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(Hansard)**

Thursday 22 May 2003

Jeudi 22 mai 2003

Speaker
Honourable Gary Carr

Président
L'honorable Gary Carr

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 May 2003

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 mai 2003

*The House met at 1000.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

PEOPLE'S ACCESS
TO THE FACTS ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ACCÈS
DU PUBLIC AUX FAITS

Mr Wood moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 29, An Act to amend the Public Inquiries Act /
Projet de loi 29, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les enquêtes
publiques.

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

Mr Bob Wood (London West): The short title of this bill is the People's Access to the Facts Act. It amends the Public Inquiries Act to allow any member of the Legislative Assembly to propose a resolution to set up an inquiry into any matter that the act allows. The assembly is required to vote on the resolution within 60 sessional days after it's proposed. Two thirds of the MPPs must support the introduction of an inquiry resolution. This in effect gives the Legislature itself the same power to call inquiries as the cabinet now has.

Members will be well aware, I think, of my interest in democratizing the workings of the Legislature. I believe more input from MPPs means there will be more input from all 12 million Ontarians. I think that more ideas being put forward, good debate on those ideas and good analysis will lead to better results for all Ontarians. I think that, as we consider how a democratic Legislature functions, we'll come to the conclusion that MPPs have to know the facts in order to do our job, and that the general public has to know the facts in order to make informed judgments on issues of the day.

Inquiries in Ontario have generally been done by independent people. They have tended to revolve around findings of fact and recommendations with respect to public policy. There was a bit of a sea change in attitude back in the early 1970s when there was an inquiry into certain aspects of the granting of a Hydro contract. That inquiry was done by a committee of the Legislature. The issue was basically whether or not the Premier had influenced the granting of the Hydro contract. At the end of that committee, there was a unanimous report finding

that the Premier had not in any way attempted to influence the granting of the contract. However, the government members said Hydro had not been in any way influenced by the Premier's personal acquaintance with the person getting the contract. The opposition members said they felt Hydro officials had been influenced by the fact this person was a friend of the Premier.

The net result of all that was there was a general perception among the public that the findings of fact made by the committee were done on a partisan basis as opposed to an objective basis. Since then, when the government has thought in terms of the need for an inquiry where findings of fact are required, they have tended almost invariably to refer it to an independent person.

I might say that I am of the view, as I think most Ontarians would be, that the calling of inquiries is primarily an executive function and should be an executive function. However, there should be a safeguard in our system to permit the Legislature to call an inquiry if there is a strong view within the Legislature from the elected people that one is needed. Since this is in effect overruling a decision of the cabinet, the threshold for the amount of support required should be higher than a simple majority. The bill proposes two thirds as the number of members who would have to support the bringing of a motion. There's no magic in two thirds; perhaps it should be three quarters or perhaps it should be 60%. But I would urge upon the House the proposition that this is really a legislative check on an executive function, and that because it is that, it should require something more than a simple majority to have it put before the House.

What this effectively means is that for the Legislature to move to set up an inquiry, there's going to have to be substantial support from the opposition side of the House, almost certainly from both opposition parties, and there's going to have to be substantial support at least from the government backbenchers. So we have a situation where if we are going to overrule a cabinet decision, there has to be some fairly widespread support among the MPPs, which is going to indicate widespread support from the public that such an inquiry is needed.

This is a mechanism used in a good number of democratic jurisdictions throughout the world. One of the classic ones is the American system, where the President has the right to veto legislation passed by the Congress, but on the other hand, the Congress has a right to override the veto of the President. The override of the veto is not by simple majority but by a two-thirds vote. There are all kinds of mechanisms of this nature that we can find throughout democratic jurisdictions. I think it's a

subtle thing of which the public may not immediately know all the details, but I think the public does understand the need for checks and balances in our system.

The British parliamentary system, of which we are heirs, has a 700-year history of looking for ways to make government work best for the people. One important aspect of that search for the right way of doing government business has always been to strike the right balance between the judiciary, the executive and the legislative branches of government. We do it a little differently than, say, our friends in the United States—I would argue we do it a little more subtly perhaps than our friends in the States—but it's just as important here and in a parliamentary system to have the right system of checks and balances among those branches of government. This proposal today really is what I believe to be a positive adjustment in the balance between the executive and the Legislature to make our system as a whole work better.

There may be some concerns raised today, and I'm going to be listening very closely to see what those may be. One may be that if we were to give this power to the Legislature it would be used irresponsibly, that we would get into partisan wrangling, invasions of privacy and concerns of that nature. I am not concerned that we may get into problems of that nature because I believe the members of the Legislature will use this power responsibly if it's given to them. They'll do that, one, because they want to do the right thing, and two, because the public is going to insist they do so. If members use a power of this nature irresponsibly, I think the electors are going to take note of that and act accordingly.

1010

I would invite members to give some careful thought to this. I would hope that should approval in principle be given today, this would be referred to one of the standing committees and I'm going to make a suggestion on that, if we get to that point today. I would hope that if we do, all members will take a look at the bill, look at ways in which it should be improved, and present amendments at that committee. Once the committee has done its work—and heard from the public, I hope, as well—I would hope that the bill might come back here for third and final reading.

I do think that process does matter, because if we have a better process, we get better results. That's really why I'm putting this proposal before the House today. The fundamental basis why I'm doing so is this: I think democracy and transparency do work, and I think this is a significant step to making them work better in this province. I would hope that after they've had a chance to consider what's in the bill and consider the principles behind it, put forward any amendments that are deemed to be needed to improve the bill, that we will indeed be able to pass this bill. Then, where a matter comes forward to the attention of the Legislature and the public where many people think an inquiry is needed, if the cabinet does not do what the majority of members think is needed or a majority of the public thinks is needed, if that majority is strong enough, it'll be possible for the

Legislature itself to take action. So we're perhaps less likely to hear concerns as we do now that things are being covered up and things are not being investigated that should be investigated. Should we have a bill along the lines of this bill, it's really all the representatives of the people who have made that ultimate decision. They have taken a look at the issue and not a sufficiently large number have concluded that action is needed.

I think if we bring this particular provision in, should the cabinet have some reluctance on some issue, as we find a petition circulating that's getting to two-thirds of members, that may be an opportunity for the cabinet to take a look at the situation again and take a second look at their decision to make sure that they're fully comfortable with what they've decided because, of course, the possibility exists that their decision may be changed by others.

I hope that we'll have a good debate today and I hope that at the end of the day we'll have second reading of the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): This is kind of an amazing event this morning to be debating this bill—not that the bill itself is amazing. In fact, it sounds like something anyone would want to support. I've always believed that you don't go so much by what someone says but by what they do.

I'd like to look at this bill in the past eight years' history of this Legislature. In this bill, the mover indicates that it's so that people know the facts; let's get the facts out to the public. I couldn't support that principle more. But if we look at history over the last eight years, we have seen things as simple as freedom of information that exists so that people can know the facts—all kinds of blocks put into place on it. We're seeing government ministries very reluctant to give information. We're seeing six months or a year for them to respond. We've seen horrendous costs go on for an individual to get information. I believe the Provincial Auditor said a couple of years ago that if an MPP makes a request under freedom of information, it is channelled through the Premier's Office so that there's a further delay put in place. Clearly they don't want the facts out. We're seeing organizations like Hydro One set up in such a way that they're not subject to freedom of information. History tells us that this government hasn't tried in any way to conform to the philosophy of this bill. The Provincial Auditor, I believe, has on occasion raised the issue that even for the Provincial Auditor, an independent servant of this Legislature, ministries are blocking information to that office.

So when you say that people need to know the facts, we need to see some substance to it. We need to see some history that that, in fact, is what is happening.

The mover of this bill—and I commend him for bringing it forward; I'm sure he's very sincere—made reference to British parliamentary tradition. As recently as yesterday, the entire government voted against British parliamentary tradition when they would not support the

bill that the government was in contempt on presenting the budget at Magna rather than here in the Legislature. This government has said, "We don't respect British parliamentary tradition. We're going to do it in a shopping centre or a bowling alley or something next time." Those words ring rather hollow when I hear about the British parliamentary tradition.

The budget is the government's philosophy put into numbers. It is the government's programs put into numbers. The people, if they want to know what services are going to be provided to them, need to not only have access to the numbers but need to have the opportunity to have questions asked. The questions are asked by the opposition. That's our role. If the mover believes there needs to be a check and balance, that's what the Legislature exists for, yet there was no opportunity at this info-budget for the opposition to ask the questions that have come to us from our constituents. I'm still trying to merge in my mind the philosophy that we want everyone to know the facts versus the reality that we're seeing the facts continually blocked.

Again, we need only to go back a few days to the order in council. Orders in council, as I understand it, are public documents fairly quickly after being approved by the cabinet, yet an unprecedented order in council appropriated for this government \$36 billion. That's such a huge number, I think most of us have trouble actually sensing what it is. Thirty-six billion dollars was quietly appropriated and, for some very strange reason, out of all the orders in council that are made public, that particular item was lost. It's probably a coincidence, but the public needs to know. I'm sounding a little bit like the Enquirer, but like the Enquirer, the public needs to know and wants to know.

We have not seen, out of this government, any openness whatsoever. I'm sure the member on the government side from Ottawa West-Nepean, to his credit, has tried numerous times to get an inquiry held into some of the incidents in the Cornwall area. I believe it's the government side that voted against an inquiry—each and every time—that was requested by one of their own most credible members.

When we look at this bill, we see that it requires two thirds—and maybe that can be altered to 60% or 70%, but if it's any number over 50%, then it really doesn't give the Legislature the power to call an inquiry, because the Premier will be able to control the vote on his or her side of the House and there isn't an openness to it.

The member for Ottawa West-Nepean has to have experienced the frustration of trying to get an inquiry that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of people in his community—he has brought numerous petitions to this Legislature, yet the government was able to block any inquiry held into what is a most important issue for that part of the province and indeed for all of the province.

So we're really not giving any power to the Legislature with this. We're still going to have the government able to control.

I look at this bill and I apply what I believe is the ultimate test to it: if this bill were in place eight years

ago, would this Legislature have been able to trigger an inquiry into the death of Dudley George? The answer is no, it would not have been effective, because we would see again a government side choosing to vote to absolutely block it. We have seen request after request come from the public, from the media, from this side of the House. So would this bill have made life better and would this bill have provided justice to the Dudley George family?

The only reason I can think of to not hold an inquiry is cost. Certainly no one will want to support a frivolous request simply to run the bill up. But the purpose of an inquiry is to clear the air and lay the facts out. If there is no problem, if there is no evidence that would prove to be embarrassing or even worse for an individual, surely everyone would want to support the inquiry. If everyone involved in the Dudley George incident had behaved appropriately, if they had done everything they were supposed to do by the book, then they should want an inquiry. They should be in support of an inquiry, saying, "Hold an inquiry so that the air is cleared, so there is no longer this cloud hanging over me." Surely the government would want to deal with that and say, "I want to get rid of this cloud, this question, this uncertainty," and what is hurting their reputation. But the government very clearly is opposed.

I guess my belief is that this bill sounds good but it won't change one little thing. It won't change anything if there is not goodwill on the part of the government to actually believe in it and enforce it. We determine whether that goodwill exists by saying, "Let's look at history; let's look at eight years."

