh, that would hurt; and/or the third alternative, which would be to run a deficit by eliminating their bill that requires this assembly to have balanced budgets.

Good people who are watching, it's tough, I'm sure, to follow what we're all saying here. What we should be doing is getting on with the business of the House. What the government should do, what the members should do, is listen to Eves, who said, "We're not going to ever make the mistake of taking this budget out to Magna Corp." Listen to the guy. I think he learned his lesson. Admit you were wrong and move on; question period, move on. Have the election you so desperately want and let's get it out of the way.

Speaker, that's the way I see it; I suspect this is the way the electorate sees it. We should just be moving on.

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak on this important motion. I was very entertained for the last 20 minutes by the member for Trinity-Spadina. He's a very entertaining speaker indeed.

I was interested in his comments about merit. I don't think there's ever been a party in government that's been recognized more for doing what we said we were going to do. He didn't seem to bring that up, and that's been revolutionary in government. It's an honest reputation we ended up getting, and it's a fair one, because that's exactly what has been accomplished.

The other area that I was hearing him talk about was balancing the budget—who has and who hasn't. I think the proof is in the pudding as to what has happened. For four years the budget has been balanced. We started out with a tremendous debt in this province and a deficit of over \$11 billion. That's well over \$1 million an hour that was being spent, that wasn't coming in. No wonder it took a little while to get that economy turned around. It wasn't something that was going to be easy to do, we knew that, and it did take a year or two. But just imagine if we spent what the Liberals were asking us to spend. Just imagine if we had spent what the NDP were asking us to spend. The debt would have just gone right out of sight and the deficit would have been even higher. They complain now that, yes, there was a bit of an increase in the debt after we took office, for the first two or three years, but at the same time they were also pleading for more money to be spent. They were quite adamant that tax cuts wouldn't work. Even their friends in Ottawa—Paul Martin, for example—now know that tax cuts work.

What we're really debating here is a motion about a budget, but what happened in the spring that they want to refer to as a budget was a budget speech. It was a speech about the budget. The budget was tabled here at Queen's Park with the Clerk on that day, the same day the speech was delivered in that hall. That was a budget speech. It was a speech describing some of the contents of the budget. There is nothing in the rules of order that require that speech to be delivered in this Legislature. As a matter of fact, a motion has to be put forward so it can be delivered here. There is nothing that says it has to be delivered here. I do respect some people's concern that it wasn't delivered in this Legislature, in this Parliament—I follow that concern; I follow that thinking—but lo and

behold, what we were talking about and what we are talking about is a speech about the budget.

When it comes to legality, I heard a member on the other side of the House speaking the other day about spending all this money outside of the Legislature. Well, that is not exactly what's going on, because a speech about the budget isn't spending money, it's just describing what's in it. The actual spending is when those budget bills come forward and they're voted on. When we vote on the budget itself, it's really voting on a principle, sort of like voting on the throne speech after there has been debate on it. Lo and behold, I think what we should be debating here right now is a budget that has been tabled properly in this Legislature with the Clerk. That's the kind of debate that should be going on, rather than holding up the process by debating process. This has gone on; this is now day four in this debate.

Yesterday they brought up special warrants and, "Isn't that awful?" There was a requirement to carry out interim supply, which had been voted on for some six months and was running out on April 30. It was necessary to have a special warrant when there wasn't an interim supply vote in the House. Consequently, approximately a little under 50% of the budget was voted on, so we could continue to pay for expenses such as our medical system, which needs dollars. Also, it was paying for things like SARS, a medical emergency that was very important to be looked after. I look back to 1995, when I heard the Minister of Energy make the comment that at that time the special warrant was for 60% of the budget. I think what was brought forward yesterday was very unfair, and what ended up appearing in the popular media was rather misleading.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Galt: If you want to catcall, you should at least be in your own seat; it makes you easier to recognize.

We talked about the democratic process and I observed the Liberals, both federally and provincially, appointing people for nominations. They won't even allow the democratic process to occur in all of their ridings. I think that's such a shame. It never happens with the PC Party, whether it's federal or provincial. They go through the normal nomination process—the selling of the memberships—which is quite competitive. That's democracy. It isn't one vote from the leader appointing somebody to be the nominee in a certain riding. That's just disgraceful to the whole process.

1750

I think what we really should be debating here this afternoon, and should have been for the last few days, are some of the things that are in the budget that are going to help the farmers and the people in rural Ontario, particularly in my riding of Northumberland. There were some really good items, and I know that our Minister of Agriculture lobbied very hard so that some of these items would be in that budget. I also have lobbied for many of these over the past few years; for example, exempting the land transfer tax when farms are being transferred within

and between family members. These farms have become large and, consequently, a large land base with a lot of buildings, and that land transfer tax can get to be pretty expensive, when in fact the farm is staying within the family. That's really no time for governments to be taking advantage of farmers in rural Ontario. There's an item; I think we should be getting on and debating and getting that one sorted out for our farmers in rural Ontario.