So I find it terribly ironic that the government puts forward a bill so that people can know the facts when it has spent eight years trying to block information getting to the public.

1020

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): I am pleased to speak to this with Mr Prue, one of our Toronto members.

The concern around access to public inquiries has become even more profound over the course of the last eight years. Call after call for a public inquiry into the slaughter of Dudley George at Ipperwash has been suppressed by this Conservative government. My colleague Mr Guzzo, the member from Ottawa West-Nepean, who has shown incredible tenacity and courage in pursuing a public inquiry into the so-called Cornwall sex scandal, has found himself rebuffed by his own government.

In fact, we can go down the list. Most recently, Howard Hampton and the New Democrats called for a public inquiry into the provincial and federal handling of the SARS crisis. The government, of course, was unresponsive.

David Christopherson, our Hamilton member, pressed for a public inquiry around the Plastimet fire and the impact on firefighters and residents in the area of the Plastimet factory.

New Democrats called for a public inquiry into the abuse of young prisoners—the alleged abuse; fair enough—at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre.

New Democrats have called for a public inquiry into the Pickering nuclear plant overruns and delays.

New Democrats have called for a public inquiry into the Hydro culture of greed. You remember that? Remember the Hydro culture of greed? Remember Ms Clitheroe, the hand-picked Conservative appointee, Ms Clitheroe of the multi-hundred-thousand-dollar car allowance? Where I come from, you can buy a Chevy Impala for less than 30 grand, and that's with leather. Down at David Chev-Olds on Niagara Street, go see Cathy Robertson and she'll give you a Chevy Impala, fully loaded, leather, air, for less than 30 grand. Cathy Robertson down at David Chev-Olds, a unionized car dealership—CAW—down on Niagara Street in Welland, probably cuts a better deal than any other sales people at any other dealership: a Chevy Impala with leather, fully loaded, air, for less than 30 grand. But Ms Clitheroe, the hand-picked Tory appointee, needs a car allowance that would buy her a Rolls or a Bentley a year. Again, where Mr Bradley or I come from, you can buy three or four houses or you can pay the salaries of more than a few nurses anywhere in this province for the car allowance alone that the Tories granted Ms Clitheroe, their electricity appointee; never mind the multi-million-dollar salary and the multi-million-dollar golden handshake.

You see, the government wanted Hydro to be run as if it were a private corporation and to appreciate and experience all the efficiencies of a private corporation, which means these huge multi-million-dollar salaries and golden handshakes, plus all the perks, plus a sailboat of her own—and not some little dingy that you're taking out of Ray's Marina down in Port Colborne into Lake Erie to do some fishing; we're talking about a yacht.

New Democrats called for a public inquiry into the Hydro culture of greed this Conservative government created. Mr Prue will recall the call for a public inquiry into the Jeff Lyons scandal, another—dare I say it—Tory friend, Tory intimate, a Tory who's privy to—who is so intimate that the pillow talk is probably more significant than the written communiqués.

But let's take a look at this bill, because we find ourselves very frustrated in the frequent calls for public inquiries, all that more frequent during the course of the last eight years of Conservative rule here in Ontario.

We've joined Mr Guzzo in his call for a public inquiry into the atrocious, scandalous, evil, criminal prospect of a literal cover-up of child abuse, of sexual assaults on children by some of the most powerful people, it's alleged, in the community. Mr Guzzo's own government has not heeded his call. I've been at the end-of-session negotiations where all three House leaders participate, and in an effort to demonstrate, yes, co-operation, as we do when it's to the end of seeing private members' bills receive at least second reading, perhaps even third, I've prevailed upon the government House leader to include Mr Guzzo's resolutions and bills among the things to which New Democrats would give consent, because there isn't a fair-minded member of this Legislature who doesn't believe there should be a public inquiry into the obscene events in Cornwall.

This is not the first bill of its type that's been introduced, indeed by the same author, and New Democrats supported this author's Bill 12. Bill 12, quite frankly, warranted going to committee, perhaps for some fine-tuning; Bill 12, now dead because Mr Eves, the Premier, prorogued the House suddenly on the eve of the House being required to return, which of course led into a whole other scandalous series of weeks whereby the government delayed the return of the Legislature, presented a bogus budget at Magna, found themselves caught up in almost two weeks of government members debating the—colloquially referred to—contempt motion.

1030

Mind you, they defeated the motion, but do you know what, Speaker? They didn't defeat the ruling of the Speaker. In every Erskine and May, every Beauchesne, every parliamentary guide that's going to be published from this day forward, whether it's the 30th edition, the 31st, the 32nd, look up "Contempt" in the index and Speaker Gary Carr's ruling is going to be there—no two ways about it.

Interjection.

Mr Kormos: Oh, the vote does not detract from the ruling of the Speaker. If you don't understand anything about the last three and a half weeks, understand this: in every parliamentary reference book, both Canadian and British, and indeed from every other jurisdiction that uses the parliamentary system, under the index where it says "Contempt"—contempt with a capital C—there's going to be a page number with significant reference to the ruling of Speaker Gary Carr of the provincial Legislature. Sorry, it's fixed. Our Speaker Gary Carr, who is a wonderful person in his own right, and I've enjoyed his friendship—I think all of us have. The majority of the House voted for him. He has made his mark in parliamentary history.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): With a landmark decision.

Mr Kormos: As Mr Bradley says, with a landmark decision, which is how I just got him into Hansard during the course of my comments on this bill.

Bill 12 provided that any member of the Legislature—implied equality of members—can call for a public inquiry and that it had to be put to a vote within 60 days. Of course there is the floodgates prospect, that member after member will be calling for public inquiries into everything from soup to nuts, into everything from legitimate to less than legitimate. That's a problem. I acknowledge that. That's why I say that Bill 12 should have had the opportunity to be scrutinized by committee, because the fundamental principle is a good one.

Bill 12 didn't provide, for instance, for a period of debate. Bill 12 didn't provide for a manner of screening frivolous calls for public inquiries. But there could have been amendments to Bill 12 that did that. However, this bill requires—it's not that any single member can call for a public inquiry—that if two thirds of the members of the Legislature call for a public inquiry, then it must be put to a vote.

Depending upon the distribution of members among their various caucuses, there could be scenarios wherein the government's majority couldn't be used to knock that out of the ballpark. I suspect it's going to be some time before we experience huge majority governments in this province, but I could be wrong in that regard.

I find it regrettable that the member has set that standard at two thirds. Two thirds implies, let's say, an overwhelming majority. I wonder if perhaps 50% plus one, which would indicate there's some possibility or likelihood of success of the resolution, might not be a fairer number, and might also accommodate different configurations of the House in terms of where members sit with respect to the three caucuses, whether it's a majority or minority government and how large the majority is.

New Democrats, with some regret, will not support this bill for that reason. New Democrats would have much preferred Bill 12 having been presented again. I understand, as well, that the two-thirds concept is consistent with other areas around which this member has been advocating. I don't quarrel with that.

At the end of the day, though, we should also put this into the context of how independent, how capable any given member is of representing their constituents and speaking out. As a matter of fact, there are both Conservative platform policy and Liberal platform policy that talk about changing the rules to create free votes. There are no rules prohibiting free votes. No changes to the standing orders are required. All it requires is some guts and gonads on the part of individual members.

Think about it. All you've got to do is stand in your place and say no, if you believe your government is wrong. It has been done before. It will be done again. It doesn't require changes to the standing orders. It doesn't require changes to the rules. It simply requires courageous and conscientious members of the Legislative Assembly, women and men who are prepared to put the interests of the people ahead of their standing in the pecking order of their caucus, ahead of their pursuit of junkets and little, greasy jobs within the caucus that provide extra pay.

The serious fault in this bill is the two-thirds requirement. Bill 12 as it stood we would have welcomed, as we did, and would support and encourage it going to committee. It is with regret that that two thirds prevents us from supporting this bill today.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this debate. I first of all wish to commend the member for London West for this bill, for bringing it forward and for allowing me the opportunity to speak to it.

I think there have been some interesting comments made already this morning by the previous speakers of the opposition, and I have to agree with some of them. But that does not diminish the importance of this legislation. We all come here and we all pay lip service to democracy and we all talk about the democratization of this House. I would be willing to admit that, having watched this House prior to coming here and in the eight

years I've been here, we have moved in the wrong direction. That has not happened. I don't see it happening in the federal House in Ottawa and I don't see it happening in many democracies around the world, particularly recently in the United States.

What we have here is the essence of democracy in the 21st century. I suggest that no member of this House would really be opposed to this bill. It is a step forward. The member for Niagara Centre made some good points with regard to the previous bill in comparing the two. I make no comment upon what has to be done in order to advance the envelope in matters of items such as this.

I come from a life in a courtroom, where you're constantly seeking the truth. I honestly thought when I came here that it would be a continuation of that effort to put the truth first. I have certainly experienced, as has been mentioned here, examples where the opposite has taken place: there has been a deliberate attempt to keep the truth from becoming part of the public record.

We all agree that an informed citizenry tends to promote responsible government, but unfortunately, in the electronic age and the 500-channel universe, voters receive a tremendous amount of information but receive very little power to seek resolution to the problems they face through their elected representatives. This is what a legislative-sponsored inquiry system would offer. It would offer empowerment of both the voters and those of us as tenants in these seats. This is an opportunity for each and every member of this Legislature to stand and deliver for their constituents, enhance the access to the information and force the release of that information.

The basic premise of this bill and of what we do here has to be that the public has a right to know. There are very, very few times when a government has the right to suppress information. Certainly we have seen it in times of war and we see it in issues of public security, but the public's right to know and to make an informed decision is the basis of our democracy and the backbone of our system.

1040

I ask you to compare some examples of what we have seen in this House and elsewhere. The tainted blood scandal: 7,000 Canadians lost their lives because of mistakes that were made at Tunney's Pasture in Ottawa, the federal Department of Health, and Queen's Park. Walkerton: seven people passed away. The Cornwall situation, to which two members have referred and that I have put forward on two occasions in private members' bills: we've had at least five suicides that we know of, possibly more. The member of that riding has been a strong supporter of those bills that he knows better than do I. Ipperwash: one member of the George family.

What do we know, what does the public know, about each of those four cases? Rather, what has been disclosed in each of those four cases? There are tremendous differences when you compare the four, tremendous differences when you compare what has been done in relation to the four—but that's a question for another day. The issue is public information and the right to know.

In the tainted blood scandal, Mr Justice Krever came down five years ago with an excellent report. It's prescribed reading for every person who wants to indulge himself of herself in government democracy, and an academic exercise in management as well, quite frankly. Surprisingly, I think five charges have been laid, five years after Mr Justice Krever, 10 years after the events. In Walkerton we've had some charges laid after the inquiry of Mr Justice O'Connor. But in Cornwall and Ipperwash, the message was always that we can't have an inquiry first because it will impair charges. We continually pointed to the Westray mine situation, where that did not happen, and now we have two examples here ourselves.

I say to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings, just to correct the matter, that my party did not turn on me on the question of Cornwall. In each case, those bills passed in this House on second reading, one by a 47 to 3 vote and the other by a 56 to 20 vote. As it was more accurately stated by the member from Niagara Centre, it was my government, but not my party. The majority of this side of the House voted with me on both of those.

I also want to state for the record that I tried yesterday and I will try again today to reintroduce a bill on Cornwall and also introduce a bill on Ipperwash, if I'm afforded the opportunity, and I hope to be debating one of them next week.

Mr Bradley: As the member for Niagara Centre has stated, I wish we were debating Bill 12 today rather than the present piece of legislation—Bill 29, I believe it's called. Anyway, Bill 12, the original bill, I thought was a stronger bill and one which was deserving of more support, because Bill 12 said the Public Inquiries Act would be amended to allow any member of the Legislative Assembly to propose a resolution to set up an inquiry into a matter that the act allows, a resolution that either designates the one or more persons who are to conduct the inquiry or requires the Speaker of the assembly or the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint them. The assembly would be required to vote on the resolution within 60 sessional days after it was proposed. I thought it was an excellent bill, and I think that would have gone a long way to empowering elected members of the Ontario Legislature to initiate inquiries.

Unfortunately—and I cannot read the member's mind, but I think he was trying to gather more support within the government caucus for this through the watering-down, if I may use that word, of the bill that now allows for a two-thirds majority of the members of the House to call for an inquiry or have signed a request that an inquiry be held.

I think it's a step forward, and I want to commend the member for that. I did prefer his original bill. I'm sure the Premier and others within the cabinet did not like his original bill, because, again, it would have given individual members even more power.

There obviously have been needs for public inquiries that have not been met. The one that comes to mind most often is the situation that happened at Ipperwash, where

Premier Harris, and subsequently Premier Eves, have consistently denied the opportunity for a public inquiry into that circumstance. I need not go into the details of it. My colleague Gerry Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, has on numerous occasions asked Premiers and Attorneys General and called for an inquiry many editorialists have done so. I think it cries out for an inquiry. The government has blocked this on every occasion and refused to call the inquiry. If we had a situation in Bill 12, the original bill that the member brought before us, I think we might well have an inquiry into Ipperwash, but for two thirds of members it's much more difficult to achieve that.

I think an independent inquiry into everything surrounding the SARS situation would have been helpful simply to learn what happened, how it happened and how in the future we can improve in any way a situation that confronts the province. An independent inquiry would have been very useful in that regard. I don't think it would have been partisan or particularly vitriolic. It would have been very straightforward, it would have dealt with the issues and I think the province would have benefited, and not only our province; I remember speaking to the member for Perth-Middlesex the other evening and we think other provinces could learn from our experience in Ontario.

There are so many situations with what we used to call Ontario Hydro, now Hydro One, and the generating end of that. Both require inquiries into what has happened because most of this is behind closed doors. So often we are told we can't get this information because it is to be kept secret for business or other reasons. Another good example, I think, would be to have an inquiry into the sale of Highway 407. There are many provisions there. Unfortunately, there are secrecy provisions that are imposed upon this Legislature. They don't have to reveal information. I think it would be good for the public to know all aspects of what happened with the sale of Highway 407 just before the last provincial election so the government could balance its budget, of what I think many people have justifiably called a fire sale.

My friend the Liberal member for Hamilton East called for an inquiry into the Plastimet fire in Hamilton. A Walkerton inquiry was called after great public pressure, but it would have been nice to have the backup of—well, it was. My good friend the former Attorney General of the province, now the minister of lots of good things, enterprise and making the economy better, Jim Flaherty is in the House today. I want his constituents to know he's here today. I don't think we would have had an inquiry into Walkerton without a lot of public pressure. I'm glad it was called. By the way, I think the person chosen for the inquiry was a good choice. The province benefited from an inquiry that we in the opposition had called for.

I want to put all this in the context of the member and some of his initiatives in this House. What has clearly happened under the Harris and Eves administrations is that the role of the individually elected member has been

diminished considerably. We have seen rule changes in this House which simply allow ministers now to virtually dictate the amount of time that legislation will go through the House. The opposition has little opportunity to slow down or modify legislation because of the government majority and the new rules. Essentially, the government has been put into the hands of some backroom whiz kids who have more influence, even to this day, than elected members of this Legislature. Of course, they were the people who advised the Premier that he should have the budget of Ontario delivered at an auto parts training facility in Ontario instead of in the Legislature. I know that there are members, such as the member for Ottawa West-Nepean and, I suspect in his heart of hearts, the member for London West, who would have preferred that it be held in the Ontario Legislature. We see this happening on an ongoing basis.

I would like to see an inquiry into the government advertising that is going on at the present time, millions upon millions of dollars being spent on huge signs on the highway, with the Premier's name on it and a political message, and they're not even sites of construction. Television commercials, radio commercials, full-page ads in newspapers, inserts in newspapers, pamphlets arriving at the house day after day: that would be the subject of a good inquiry. It would not happen if two thirds of the members were required to have such an inquiry.

1050

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I appreciate the opportunity this morning to address some of my concerns and some of my endorsements for this bill. I'd like to start off with the author of the bill, the member for London West. I've sat beside him for quite a while now, and you get to know a little bit about a person when you're sitting beside them. The member for London West is hard-working and dedicated and he has a very keen mind. He's a lawyer. I can recall sitting beside a member, Doug Rollins. I enjoyed his company and learned a great deal from him. I also sat beside David Tilson. David was a lawyer as well. I just wanted to say that I've expressed my opinion to both Mr Tilson and Mr Wood that just because they're lawyers, I've never held that against them at all. The member for London West has a great sense of right and wrong, and democracy and freedom, and what this chamber and this Legislative Assembly are about and should be about. This bill that he's brought to us this morning indicates his dedication toward democracy.

I take with interest some of the comments of the other people who have addressed this bill this morning. I was particularly listening to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings when he was talking about free votes. Yes, private members' business is a time for free votes. He thinks there should be others. I can remember that the last time there was going to be, supposedly, a free vote in this House, his caucus, to a person, along with the NDP, to a person, stood up in unanimity. I thought that was an interesting concept of a free vote.

I listened intently to the member for Niagara Centre. He as well is a lawyer and has a keen mind. When he gets away from partisan politics he can be a very interesting and engaging individual, and he certainly brings a different point of view to a lot of issues. His colleague the member for Trinity-Spadina, I can recall with a little bit of mirth, not so very long ago was commenting on the budget being released at Magna in Brampton, and referring to Frank Stronach as such a great buddy of the government of Ontario, and indeed I hope he is. I hope he has changed, because I can recall that in 1988 the same man ran as a Liberal. It's intriguing how different members bring different issues to it.

I wanted to say that the member for London West feels and deeply believes that this bill is part of democracy, and I can't argue or disagree with him in that at all. I think there are so many pressing issues. We could have had inquiries, perhaps, and some of them have mentioned some recent ones. I think back to the Hagersville fire. I think back to the Patti Starr affair. I don't remember the public inquiries for those, so I don't intend to make any apologies for the decisions that have been made by the executive council in calling inquiries in this province.

With that, I have a great deal of gratitude in being able to speak toward this bill and being able to represent the people of Perth-Middlesex in saying that I agree wholeheartedly with it and I will be voting in favour of it.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): Like the previous speakers, I support the bill. I think the member from London West should be congratulated for bringing it forward. I'm not going to say I'm totally without reservations on it. I believe that opposition parties of all stripes, whatever government there is in this place, make an attempt to embarrass the government from time to time. That's the nature of politics. There are calls for inquiries on a fairly regular basis, and I can see that it could be potentially embarrassing to any government. On the other hand, the requirement built into the bill that at least two thirds of the members sign on to any request for a public inquiry should in itself be protection. A simple majority would, I think, encourage abuse, whereas if you get two thirds of the members of this place to sign on to a request for a public inquiry into any issue, then that should be adequate.

I also believe this ties in quite neatly with what the Premier has stated on occasion: that he would like to see more democratization in this place, that he would like to see more representation by the members in this place of their constituents. That cannot be achieved under the present system.

So I would like to say that the member from London West should be congratulated. I don't believe this is a political bill. There is no partisanship expressed, although there was a little bit on the opposition benches, but that's to be expected. I think we can accept that.

The Acting Speaker: The member for London West has two minutes to reply.

Mr Wood: I'd like to thank all the members who participated in the debate. I'd like to deal briefly with two

concerns that were expressed, and then deal in a little more detail with the major concern that appears to have been expressed. I'm going to go right into my two minutes.

A couple of concerns were expressed that this gives no power to the Legislature because the members will simply follow the government line and not be prepared to support any inquiry the government is not prepared to support. That, of course, can happen. This bill cannot give a sense of responsibility to any MPPs. If they want to follow the government line and not do what they think is right for the province, there's nothing the law or the rules can do about that. I have confidence in the MPPs. I think they're all here to do the right thing, and I think they will try to do the right thing.

Some specific instances were mentioned where members thought an inquiry should have been held when it wasn't. Certainly those points of view are legitimate. My response to that is that this mechanism gives a greater chance for an inquiry to be held than we have now, so I would encourage members who have concerns to consider supporting the bill.

The main and major concern I heard expressed was the issue of the two-thirds petition. The reason for that is that I see the calling of inquiries as primarily an executive function. I see a role for the Legislature as a check and balance on the decision that's made by the cabinet. So I think it should more than a simple majority. Preference was expressed by some of the members for Bill 12 over this bill. The principle of both bills in my mind is the same: either you're for some MPP input into whether or not an inquiry is going to be held or you're not. I would invite members to consider whether or not they support that principle, and if they do support that principle, I would invite them to support this bill.

There is an opportunity to move this issue forward. I'm going to ask that this bill go to committee if it's passed. I invite members to support the principle of the bill.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item number 7. I will place the question at 12 o'clock noon.

1100

ONTARIO WATER RESOURCES
AMENDMENT ACT
(WATER SOURCE PROTECTION), 2003
LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RESSOURCES EN EAU
DE L'ONTARIO
(PROTECTION DES SOURCES
D'ALIMENTATION EN EAU)

Mrs Dombrowsky moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection / Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ressources en eau de

l'Ontario en ce qui concerne la protection des sources d'alimentation en eau.

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

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): I'm delighted that I—actually, I guess it is with some mixed emotions that I stand in the Legislature this morning to speak to a private member's bill. This is the third time I've introduced this bill in the Legislature, and it's one that I feel very strongly about. I think it's important for the people of Ontario because it deals with something we all need every day, each and every one of us, and that is water.

The bill speaks particularly to water source protection. It very simply puts in legislation that when the Ministry of the Environment considers permits to take water in any and every community in the province, it must do three things: it must notify municipalities; it must notify conservation authorities; and, finally, and I think most importantly, it must consider its own statement of environmental values when considering permits to take water.

I want to talk briefly about the history of this bill, how it is that it has come to pass and how it is that I've presented it three times in the Legislature. There was a situation in my own riding where residents in the community of Centre Hastings were shocked indeed to find out that a permit to take water had been granted for a significant amount of water to be removed from Rodden Creek. Rodden Creek is a very important creek in the community because it feeds into the community of Stirling, and many farms rely on that water source. They were quite alarmed when they heard there was a permit to take water granted for the purpose of removing water to have it bottled. They were worried about the impact that was going to have on the water source that they relied on for their crops, to feed their animals and then on into the community of Stirling, where it is a significant feature in that community as well.

As we came to do a little research on the issue, it was brought to our attention that the way the legislation is written is that communities and conservation authorities "may," not "shall," be notified. We think it is absolutely essential that communities, municipalities and conservation authorities—conservation authorities being those groups who have the responsibility to manage watersheds—should have this information. As the bill evolved, we also included that the ministry must consider its own statement of environmental values.