I'm also rather excited about an item in the budget about extending the Ontario wine strategy. Very close to my riding, the county of Prince Edward is really blossoming in the wine industry, and it's certainly a very successful start. It's doing very well. This wine strategy is going to be extended for another five years, some \$10 million. This is an item that is pretty important to the economy of Prince Edward county, as well as the Niagara Peninsula. I think this is another item that we should get on with and debate and get into place.

Also suggested in the budget was the cutting of the capital tax rates and a 100% reduction in the corporate income tax for alternative fuels. This brings it back to farmers with the production of corn for ethanol, and also the production of biodiesel, especially from soybeans and the soy oil that can be used for that purpose. It's a great boon for the farmers of this province, for the farmers in my riding, to be able to produce grains that can be used both for ethanol as well as biodiesel. These are the kinds of things that are important to them, not the procedures in this Legislature. I'm quite anxious to get on with that and see that this kind of corporate tax is reduced and removed from those particular productions.

Also, there is \$1 million per year for the next five years to assist with food safety, particularly as it relates to education and training. I think everyone in this House is empathetic to that concern. We all enjoy food, some of us maybe a little more than others, and certainly we've heard about the concerns about water. There's no question that our food and the safety of that food is every bit as important.

Something that I've lobbied on for some time—and I think you, in your riding, Mr Speaker, have a similar concern—is the identification card that farmers could use to exempt them from the retail sales tax. It's very inconvenient to have to pay it, keep all the bills and then submit them periodically to recover that retail sales tax, when in fact they could have it removed right at source. It's something that the Northumberland Federation of Agriculture has commented on to me at different times. I've sent letters to the Minister of Agriculture and Food, as well as the Minister of Finance, encouraging this very thing to happen; and lo and behold, it's in the budget. It could happen; it's just a matter of getting on with it in this House. But, instead, the loyal opposition is insisting that we debate process.

It's so frustrating that we're hung up in this process and can't get on with making things happen in the budget, and getting the votes on the various budget bills that would make some of these things legal.

For example, in the budget there is also talk about assistance for nutrient management. Once that act went through, some farmers had a lot of difficulty in being able to afford the costs that go with nutrient management.

One thing that has really caught the attention of seniors in that budget is the Ontario home property tax relief, giving them relief from education tax. I've heard for so long in rural Ontario from seniors, "Why do we have to continue to pay education tax on our homes?" Well, we have taken a big step in trying to look after that with the change and capping the education tax in Ontario, and now it's being reduced significantly. Now we have an opportunity for our seniors to be totally exempt from that education tax, and we had heard for so long from our municipal councillors, frustrated over the spiralling education tax in Ontario. Here is an opportunity so that our seniors won't have to pay for any of it.

In that budget was a commitment for several million dollars to assist with the funding of rural schools and small schools. Some 70 or 80 schools are being closed across Ontario on an annual basis, and this has been going on for the last three or four decades. Certainly it's very distressing to communities. As a matter of fact, there has been quite a debate in Port Hope over this very issue. Here's money that's suggested in the budget. We should get on with debating it and get it in place so that our small schools in Ontario are properly funded.

I see the opportunity in the budget for more money for nurse practitioners. With the shortage of physicians in rural Ontario, there is no question that these nurse practitioners can carry out an awful lot of the routine jobs, the routine services that are required in rural Ontario. Also there is new money for emergency firefighting equipment in some of our small communities.

Excellence in education was brought out on several occasions in that budget, and I just want to make a comment on a few of those. Some 135,000 new post-secondary student places: this is the largest capital investment ever in Ontario and the most significant since the 1960s, when there was a significant expansion in our post-secondary schools, our universities and our colleges. There has been a lot of concern about what's going to happen with our double cohort and if there will be enough space for them. This is going to ensure that there will indeed be enough spaces for that very thing.

It's mentioned in there also that we'll allow athletes, musicians, artists and people who are highly skilled to be able to go into our schools and work and function as expert instructors and volunteers.

There's also a suggestion there that parents will have more choice in where their children will be enrolled. This is a chance to enrol your young person, your student, any place within your school board rather than in your neighbourhood if you don't particularly agree with that school—or with that particular teacher—that your young person, your student, your child is attending.

All in all, there is a tremendous number of things in that budget that we should get on with and debate and get in place rather than being here debating process.

I see the clock is just about 6. Maybe we'll wind up and continue tomorrow at 1:30.

The Deputy Speaker: Because of the unusual circumstance we currently find ourselves in, before adjourning today I would like to advise members of the procedures for tomorrow morning's meeting of the House.

Our standing orders are very clear in providing that the only reason this place should meet before 1:30 of the clock on a Thursday is to deal with private members' public business. Tomorrow, of course, happens to be such a day when the House will begin meeting at 10 am.

Therefore, from 10 o'clock until noon tomorrow the House will meet to deal with private members' ballot

items 5 and 6, standing in the names of Ms Churley and Mr Gilchrist. Then at 1:30 of the clock, when we come back to this place, we will immediately go into the debate on the amendment to the amendment to the motion by Mr Conway as it sits today, with the member for Northumberland properly having the floor at 1:30.

Please note that this is based on the process the House followed on January 22 and 23, 1997, in identical circumstances.

It being past 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 am tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1801.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon / L'hon James K. Bartleman

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Gary Carr

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Deputy Clerk / Sous-greffière: Deborah Deller

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

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

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Algoma-Manitoulin	Brown, Michael A. (L)	Haldimand-Norfolk-Brant	Barrett, Toby (PC)
Ancaster-Dundas- Flamborough-Aldershot	McMeekin, Ted (L)	Haliburton-Victoria-Brock Halton	Hodgson, Chris (PC) Chudleigh, Ted (PC)
Barrie-Simcoe-Bradford	Tascona, Joseph N. (PC)	Hamilton East / -Est	Agostino, Dominic (L)
Beaches-East York	Prue, Michael (ND)	Hamilton Mountain	Bountrogianni, Marie (L)
Bramalea-Gore-Malton- Springdale	Gill, Raminder (PC)	Hamilton West / -Ouest	Christopherson, David (ND)
Brampton Centre / -Centre	Spina, Joseph (PC)	Hastings-Frontenac- Lennox and Addington	Dombrowsky, Leona (L)
Brampton West-Mississauga / Brampton-Ouest-Mississauga	Clement, Hon / L'hon Tony (PC) Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée	Huron-Bruce	Johns, Hon / L'hon Helen (PC) Minister of Agriculture and Food / ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation
Brant	Levac, Dave (L)	Kenora-Rainy River	Hampton, Howard (ND) Leader of the New Democratic Party / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique
Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Gerretsen, John (L)
Burlington	Jackson, Cameron (PC)	Kitchener Centre / -Centre	Wettlaufer, Wayne (PC)
Cambridge	Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth (PC) Deputy Premier, Minister of Education / vice-première ministre, ministre de l'Éducation
Chatham-Kent Essex	Hoy, Pat (L)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	Beaubien, Marcel (PC)
Davenport	Ruprecht, Tony (L)	Lanark-Carleton	Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. (PC) Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones
Don Valley East / -Est	Caplan, David (L)	Leeds-Grenville	Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. (PC) Minister of Public Safety and Security / ministre de la Sécurité et de la Sécurité publique
Don Valley West / -Ouest	Turnbull, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Associate Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre associé de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne (PC) Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Dufferin-Peel- Wellington-Grey	Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Premier and President of the Executive Council, Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif, ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales	London West / -Ouest	Wood, Bob (PC)
Durham	O'Toole, John R. (PC)	London-Fanshawe	Mazzilli, Frank (PC)
Eglinton-Lawrence	Colle, Mike (L)	Markham	Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. (PC) Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture / président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement, ministre de la Culture
Elgin-Middlesex-London	Peters, Steve (L)	Mississauga Centre / -Centre	Sampson, Rob (PC)
Erie-Lincoln	Hudak, Hon / L'hon Tim (PC) Minister of Consumer and Business Services / ministre des Services aux consommateurs et aux entreprises		
Essex	Crozier, Bruce (L)		
Etobicoke Centre / -Centre	Stockwell, Hon / L'hon Chris (PC) Minister of the Environment, government House leader / ministre de l'Environnement, leader parlementaire du gouvernement		
Etobicoke North / -Nord	Hastings, John (PC)		
Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Kells, Morley (PC)		
Glengarry-Prescott-Russell	Lalonde, Jean-Marc (L)		
Guelph-Wellington	Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda (PC) Minister of Community, Family and Children's Services / ministre des Services à la collectivité, à la famille et à l'enfance		

Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti	Constituency Circonscription	Member/Party Député(e) / Parti
Mississauga East / -Est	DeFaria, Hon / L'hon Carl (PC) Minister of Citizenship, minister responsible for seniors / ministre des Affaires civiques, ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées	Scarborough Centre / -Centre	Mushinski, Marilyn (PC)
Mississauga South / -Sud	Marland, Margaret (PC)	Scarborough East / -Est	Gilchrist, Steve (PC)
Nepean-Carleton	Baird, Hon / L'hon John R. (PC) Minister of Energy, Minister responsible for francophone affairs, deputy House leader / ministre de l'Énergie, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones, leader parlementaire adjoint	Scarborough Southwest / -Sud-Ouest	Newman, Hon / L'hon Dan (PC) Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / ministre associé de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Niagara Centre / -Centre	Kormos, Peter (ND)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Phillips, Gerry (L)
Niagara Falls	Maves, Bart (PC)	Scarborough-Rouge River	Curling, Alvin (L)
Nickel Belt	Martel, Shelley (ND)	Simcoe North / -Nord	Dunlop, Garfield (PC)
Nipissing	McDonald, AL (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Northumberland	Galt, Hon / L'hon Doug (PC) Minister without Portfolio, chief government whip / ministre sans portefeuille, whip en chef du gouvernement	St Catharines	Bradley, James J. (L)
Oak Ridges	Klees, Hon / L'hon Frank (PC) Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports	St Paul's	Bryant, Michael (L)
Oakville	Carr, Hon / L'hon Gary (PC) Speaker / Président	Stoney Creek	Clark, Hon / L'hon Brad (PC) Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail
Oshawa	Ouellette, Hon / L'hon Jerry J. (PC) Minister of Natural Resources / ministre des Richesses naturelles	Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh	Clearly, John C. (L)
Ottawa Centre / -Centre	Patten, Richard (L)	Sudbury	Bartolucci, Rick (L)
Ottawa-Orléans	Coburn, Hon / L'hon Brian (PC) Minister of Tourism and Recreation / ministre du Tourisme et des Loisirs	Thornhill	Molinari, Hon / L'hon Tina R. (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associée des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Ottawa South / -Sud	McGuinty, Dalton (L) Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition	Thunder Bay-Atikokan	McLeod, Lyn (L)
Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Guzzo, Garry J. (PC)	Thunder Bay-Superior North / -Nord	Gravelle, Michael (L)
Ottawa-Vanier	Boyer, Claudette (Ind)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	Ramsay, David (L)
Oxford	Hardeman, Hon / L'hon Ernie (PC) Associate Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre associé des Affaires municipales et du Logement	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	Bisson, Gilles (ND)
Parkdale-High Park	Kennedy, Gerard (L)	Timmins-Baie James	Smitherman, George (L)
Parry Sound-Muskoka	Miller, Norm (PC)	Toronto Centre-Rosedale / Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Churley, Marilyn (ND)
Perth-Middlesex	Johnson, Bert (PC)	Toronto-Centre-Rosedale	Marchese, Rosario (ND)
Peterborough	Stewart, R. Gary (PC)	Toronto-Danforth	Sorbara, Greg (L)
Pickering-Ajax-Uxbridge	Ecker, Hon / L'hon Janet (PC) Minister of Finance / ministre des Finances	Trinity-Spadina	Arnott, Ted (PC)
Prince Edward-Hastings	Parsons, Ernie (L)	Vaughan-King-Aurora	Flaherty, Hon / L'hon Jim (PC) Minister of Enterprise, Opportunity and Innovation / ministre de l'Entreprise, des Débouchés et de l'Innovation
Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Conway, Sean G. (L)	Waterloo-Wellington	Young, Hon / L'hon David (PC) Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Sarnia-Lambton	Di Cocco, Caroline (L)	Whitby-Ajax	Pupatello, Sandra (L)
Sault Ste Marie	Martin, Tony (ND)	Willowdale	Duncan, Dwight (L)
		Windsor West / -Ouest	Kwinter, Monte (L)
		Windsor-St Clair	Munro, Julia (PC)
		York Centre / -Centre	Cordiano, Joseph (L)
		York North / -Nord	Sergio, Mario (L)
		York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
		York West / -Ouest	
		Mississauga West / -Ouest	Vacant

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

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

CONTENTS

Wednesday 14 May 2003

MOTIONS

House sittings

Mr Stockwell..... 344

OTHER BUSINESS

Community Living Day

Ms Mushinski..... 343

Mrs Dombrowsky..... 343

Mr Martin..... 343

Contempt of Parliament

Mr Peters..... 344

Mr Hampton..... 347

Mr Baird..... 349

Mr Phillips..... 352

Mr Spina..... 354

Mr Sorbara..... 356

Mr Kormos..... 359

Mr Miller..... 361

Mr Patten..... 364

Ms Mushinski..... 367

Mr Ruprecht..... 369

Mr Marchese..... 372

Mr Galt..... 375

Debate deemed adjourned..... 377