The reason that particular part has been placed in the bill is that in the community of Perth there is a very controversial permit to take water that has been granted in that area. It was made public that a business, OMYA, was granted a permit to take water from the Tay River for an amount of 1.5 million litres of water a day. This is an alarmingly large amount for the people in that community, particularly people who have interests in the Tay River. When I say "interests," they may use it as a water source or it may be flowing through the community. There was a very real concern that by removing that

amount of water, it would have an impact on the water levels and also that that would have—pardon the pun—a ripple effect into Bob's Lake, which is the headwater of the Tay River, which is located in my riding.

The other part of that particular permit is that over a period of time the amount of water that will be removed from the river will increase to 4.5 million litres of water a day. People in the community felt that was just totally unreasonable and that in fact the ministry had not considered its own statement of environmental values, which very clearly state that when considering permits to take water, it would be essential that they appreciate the ecosystem impact that such a removal would have.

The ministry was challenged by members of the community on this permit. During the challenge it was quite interesting that the ministry argued in its defence that it did not have to consider the statement of environmental values because it was not legislated. This bill will legislate that the ministry must consider its statement of environmental values when considering permits to take water.

We then had the Walkerton Inquiry and the report from Mr Justice Dennis O'Connor, which was very comprehensive and which did speak to water source protection. It was interesting as well that the government, while it did implement some of the recommendations, had up until as recently as last fall done absolutely nothing to implement any regulations around water source protection. This is something that is cited by the Canadian Environmental Law Association where they wrote in April of this year that CELA had previously been concerned that while they saw "the government proceed with various recommendations from the Walkerton Inquiry, including consultations on the then proposed Safe Drinking Water Act and the then proposed sustainable water and sewer systems legislation," they had not seen "any response on the recommendations concerning water source protection."

However, later on last year in November, the government did undertake an advisory committee. CELA sat on this committee. The goal of the committee was to establish a framework which outlines accountability roles and responsibilities for water source protection.

At the present time, there are proposed regulations on the EBR Web site. In the first two statements that are contained in this bill, the regulations would require that the ministry must contact municipalities, conservation authorities and abutting landowners. However, the regulations, I would suggest, are very unclear about any commitment to the statement of environmental values and that it must consider those.

I'm sure we will hear from government members that this bill is redundant, that it's going to be in regulations in the very near future, but what I'm saying here this morning is that it is absolutely essential that this bill is passed. As recently as yesterday we have seen what can happen to government regulations. They can be amended, they can be added to, they can be taken away and no one has any opportunity to make any comment on that.

We in the Liberal Party are absolutely committed to water source protection. In our platform document, Growing Strong Communities, Dalton McGuinty has committed, unlike the Harris-Eves government, to implement every recommendation of the Walkerton Inquiry. We will, we are committed, we are prepared to put in legislation that, with regard to permits to take water, municipalities must be notified, conservation authorities must be notified and that the statement of environmental values for the Ministry of the Environment must be considered when permits to take water are considered by the Ministry of the Environment. It's not a matter of leaving it to regulation, which may or may not be changed; we believe this is so important that it must be enshrined in law.

The Canadian Environmental Law Association indicated in its release on April 23, 2003, that it will be writing to the government and to each political party asking each to commit to adopt the framework, which would be the regulation in its entirety, as part of any party platform. It very much wants to see a commitment to water source protection.

I would say that we are prepared, on this side of the House, to go one better than what's proposed even in the framework. We are prepared to make this the law in the province, not simply part of a regulation that may or not be changed at one point in the future. Certainly, given the record of this government and how it deals with and manages regulations, I don't think it's anything we want to leave at that status. It requires a legislative solution. That is what is being proposed here this morning.

1110

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): I first want to thank the member for introducing an Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection.

I want to assure everyone in this Legislature that we share the member's belief in the need to protect the source waters that are so important to the people of Ontario. Our government recognizes the need to protect water at every step, from source to tap. That's why we've developed the most comprehensive clean water strategy in the history of our province. Our strategy is based on the premise that well-protected water is absolutely fundamental to the high quality of life we enjoy in Ontario.

We are taking action on many fronts to protect Ontario's water supplies and ensure those supplies are indeed sustainable. Our efforts include proceeding quickly to implement changes and address recent concerns about the permit to take water program. We're always open to new ways to improve the effectiveness of our programs.

However, the private member's bill introduced today—an Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection—is not necessary because everything in it is being addressed by our work to improve the permit to take water program.

Before I talk about our program in more detail, I want to put it into context by outlining some of the unprecedented actions we've taken to ensure that Ontarians

have access to the best drinking water in the world. In August 2000 we introduced Operation Clean Water, highlighted by the drinking water protection regulation, which most of you will know as regulation 459. The regulation gave Ontario's first-ever legally enforceable standards for drinking water quality, as well as strict requirements for testing, treatment and reporting. We also implemented annual inspection of all municipal water facilities to ensure compliance with the regulation.

These efforts were complemented in other areas as we worked to create a comprehensive strategy that protects drinking water, both at the source and at the tap. With the release of Commissioner Dennis O'Connor's report of the Walkerton Inquiry, we gained a new focus in our efforts. Commissioner O'Connor's report amounts to a new vision of how we can provide stronger, more integrated protections for Ontario's drinking water. The Ontario government embraces O'Connor's vision, and we are committed to implementing all of the 120 recommendations made by the commission.

The creation of a Safe Drinking Water Act is one of his key recommendations. The act represents a major step forward in water system management and accountability. It provides the legislative authority to implement 50 of the 93 recommendations made in part two of Commissioner O'Connor's report. The Safe Drinking Water Act builds on our existing policies and practices, like the drinking water protection regulation and our tough inspection regime. These will be rolled into the new act over time.

The Safe Drinking Water Act was passed in December 2002, and we're now working on a series of attendant regulations that will (1) make Ontario the first province with authority to require mandatory licensing and accreditation of laboratories that perform drinking water testing; (2) require the establishment of a standards advisory council, and provide authority to set standards for drinking water treatment, distribution, quality and testing; (3) require the certification of all drinking water system operators, including those operators who have been grandparented under the old certification regime; (4) require an owner's licence for municipal drinking water systems; (5) hold municipalities with oversight functions to a statutory standard of care; and (6) provide the Ontario government with the authority to strengthen compliance and enforcement provisions.

As well, a new position of chief water inspector has been created. This symbolizes an important step toward increased accountability.

When the necessary regulations are in place, the Safe Drinking Water Act will provide Ontario with the strongest-ever safeguards to protect the water that comes out of our taps.

Another important piece of legislation I should mention at this point is the Sustainable Water and Sewage Systems Act. The purpose of this act is self-evident. It is meant to ensure that we have effective water and sewage services protecting our health, not just today or for the foreseeable future but for generations to come.

I would now like to turn to the source protection component of our integrated clean water strategy.

Interjection.

Hon Mr Galt: Commissioner O'Connor made 22 recommendations with respect to source protection, and if the member for Kingston and the Islands would just listen, I'll continue with my presentation. I hope I'm not interrupting him too much.

We have been working diligently to ensure that we come up with actions that will best meet those recommendations. Last November we announced the creation of the advisory committee on watershed-based source protection. The committee afforded us an opportunity to hear from a wide range of interests and backgrounds involved in the protection of water sources. The final report was released on April 21 of this year.

The advisory committee on watershed-based source protection has provided us with a number of excellent recommendations on ways to protect the sources of our drinking water in accordance with the work of Commissioner O'Connor. Among other things the advisory committee report is calling on the provincial government to do—I'm sure the member for Kingston and the Islands will be interested in all of these points: (1) carry out further consultation on how best to put source protection into place and how to pay for it; (2) establish a committee of technical experts to develop a process for identifying and managing threats to drinking water sources; and (3) introduce legislation for watershed-based source protection. The advisory committee provided valuable advice on what this legislation should contain.

We are reviewing these recommendations very carefully and over the next few months the public will have the opportunity to do the same.

I think you can see from this presentation what our government is doing to ensure we have the safest possible water in Ontario. You will see that this bill being brought forward by the member from Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington is indeed redundant.

Mr Ernie Parsons (Prince Edward-Hastings): I described a bill an hour ago as being an amazing bill, and this to me is also an amazing bill. It's amazing from the viewpoint that the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington has fought fiercely for four years to try to get these changes. The first time and the second time she introduced the bill, this government voted against it and said, "It's redundant. We don't need to do it." Now we're hearing, "Well, we're actually starting to do it and we're going to do it by regulation." If it was redundant before, why the changes now? The reality is that this government has not addressed the issues in the bill this member has put forward.

Secondly, where they are starting to make some moves to address the bill, they're doing it by regulation rather than in the bill itself. We have learned the hard way with this government that by regulation, they're doing business behind closed doors. Things are quietly changed and modified, with no public consultation and no public knowledge of it.

Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario Liberals believe this needs to be enshrined as a basic principle, that we are going to protect our water source. All the energies this government wants to put into cleaning water fail to address the real issue: that we need to stop polluting. We believed for years in Ontario that we had unlimited supplies of clean water. We now know better than that. This is not rocket science, folks. We know we need to protect the water. This bill addresses some of the commitments. It says that one of the basic responsibilities of government is to protect our drinking water. "After seven years of neglect, it is time to get it right," says Dalton McGuinty, and he could not be more right on this issue.

1120

We believe, as Liberals, that we need to implement every recommendation—every recommendation—of the Walkerton Inquiry, as soon as possible. It is unbelievable to me that we are stalling on this. For protecting our groundwater, there are some very basic principles that this government violates. When we have permits come forward for things such as dump expansions, this government is, without any reservation, taking and scoping the range of the environmental assessment—"scoping" meaning they're taking it and reducing it to make it fast and easy for the applicant to get it through. I strongly believe that if the proposal presents no risk and no hazard to our groundwater, then there is no problem with going through the full environmental assessment. It may cost a little more money, but surely we've learned from Walkerton that it is more important to do it right than to do it cheaply. Cheap has cost lives; cheap has been proven—I guess it's fair to say this government knows the cost of everything and the value of nothing. We've seen that demonstrated with their regard for the environment.

As a rural resident, for the people who live in rural areas, water is the very essence of life. It makes their farm viable or not. It means they can live on a particular property or not. Everything that every rural resident cherishes falls apart if they have no groundwater or if their groundwater is polluted. They deserve to know if there's going to be anything that could potentially affect their groundwater supply. For that reason, I strongly support the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington on her bill that will require municipalities to be told. I always believe that if you're going to do something right, it will stand daylight; it will stand the public knowing about it. It needs to be presented in public. Municipalities that are local-council-represented, elected to represent the people in that particular community, need to know if there is a potential of something that would adversely affect the residents of that community, the industry in that community, their very lifeblood.

At the moment, the process is that individuals or municipalities or whoever have to keep checking on a regular basis—meaning daily—to see if there is any posting on the EBR, that there may be a water-taking permit or there may be something proposed. Surely we need to respect the municipal people. Surely we need to advise

them: "Here is an application that would adversely affect you." I've said it before and I'll say it again: this isn't rocket science. I suspect we could have almost anyone look at this and say, "Why wouldn't you tell? Why does it have to be kept a secret?" I don't hear an answer on that. This is a government that, although they talk about Red Tape Commission and they want to reduce it, in fact has created more obstacles for citizens to get access to information from the government. They have put up all kinds of barriers and hoops for people to jump through to find out what's going on in their community. I believe if this government truly wanted to protect groundwater and truly wanted to do the right thing, they would do second and third reading on this bill today and get it passed, because it has the potential to greatly improve the quality of life for Ontario.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I think I'll start, because I might forget in my 15 minutes here, by telling people about Howard Hampton's and the NDP's Public Power platform for the election that's coming up any day now.

Interjections.

Ms Churley: No props. It's www.publicpower.ca. Within this document, there is—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and the Islands): Speak to the bill.

Ms Churley: The Liberals are getting nervous there.

In this document, there are practical solutions for clean air and water. I urge people to take a look at the Web site or, if they don't have access, to give us a call or e-mail us and we will get the information to them.

I know that after the tragic events in Walkerton—and we are, by the way, within the time frame of the third anniversary of the deaths and illnesses in Walkerton. As we all know, all of us agree that that was a huge wake-up call to all of us—the legislators, the municipal councillors, everybody, the public—to take better care with our water that is life-giving and -sustaining and it can kill. That was quite a wake-up call for us, although, as you will recall, at some time before Walkerton happened—and I'm sure Mr Bradley will remember this—there was a death in I believe Barrie. Somebody was drinking water and he got cryptosporidium and died. I remember at that time the NDP raised concerns, and I asked questions in the House expressing concern and alarm, about what was happening after the major cuts to the Ministry of the Environment and the downloadings, and then of course the privatization of the labs. So instead of the government rallying and saying, "We'd better take a better look and perhaps beef up what we have in the Ministry of the Environment," after that death in Barrie, they went in the opposite direction and said, "Don't worry. Everything's OK." In fact it was some time after this that the tragic events happened in Walkerton.

I see a parallel in the Minister of Agriculture's answer yesterday to the question of my leader, Howard Hampton, on meat inspectors. It was alarming in that the Minister of Agriculture said very similar things in answer

to that question about so many meat inspectors being laid off. I believe there are only eight full-time meat inspectors now. The government said, "Don't worry. Everything's OK," and talked about what a wonderful job they're doing. That was also said when they started to be warned about problems with the cutbacks, down-loading and privatization before Walkerton happened: "Don't worry. It's perfect. We're doing a better job than ever before."

So I would say to the government that it's important to listen to these warnings from the opposition or from whoever else has some kind of expertise and knowledge about what's going on. That's why I want to say to Ms Dombrowsky today that I support her bill. I know she's made several attempts to get this passed. It's a small piece of a big, major problem, a big puzzle that Justice O'Connor made recommendations on some time ago: what had to be done to create a regulatory regime that fully protects our water from source to tap.

The bill before us today does some of that. I would argue that to some extent it reiterates some ideas that are already in place, and that's called the Environmental Bill of Rights, which the NDP brought in, I believe, when we were in government, with all-party support.

Section 11 states that, "The minister shall take every reasonable step to ensure that the ministry statement of environmental values is considered whenever decisions that might significantly affect the environment are made in the ministry." It also says in sections 5 and 6 that the ministry shall set up an environmental registry for the purposes of posting proposals for things such as permits to take water, and that citizens and groups shall have a period of 30 days. So those things are already part of the law.

Given the problem around water-taking these days, and I want to refer specifically to a recent decision by the Minister of the Environment when the minister overturned an Environmental Review Tribunal decision to allow a Swiss multinational company to take massive amounts of water from the Tay River, we were appalled and actually quite surprised that the minister did it. I didn't think he would after the recommendations from Justice O'Connor, because that was one of the key recommendations, and the government chose to ignore it. It was a test of the government, and the people in the area felt really betrayed because they participated in the so-called public process. Then, when they won the day originally, the company appealed to the minister, who caved in to them.

I'm happy to see this bill before us today. I would say to the government that it's a small piece of a bigger puzzle and they should be supporting it. There's no reason in the world that they shouldn't be doing that. In fact, on the eve of the third anniversary of the tragedy in Walkerton—and I must say to all members that some of the people in Walkerton became good friends of mine. I visited Walkerton throughout that whole ordeal. I spent a lot of time there and I talked to some of the people in Walkerton on a regular basis. What I'm finding, and I'm

sure you're not surprised to hear this, is that there are people in Walkerton who are still sick and who will be sick for the rest of their lives. There are children who will have to have kidney transplants. When you think about the ongoing tragedy to that community, in people's lives and health, it's just astounding.

1130

That's why, three years later I note that there was nothing in this government's platform this time. I referred to that on the day it was released, when they did it in little go-karts, that their Road Ahead is the road back to Walkerton, full circle. In fact, as some of them came riding out through paper in a little go-kart, I noted, what do go-karts do? They bump around all over the place but they go full circle. It's not the Road Ahead; it's the road full circle back to Walkerton. More tax cuts, the mortgage interest deductibility, which even the right and left analysts say won't work and is not necessary, the money for private schools: all of those things will either put the public purse and the government in the hole—they've got a law they've already broken that says they can't do that. Then, with the combination of these things they're promising, should they be re-elected, it would lead to more massive service cuts; we would see even more cuts at the Ministry of the Environment, in our health care system, in our schools etc. That's why it's not the Road Ahead; it's the road moving full circle, back to Walkerton.

It's important that we have these opportunities to debate these kinds of bills today and throughout the next little while, unless the election is called. Yesterday I re-introduced my Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Act because the government has done nothing on that. They've done some consultations, but we still don't see anything. Justice O'Connor made it very clear that that was the lynchpin, to make sure Ontario's drinking water is protected.

We have a Safe Drinking Water Act. I'll remind members of the House that I came forward with the original Safe Drinking Water Act right after the tragedy in Walkerton and urged and urged, with the support of the Liberals, the government to pass that bill, and it never did. Eventually, after Justice O'Connor came out with his recommendations, they passed one of their own, although it's very different, because there's nothing about source protection, which there was in my bill. Within their bill we're still left without that.

I want to remind the Legislature as well that I introduced yesterday, as well as the Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Act—

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, talk about this bill.

Ms Churley: Well, it's related—the No Hog Factories Act. What that does, because this relates again to protecting our water and keeping our water clean, is it prohibits large hog farms, subject to the ability of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make exemptions where it's appropriate to do so. Where I say it's appropriate to do so in this bill is, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations exempting

any person from complying with section 2 if”—and this is the key point—“the Lieutenant Governor in Council is satisfied that Ontario legislation is in force that protects sources of drinking water from contamination that may be caused by the factory hog farm.”

We all know on all sides of this House the problems that are out there right now across the province, and in the Minister of Agriculture’s own riding, Huron. I get lots and lots of e-mails and letters from people all across the province saying there needs to be some legislation in place to curtail the growth of these huge pig farms in areas that are environmentally sensitive.

Those are two bills that I know my Liberal friends, as I support the Liberal bill before us today, and I hope the government will support it—these are things, after what happened in Walkerton, we should all be working on together to try to put all these pieces of the puzzle together, and what we have before us today is indeed a piece of that puzzle.

I listened to Mr Galt talk about why it wasn’t necessary and his glib answer that, “We’re doing everything. We’re perfect. We’ve got it all under control. Don’t worry. We don’t need your help.” It’s the same old stuff that we’ve been hearing over and over again.

In the few minutes I’ve got left, I’m going to remind the government and the public why we need to be passing such legislation.

As Justice O’Connor said, “A strong source protection program offers a wide variety of benefits. It lowers risk-cost effectively, because keeping contaminants out of drinking water sources is an efficient way of keeping them out of the drinking water.”

So the government should pass my source protection act now. It lays out the framework to do that. There’s no need to wait.

But as we speak here today about the situation on the anniversary of Walkerton—that’s the third anniversary—we have a situation where we have all kinds of municipalities whose water systems are out of compliance. We have money that the government—let’s see; how much is it? In the 2002-03 budget, the government promised to spend \$174 million on water projects in Ontario, almost all of that badly needed money for municipal water projects. In the most recent budget, they admit that they only spent a third of that amount. They underspent by \$110 million on municipal water projects, at a time when we have boil-water orders all across this province.

Over the last two years, they failed to invest in the crumbling infrastructure in this province and failed to spend over \$200 million on water. I fail to understand how they can justify that when we know that there are many, many boil-water orders across this province as we speak.

I stand in support of this bill before us today. I would urge the government to also, as we’re determining support for this bill, take a look at the two bills that I brought forward yesterday. Of course, I reintroduced the source protection act. I introduced it in the last session, and it died on the order paper when the government

prorogued the House. I just brought forward the new piece of legislation on limiting big pig farms until a proper source protection act is in place. That’s what I urge the government to do.

A report in September of last year, as I said, shows that over 40% of our municipal water systems are out of compliance. The government says that’s down from 60% last year, and that they’re doing well. It’s still 40% out of compliance. We would all agree that that’s not acceptable on this third anniversary of the Walkerton Inquiry.

I would urge the government members to support this bill today, and to, furthermore, agree to—I’ll be asking later for third reading on the two bills that I presented yesterday, that also will go a long way toward protecting our drinking water in this province.

Mr Norm Miller (Parry Sound-Muskoka): It’s my pleasure to join in the debate today with regard to an Act to amend the Ontario Resources Act with respect to water source protection. Like my colleague, I share the member’s belief in the need to protect the source waters that are so important to the people of Ontario.

Before I get into my prepared speech, I’d like to talk a bit about some of the things going on. As every day goes by, we’re adding to our knowledge of source water across this province. Yesterday’s Sudbury Star reads:

“The Ministry of the Environment has commissioned a \$1-million study of groundwater in five northern Ontario communities, including Markstay-Warren, just east of Sudbury.

“The project involves the analysis of water sources and the integration of the results into a cohesive set of statistical and visual data. This includes both technical reports and extensive mapping....

“This is just one of a series of projects that started in August of 2001. Five or six have been announced in the last month, and more are expected.

“These studies have been commissioned as part of Ontario’s Operation Clean Water, part of the provincial government’s plan for managing provincial resources.

“At the end of the studies, there will be a comprehensive understanding of Ontario’s aquifers....

“A benefit to residents is that the quantity and quality of their water can be gauged closely for years to come. This will allow communities to make more informed decisions in municipal planning.”

That’s going on as we speak.

1140

An April 14 announcement: “Thirty-two more Ontario communities will have better information to protect their drinking water resources thanks to the Ernie Eves government’s additional \$5-million investment in local groundwater studies, Environment Minister Chris Stockwell announced....

“The grants for Ontario communities and conservation authorities build on the largest single investment in groundwater resources in the province’s history. Since 2000, the Ontario government has invested \$19.3 million in local groundwater studies to help gather valuable information on the province’s groundwater resources.”

So we're adding to our knowledge of source waters all the time.

In my riding of Kearney, phase two of a project is underway studying the headwaters in the Magnetawan River system, right on the border of Algonquin Park. It's certainly a critical study going on there. That project will assess the feasibility and means for protection of the surface and groundwater quality in the headwater areas of the Magnetawan River, and flows to the Big East River, in support of environmentally sound growth and economical development. So as we speak, a lot is going on.

I'd like to speak for a second to the member of Toronto-Danforth talking about monies not flowing within the current budget year. I'd like to point out that there are due processes that have to be followed. I'm sure she would be the first one to say we should follow the current environmental assessment process. I know I'm working with the many municipalities in my riding as they work to improve their water systems day by day.

There was mention made by Mr Galt of the advisory committee report that came out April 21. The chair of that committee was Bill Calvert, a very competent chair and the former CAO of the district of Muskoka. He was the chair of the advisory committee on watershed-based source protection.

Before discussing those actions, I want to give some background on the permits to take water program. I want to be very clear that through our permits to take water program, the Ontario government has spared no effort to ensure that permits are subject to comprehensive review and strict controls. These controls include expiry periods and, where appropriate, environmental monitoring. We have the Ontario low water response plan in place to deal with drought conditions in Ontario watersheds. As members of the House are aware, permits to take water fall under the provisions of the Ontario Water Resource Act, the OWRA, and decisions on granting permits and the specific conditions to be imposed on permits are made on the basis of sustainability. The goal is to ensure that new water-takings do not interfere with existing groundwater users or uses.

Another guiding concept is fair sharing of the resource. The OWRA and attendant regulations authorize a ministry director appointed under the legislation to issue permits to proponents for most types of surface and groundwater takings for quantities over 50,000 litres per day. There are some exceptions to that rule.

I know I'm going to run out of time, so I'm going move on to talk about some announcements that came out on April 21, that I referred to earlier. Notice was given of two key actions that we're taking to further strengthen our source water protection.

First, a six-month moratorium was announced on permits to take water in two of southern Ontario's most environmentally sensitive areas: the Oak Ridges moraine and the Niagara Escarpment. The six-month moratorium took effect on March 1 of this year and is applicable for beverage manufacturing, including bottled water oper-

ations; fruit and vegetable canning and pickling; ready-mix concrete manufacturing; and other manufacturing and production of goods that contain water that is taken under a permit to take water. The moratorium takes the spirit of the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Act, 2002, and the Niagara Escarpment Act a step further by protecting local resources over the short term while new initiatives are being developed.

Second, along with the six-month moratorium, we announced the posting of amendments to regulation 285/99, the water-taking and transfer regulation, for public comment. Generally speaking, the announcement increases the accountability of permit holders and those applying for permits, requiring the public sharing of information on both new and revised permits.

In developing the amendments, we carefully reviewed recommendations from a number of key stakeholders, including the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Environmental Commissioner and the Environmental Review Tribunal.

The amendments to the regulation will require permit applicants to notify municipalities, conservation authorities and adjacent landowners about proposed water takings, require reporting of water use by permit holders, and define potential impacts that will be considered when reviewing permit applications.

The Ministry of the Environment will also consult on other program improvements that will establish a service cost recovery fee structure for permit applications.

These proposed changes will ensure that Ontario continues to be among the leading jurisdictions in North America when it comes to the protection of the sources of drinking water.

It is clear that the Ernie Eves government takes very seriously its responsibility to ensure that Ontario has, and enforces, the best drinking water protection rules in the world. These rules include provisions to ensure that permits to take water are issued in such a way as to protect and ensure the sustainability of our precious water resources.

As I and my colleague indicated earlier, we are always open to any new ideas that will strengthen our safeguards. However, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection does not add anything to the process that we have in place. We do, however, appreciate the concerns of the member and I would invite her and everyone with an interest in this issue to work with the government as we continue to build on the strength of Ontario's permit to take water program.

Mr Gerretsen: It's very disappointing to listen to the government members here today. Instead of talking about the private member's bill that has been brought forward, which really wants to bring the highest standards to the drinking water situation here in Ontario, they talk about everything else.

The first point I want to make is, why don't you implement all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations with respect to Walkerton? The report's been out for more than a year now. You know darned well you haven't

implemented all of the recommendations yet. If you did, we'd go a long way to resolving the source water situation here in Ontario.

Secondly, if you really want to be proactive—it's a very simple bill—why don't you just give true meaning to the statement of environmental values that the ministry has by putting it into legislation? You know darned well what happened with this Tay water situation up in the Perth area. There was a hearing before the Environmental Review Tribunal—I think it was a 30-day hearing—and then after the hearing was done, the minister overturned the tribunal's decision because of new information the minister had. That new information, if there really was any new information, surely should have gone back to the tribunal so the tribunal could make a decision taking all the information into account, including the so-called new information. That's the real problem here.

I take the position that the water sources we have, the water we have in our streams and the underground sources, are a precious commodity and a resource that belongs to each and every Ontarian, in exactly the same way that the coal that's underground and the forestry that's out there—you know, we do things to protect those industries. Why don't we do exactly the same thing with water? We should be even more vigilant with water since we all need it on a day-to-day basis for our ongoing existence.

The bill that the member proposes here is very simple. As I've already stated, one is to include the statement of environmental values as part of legislation. Two, make sure that when notice of an application to take water out of our streams or out of our underground water system is given, municipalities and conservation authorities in those particular areas be notified. They shouldn't be placed in the position where they in effect have to watch the Net on a day-to-day basis to see if an application has been made. What could be more reasonable than that? Notify them and give them 30 days, as the member is suggesting in the legislation, to make a response to the ministry. That surely is the least we can expect in a situation like this.

1150

Also, make it mandatory that the director take the various pieces of information they get from the municipality and from the conservation authority into account. You know as well as I do that currently the regulation states that the MOE director "may" ensure that government authorities are notified, and they "may" consult and they "may" take whatever they say into consideration. Well, in today's world, that just isn't good enough. In light of what happened in Walkerton, it isn't good enough. It should be mandatory. Surely the drinking water supply we have out there and the sources of our drinking water are so important to each and every one of us that we cannot just leave it to chance that maybe the right decision is made. It should be made mandatory in legislation. That's what this bill speaks to.

We still haven't heard from any government member who claims that this government is doing more about our

water situation—the people out there know that isn't the case—about why you haven't endorsed and implemented all of Justice O'Connor's recommendations. I strongly suggest that if this House collectively wanted to send a message to the people of Ontario that we really care about our water supply sources and we want to make sure that the water people drink on a day-to-day basis is as pure as it possibly can be, then the best thing we could do is pass this bill unanimously on second reading today.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mrs Domrowsky once again has brought forward a bill in this Legislature to deal with a situation that cries out for a legislated solution, and once again I hear the government say that they believe that what they have in place will solve the problem. It reminds me of the launch of a certain document last week, called *The Road Ahead*. I thought the term I heard on the news, *The Road to Walkerton*, was a better description of the launching of the new document, because the policies contained in there will lead once again, if not in the drinking water situation then in some other circumstance in the province, to another Walkerton.

The member has brought forward a piece of legislation for a variety of reasons. People in her area and across the province have expressed astonishment that the provincial government does not notify, is not obligated to notify, municipalities and other relevant agencies and people about permits to take water, oftentimes millions upon millions upon millions of litres of water. Where there was a test of the government's will in this regard was certainly the OMYA situation in eastern Ontario. It even reached an environmental tribunal. I think Pauline Browes was the chair of that tribunal. The discussion went on for several days; I heard there were 30 days of discussion and representations before the panel. A compelling case was made against the request of the company for its water-taking permit, which would take a huge amount of water from its position in eastern Ontario, yet the Minister of the Environment, when push came to shove, came down on the side of the company and not on the side of the environment. In fact, he overruled the environmental tribunal in this particular case, an independent environmental tribunal which had heard all the compelling evidence. The minister decided in his great wisdom that he would overrule that. To me, that epitomizes this government's approach to the environment: when push comes to shove, unless there is all kinds of public scrutiny and an outcry, this government will come down on the side of the anti-environment rather than the environment. That's most unfortunate.

The member calls for legislation. Why does she do that, instead of a regulation? The government says, "We have a regulation that will look after this." Regulations are made behind closed doors by a limited number of people with a limited amount of input and can be changed by the government. We saw an example of this in the House yesterday, where the government changed some of its regulations and sprang them on the House.

The government can do that at any time. Surely every member of this Legislature—except the cabinet itself—would want to see this provision enshrined in legislation. Why? First, it would have stronger force, and second, if the government wishes to change the provisions contained in the legislation, it must come before the House and have it debated in the House. That is far superior, because we've had a very bad example of a minister who simply caved in, if I may use that terminology, to a company that wanted to take millions upon millions of litres of water, and of course that was to be exported as part of a slurry.

The member, Mrs Dombrowsky, deserves credit for persistence because she has raised this issue in question period, in statements, in debates and during the time devoted to private members' hour. She is to be commended for that. I see no reason why the government members would not vote for this, if this was not what we call a whipped vote, if this were truly a free vote, as they claim.

This is the third anniversary of the Walkerton tragedy, that we're just about to pass. This is an example of how we have to deal with problems legislatively, proactively and in a way that will protect the environment. Mrs Dombrowsky's legislation will do that. I'm pleased to support it and I urge other members to do the same.

The Acting Speaker: In response, the member for Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington.

Mrs Dombrowsky: I would like to thank the members who participated in the debate this morning on what I believe to be a very important issue: the members for Northumberland, Prince Edward-Hastings, Toronto-Danforth, Parry Sound-Muskoka, Kingston and the Islands, and of course the member for St Catharines who has always so generously participated in the debate on this issue.

I would also like to thank the people from across Ontario who have taken the time repeatedly to write to me to express their support for this legislation, not just people from within my riding but from the ridings of Perth-Carleton, Barrie, Parry Sound, indeed from across Ontario. People are very concerned about their water sources and they want to ensure they are protected. They want to ensure their Ministry of the Environment is definitely following its own rule, its statement of environmental values.

The government would offer this morning by way of argument that this is already happening, that this is going to be regulated, so it is unnecessary. I would remind the members of the government that at the hearing around the OMYA issue in Perth, one of the arguments your lawyers put forward was that the Ministry of the Environment was not required to consider the statement of environmental values because it was not legislated.

That is what the bill this morning is all about. We want to enshrine in legislation that commitment for the people of Ontario, for the most precious resource we have—apart from our children, of course—our water. I

thank all the members who have participated and I hope that you will be able, in a very non-partisan way, to support this solid piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: This completes the time allocated for debate on ballot item 8. We will now deal with ballot item 7.

PEOPLE'S ACCESS
TO THE FACTS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ACCÈS
DU PUBLIC AUX FAITS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mr Wood has moved second reading of Bill 29, An Act to amend the Public Inquiries Act.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will have a bell following my placing the question on ballot item 8.

ONTARIO WATER RESOURCES
AMENDMENT ACT
(WATER SOURCE PROTECTION), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES RESSOURCES EN EAU
DE L'ONTARIO
(PROTECTION DES SOURCES
D'ALIMENTATION EN EAU)

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Mrs Dombrowsky has moved second reading of Bill 35, An Act to amend the Ontario Water Resources Act with respect to water source protection.

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

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

Carried.

Pursuant to standing order 96, this bill will be referred to—

Mrs Leona Dombrowsky (Hastings-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington): Mr Speaker, I would ask that this bill be referred to the committee on general government.

The Acting Speaker: Mrs Dombrowsky has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on general government. Agreed?

All in favour will say "aye."

All opposed will say "nay."

Agreed.

PEOPLE'S ACCESS
TO THE FACTS ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ACCÈS
DU PUBLIC AUX FAITS

The Acting Speaker (Mr Michael A. Brown): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1200 to 1205.

The Acting Speaker: All those in favour will please stand and remain standing until their name is called by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Duncan, Dwight	Miller, Norm
Barrett, Toby	Flaherty, Jim	Munro, Julia
Bartolucci, Rick	Galt, Doug	Mushinski, Marilyn
Beaubien, Marcel	Gerretsen, John	Parsons, Ernie
Bountrogianni, Marie	Gilchrist, Steve	Patten, Richard
Bradley, James J.	Gill, Raminder	Peters, Steve
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Caplan, David	Guzzo, Garry J.	Pupatello, Sandra
Clark, Brad	Hastings, John	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, Bert	Sampson, Rob
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Marland, Margaret	Tascona, Joseph N.
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Wettlaufer, Wayne
DeFaria, Carl	Maves, Bart	Wood, Bob
Di Cocco, Caroline	Mazzilli, Frank	
Dombrowsky, Leona	McDonald, AL	

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed will please stand and remain standing until their name is called by the Clerk.

Nays

Cunningham, Dianne	Ouellette, Jerry J.	Wilson, Jim
Kormos, Peter	Prue, Michael	
Martin, Tony	Turnbull, David	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 49; the nays are 7.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr Bob Wood (London West): I'd like to thank the House for its support and ask that this be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee.

The Acting Speaker: Mr Wood has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed?

All those in favour will please stand and remain standing.

All those opposed will please stand.

Mr Wood has asked that the bill be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. The majority is in favour.

All business now being complete, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1209 to 1330.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BSE

Mr Steve Peters (Elgin-Middlesex-London): The outbreak of BSE is dealing a huge blow to the \$1-billion-a-year Ontario beef industry. It's incumbent on every one of us in this Legislature associated with this building, be we the politicians or the media, that we do everything we can to instill confidence in this industry, that it is safe to eat beef. The experts out there are saying that it's safe to eat beef. We must ensure, though, that both levels of government continue to work together co-operatively to ensure that the investigation continues and that we put everything in place to ensure that the outbreak does not occur in Ontario.

We must do everything we can. I urge the Minister of Agriculture to, if need be, go it alone, as she has said, to do everything possible to reopen the American borders and the other exporting borders as well. Every day that we wait, our farmers are losing thousands and thousands of dollars.

We need the minister to please work as well with the rendering industry to ensure that their needs are being met as we work through this most difficult situation.

Most importantly, it's not too early for the Minister of Agriculture to start putting the wheels in motion to deal with compensation measures that we know are going to have to be undertaken.

We urge all Ontarians to choose beef as their meal choice. Fire up that barbecue and have a hamburger, have a steak, or try my favourite: Ontario corn-fed beef. Please, beef—it's what it's all about. Beef—we need to do everything we can to support this industry. You can do that at home, ladies and gentlemen, by making sure that you go out to that grocery store and buy some Ontario beef.

STAFF APPRECIATION

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Since 1995, it has certainly been my honour to serve the people of Scarborough East. Members on both sides of this House work very hard to represent our communities. While we may be the public face of the provincial Legislature in our communities, our work could not be accomplished without a dedicated team of staff and volunteers who work very hard every day on our behalf.

In the past eight years, my community office has assisted literally thousands of individuals resolve conflicts between governments at all levels. They've helped people find jobs and training. They've assisted others with OSAP, Family Responsibility Office claims, WSIB claims, scrolls, and information on a wide variety of government programs. They have done so professionally and effectively, and for this I am exceedingly grateful.

I'd like to thank my constituency team, including Karen Cain, who has been with me right since 1995, Nadia Mangal, Mary Semple, as well as staff such as

Jack Douglas, who are now retired but who gave yeoman service while in our office.

I would also like to thank our hard-working summer students and volunteers, who have played a major role in helping us provide the best quality service to the residents of Scarborough East. They include Christina Serafico, Lisa Young, Scott Thompson and Karen Serafico.

I can't leave out the hard-working Queen's Park staff: Jenna Clark; my legislative intern, Graham Erion; and my EA, Paul Calandra, who has also been with me since day one.

Before this session of Parliament ends, I want to offer my heartfelt thanks to the people who are truly the backbone of the political process, our Queen's Park constituency staff.

DISTILLERY DISTRICT

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): Today marks an historic day in a riding that has been home to a lot of Ontario's history.

Later today, Cityscape Development will officially open the distillery district. This is the renovated former Gooderham and Worts Distillery in my riding near Front and Parliament. The distillery district promises to be one of the great new hotbeds of exciting activity in the city of Toronto. Recently Artscape opened a bunch of studios down there for artists. This is a renaissance that's bringing new life to one of the areas of our city long in need of it.

We have another historic opportunity for the Minister of Culture who's here with us today to play his role on behalf of the people of Ontario, and that is to ensure that one of the most historic sites in Canada, the first Parliament site at Front and Parliament, is restored to public hands so that this site, which has been the birthplace of the history of democracy in Upper Canada, can be used for the opportunity to tell us about our history and our heritage.

This past Saturday I joined with Councillor Pam McConnell and 300 or 400 other people, including mayoralty candidates Barbara Hall and John Tory, in lending support to see that this historic site is returned to public hands.

There's a cultural argument, but there's an economic argument too. The province of Ontario owns about 100 acres of adjacent land. There is no better way to ensure we get top dollar for that land and that we use it to its highest and best value than to take this historic site and make sure it underpins this distillery district that is coming to new life at Front and Parliament. I call on the Minister of Culture to act today.

CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I rise to inform the House that last Monday, May 12, was the international day of recognition for ME, also known as

chronic fatigue syndrome. ME is a serious, debilitating, multi-system physical illness that affects individuals of all ages. Results of recent studies show that ME affects 522 women and 291 men for every 100,000 members of our population. The onset of the illness may be sudden, and while a few victims may be able to continue work or school, many are bedridden or require mobility devices.

ME has a particularly negative impact on our children and youth. As with adults, children may experience neurological or cognitive difficulties, muscle weakness, profound exhaustion and dysfunction of the immune system.

Despite ongoing worldwide research, the cause of ME remains unknown. Fortunately for sufferers of this debilitating disease, their cause is being well represented by the volunteers at the ME association of Ontario. Founded in 1990, this non-profit organization is dedicated to providing education and information to those affected by ME.

I ask all honourable members to join me in applauding the efforts of the dedicated volunteers of the MEAO as they help raise awareness of ME.

Members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario wear a blue ribbon in support those afflicted by ME and in the hope that the hard work and vigilance of volunteers and researchers will soon bring the incidence of ME to an end.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Ms Caroline Di Cocco (Sarnia-Lambton): My community of Sarnia-Lambton dutifully followed the provincial government's directive and amalgamated our hospitals. What we have now, seven years later, is an inadequate facility containing insufficient beds and a depleted and demoralized workforce. We do not have enough beds to meet the needs of our community, and we do not have enough nurses and health care professionals to manage the patients.

Not only is this hurting my community's ability to attract new doctors, but our best and our most experienced health care workers are leaving these inadequate facilities to work in the United States or pursue other careers.

Dr Withers is a family physician in Sarnia. He points out that the current ER was meant only as a temporary structure and that now it is treating double the patients it was designed to treat. Concerns over the working conditions, insufficient staffing and lack of available beds have driven away experienced emergency doctors and nurses to seek work elsewhere.

If workplace conditions and deficient infrastructures are not addressed, the Minister of Health should understand that the reality is that we cannot resolve the systemic shortage or keep pace with the exodus of health care professionals. As the MPP for Sarnia-Lambton, I want to make sure that the minister once again understands the urgent need in Sarnia-Lambton for a new hospital.

1340

SUDBURY REGIONAL HOSPITAL

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): For months now, phase 2 construction at the Sudbury Regional Hospital has been on hold. We've had an operating review, a capital review, recommendations, a supervisor, more recommendations, but no money from this government to finish this capital project. Instead we've been told we'll have to contribute even more to cover the local share of increased construction costs; this after the community has already fundraised more than we had to, in three years instead of five. Our community has done enough. We've met our obligations and we shouldn't be forced to do more. Instead it's time the Conservatives put their money on the table to get this project done.

Our regional hospital has a responsibility to provide health care services to people right across northeastern Ontario. We can't do that, much less meet the needs of local residents, when the wing for emergency services, for example, is still a huge hole in the ground.

The government doesn't understand that ongoing construction delays also put the northern medical school at risk. The media has already reported the opening might be delayed until 2005, due to issues involving accreditation. What medical student will apply to Sudbury if the future of the teaching hospital is in limbo? Who will come to teach if it's not clear the hospital will be done on time? We can't recruit if we can't guarantee the project will be done, and done on time. The government must announce money now so that the northern medical school is not compromised in this way.

Sudbury says, "Finish our hospital." That is what the Conservative government should do right now.

STRATFORD FESTIVAL

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): I rise today to inform my colleagues and all Ontarians that the Stratford Festival will celebrate the opening night of its 51st season this coming Monday, May 26, 2003.

This year's program includes Greek classics like Agamemnon and The Birds, modern Canadian works like the 1983 Governor General's Award winner Quiet in the Land by Anne Chislett, musicals like Rodgers' and Hammerstein's The King and I, and of course Shakespearean plays including Antony and Cleopatra and The Taming of the Shrew, which will be featured at Monday's opening night performance.

Interjection.

Mr Johnson: At this time I would like to recognize Richard Monette, the festival's artistic director since 1994, which might be of interest to the member for Windsor. Mr Monette, who has been with the festival in various roles for 31 years, recently agreed to continue as artistic director until 2007. This will make him the longest-serving artistic director in the festival's history. His continued devotion to the Stratford Festival has contributed greatly to its success.

Interjection.

Mr Johnson: I'd ask again if the member for Windsor would give me a little courtesy.

Talk about success: this year the festival will feature 23 plays in four venues. It creates almost 6,000 jobs in and around Stratford and accounts for 150,000 room nights in local hotels and bed and breakfasts. The estimated economic impact on the region is \$170 million.

I am looking forward to Monday's performance. I hope that all members of this House will visit Stratford this summer to see a play, eat especially good Canadian beef in one of the many fine restaurants and roam through the shops on the main street, which is Ontario Street in Stratford.

DAIMLERCHRYSLER

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): We've had extremely disappointing news today that DaimlerChrysler will not go ahead with a \$1.6-billion investment in my city to build a truck plant. The company was negotiating since last fall with federal and provincial governments to come up with a package that would at least assist in making the business case to build the plant.

DaimlerChrysler is being just too generous in citing the softening market as the only reason not to go ahead with this project. Having been kept abreast of information of the negotiations all along, it's been embarrassing to see the attitude of ministry officials in the just-don't-bother-me mood and months of delay in offering a package to DaimlerChrysler. As it was told to me, "The treatment from the government negotiating team was atrocious."

We have a minister responsible for innovation. Well, the flexible manufacturing facility proposed for Windsor is ideal for future production; it's the innovative approach to manufacturing that would also improve and modernize parts manufacturing.

Ontario ministries should have been leaping all over the potential for a new assembly plant, which rarely comes along these days. Instead this government practically chased them out the door. You need to be in the incentives game, which has wholly benefited southern states. I don't feel this government understands the lost jobs we are now facing—jobs that start at \$18 or more an hour. Our auto sector accounts for one in four jobs in my city; one in six jobs in this province. In a Liberal government under Dalton McGuinty, we'll lead an automotive investment SWAT team to get out there and look for new investment, not sit on our hands like this government has done.

DON YOUNG

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I have a very moving story to relate about a young, 31-year-old man from Ennismore in my riding. On July 29 last year a gravel crusher destroyed Don Young's legs. During the ambulance ride to Sunnybrook Hospital and the ensuing

days of numerous surgeries, Don received 30 pints of blood. Miraculously, within six months he has learned to walk again and has now returned to work.

Don received an outpouring of support and encouragement from residents in the Peterborough riding. He realized that the availability of blood saved his life. He wanted to do something to show his appreciation. With his wife Stephanie and 15-month-old daughter Siera, the young family decided to host a special blood donors' clinic. The goal was to double the 30 pints of blood that Don received during his ordeal.

The Youngs were overwhelmed by the response to the clinic. Not only did they double the 30 pints; they exceeded it by 171 pints. Two hundred and seventy-seven people, 184 of them first-time donors, attended the clinic. Those who were not able to attend the clinic hosted by the Youngs are donating blood at Canadian Blood Services. At the last report, 280 had been donated.

Don owes his life to the people who gave blood at regular clinics. By sharing his story he encourages more people to see the value of donating blood. When Don is asked about his handicap, he responds, "I guess you're as handicapped as you feel." This young man and his family deserve to be applauded for their positive outlook and courage in overcoming a catastrophic incident by giving back to their community and for making people aware that they were given blood to save their lives.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

THE RIGHT CHOICES ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES BONS CHOIX (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 41, An Act to implement Budget measures / Projet de loi 41, Loi mettant en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires.

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

All those in favour will please say, "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1348 to 1353.

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

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hastings, John	Runciman, Robert W.
Beaubien, Marcel	Hudak, Tim	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Spina, Joseph
Coburn, Brian	Johnson, Bert	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Klees, Frank	Stewart, R. Gary

DeFaria, Carl	Marland, Margaret	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Martiniuk, Gerry	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Maves, Bart	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	Mazzilli, Frank	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	McDonald, AL	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, David

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Smitherman, George

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 45; the nays are 27.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

STUDENT HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAMS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR LES PROGRAMMES DE SANTÉ ET DE SÉCURITÉ POUR ÉTUDIANTS

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 42, An Act to bring health and safety programs to Ontario students / Projet de loi 42, Loi visant à offrir des programmes de santé et de sécurité aux étudiants de l'Ontario.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Michael Gravelle (Thunder Bay-Superior North): The purpose of this legislation is to equip Ontario's students entering the workforce with the skills and knowledge they need to prevent injuries, fatalities and occupational disease in the workplace. We need this legislation because young workers are at a much higher risk of a workplace accident or disease than other workers. In fact, their chance of sustaining an injury at work is 80% higher than the average worker's. Nobody feels more strongly about this than the Thunder Bay Injured Workers' Support Group. This in fact is their legislation—legislation, may I say, that I have introduced before. I hope we'll be successful this time in having this act pass third reading.

ONTARIO HOME PROPERTY
TAX RELIEF FOR SENIORS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 SUR L'ALLÈGEMENT
DE L'IMPÔT FONCIER RÉSIDENTIEL
POUR LES PERSONNES ÂGÉES
DE L'ONTARIO

Mrs Ecker moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 43, An Act to provide Ontario home property tax relief for seniors / Projet de loi 43, Loi prévoyant un allègement de l'impôt foncier résidentiel pour les personnes âgées de l'Ontario.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1358 to 1403.

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

Ayes

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

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn
Bartolucci, Rick	Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve
Bountrogianni, Marie	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Kormos, Peter	Pupatello, Sandra
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Ruprecht, Tony
Cleary, John C.	Marchese, Rosario	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	Smitherman, George
Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony	

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 47; the nays are 26.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY
AMENDMENT ACT (WORKPLACE
CARCINOMA COMMITTEE), 2003

LOI DE 2003
MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SANTÉ
ET LA SÉCURITÉ AU TRAVAIL
(COMITÉ DU CARCINOME
D'ORIGINE PROFESSIONNELLE)

Mr Bartolucci moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 44, An Act to amend the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require the appointment of a workplace carcinoma committee / Projet de loi 44, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la santé et la sécurité au travail en vue d'exiger la constitution d'un comité du carcinome d'origine professionnelle.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): This bill amends the Occupational Health and Safety Act to require the minister to appoint a workplace carcinoma committee responsible for advising, investigating and reporting on matters concerning workplace cancers.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Northern Development and Mines): Just a quick point of order because they have to leave shortly, Mr Speaker: I introduce Mayor Charlie Primeau; Roy Sinclair, the CAO; and Eric Rutherford, deputy mayor, of Greenstone, northwestern Ontario.

INQUIRY INTO
POLICE INVESTIGATIONS
OF SEXUAL ABUSE AGAINST MINORS
IN THE CORNWALL AREA ACT, 2003
LOI DE 2003 PRÉVOYANT UNE ENQUÊTE
SUR LES ENQUÊTES POLICIÈRES
RELATIVES AUX PLAINTES DE MAUVAIS
TRAITEMENTS D'ORDRE SEXUEL
INFLIGÉS À DES MINEURS
DANS LA RÉGION DE CORNWALL

Mr Guzzo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to establish a commission to inquire into the investigations by police forces of complaints of sexual abuse against minors in the Cornwall area / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à créer une commission chargée d'enquêter sur les enquêtes menées par des corps de police sur les plaintes de mauvais traitements d'ordre sexuel infligés à des mineurs dans la région de Cornwall.

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

The member for a short statement?

1410

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa West-Nepean): There's not much more I can add. I've added that it's the same bill which has been passed in this House on two occasions, but there are additional circumstances and additional information that I would welcome the opportunity to circulate amongst the members of the House, and I will take that opportunity early next week.

I'd just say to you that as a result of the settlement of a number of civil cases there, all with a confidentiality clause refusing to allow the individuals to talk to the press and, in one case, name members of this Legislative Assembly—a very, very remarkable circumstance, I might tell you. I'm pleased to be lumped with the member from Cornwall in that confidentiality contract. I thank you for the opportunity.

TRUTH ABOUT IPPERWASH ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 CONCERNANT LA VÉRITÉ SUR IPPERWASH

Mr Phillips moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to provide for a public inquiry to discover the truth about events at Ipperwash Provincial Park leading to the death of Dudley George / Projet de loi 46, Loi prévoyant une enquête publique pour découvrir la vérité sur les événements qui se sont produits au parc provincial Ipperwash et qui ont conduit au décès de Dudley George.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I understand that the member for Ottawa West-Nepean is also planning to introduce a similar bill, and I didn't mean to scoop him, but this is a bill that I introduced before. I would hope that, before we adjourn, the Legislature would agree to conduct this. If we do not do this now, a considerable amount of money will be spent on a civil case that, in my opinion and the opinion of many Ontarians, would be better spent in an inquiry to get at the truth about Ipperwash.

RETAIL SALES TAX RELIEF FOR AMATEUR YOUTH SPORTS ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 VISANT À ALLÉGER LA TAXE DE VENTE AU DÉTAIL EN MATIÈRE DE SPORT AMATEUR POUR LA JEUNESSE

Mr Sampson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 47, An Act to amend the Retail Sales Tax Act to provide an exemption from tax for amateur youth sports / Projet de loi 47, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la taxe de vente au détail pour prévoir une exemption de taxe en matière de sport amateur pour la jeunesse.

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

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-St Clair): On a point of order to you, Mr Speaker: Is that bill going to be in order? It sounds as though it is a money bill. Perhaps the member would prefer to put it on the order paper as a resolution that this House could deal with.

The Speaker: We obviously haven't had a chance to read it, but we will, as we do scrutinize all bills.

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

The member for a short statement?

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): This is the identical bill that stood on the order paper in the third session of the 37th Parliament that you ruled could stay on the order paper, and it's the second time the opposition has stood against amateur sports in the province of Ontario, and I'm disappointed to hear that.

This actually does help hundreds of thousands—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): You're such a piece of work.

Mr Sampson: I'm sorry, to the honourable member. I'm sorry, Speaker, does the member have the floor right now?

The Speaker: Order. Let the member have his time, please.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Speak to the bill then.

Mr Sampson: I am going to speak to the bill. It helps hundreds of thousands of young boys and girls who are involved in amateur sports—

Mr Duncan: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's a speech. He has already taken something we said right out of order. We'd like to see this—

The Speaker: It is a short speech.

I'd just remind everyone that there are a lot of members who do want it. We have a 30-minute rule. If we can get to it, we'll get more members on.

Mr Sampson: It's a bill I've already introduced in the previous session of this Parliament. It helps hundreds of thousands of young boys and girls who are involved in amateur sports stay involved in amateur sports. It gives them some tax support to do so. To the honourable members opposite, I hope I have your support to do that.

BUSINESS CORPORATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (LIMITING COMPULSORY ACQUISITIONS), 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SOCIÉTÉS PAR ACTIONS (RESTRICTION DES ACQUISITIONS FORCÉES)

Ms Pupatello moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 48, An Act to amend the Business Corporations Act to limit compulsory acquisitions / Projet de loi 48,

Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sociétés par actions en vue de restreindre les acquisitions forcées.

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

The member for short statement?

Ms Sandra Pupatello (Windsor West): Briefly, the bill amends the Business Corporations Act to exempt the application of section 188 of the compulsory acquisitions section, takeover bids or issuer bids made in respect of an offeror corporation whose equity securities were the subject of an initial public offering at any time within five years. This is specifically meant to address the issue of so many individuals who invested in TD-Waterhouse stock, which was then in a forced-sale takeover. Many, many individuals across the country, let alone in Ontario, lost tens of thousands of dollars. This is meant to address that.

KITCHENER-WATERLOO FOUNDATION ACT, 2003

Mr Wettlaufer moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act respecting the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation.

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

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

SENIORS' PROTECTION ACT, 2003 LOI DE 2003 SUR LA PROTECTION DES PERSONNES ÂGÉES

Mr Colle moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act to protect people over the age of 65 from discrimination by amending the Human Rights Code / Projet de loi 49, Loi visant à protéger les personnes de plus de 65 ans de toute discrimination en modifiant le Code des droits de la personne.

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

The member for short statement?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): This is the second time I've introduced this bill. This bill, if passed, would amend the Human Rights Code, making it contrary to the act to discriminate in employment on the basis of age because a person is 65 years of age or older. I think it's time to end this discrimination. If the government is really serious about it, they would move unanimous consent to support this passage right here and now.

The Speaker: Introduction of bills? The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke North): Well, it's about time. We've got all the time in the world. This is the first time—

The Speaker: The other members want to get in. We're coming down to the last five minutes. Other members cannot—I would appreciate it if the member would hurry up.

Mr Hastings: Thanks for the lecture, Speaker. The bill I am introducing today is entitled—

The Speaker: Just a second. Member take his seat, please.

Mr Hastings left the chamber.

THUNDER BAY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION ACT, 2003

Mr Gravelle moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr20, An Act respecting the Thunder Bay Foundation.

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

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

1420

MINISTRY OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT, 2003

LOI DE 2003 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LE MINISTÈRE DES SERVICES CORRECTIONNELS

Mr Sampson moved the first reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ministry of Correctional Services Act / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère des Services correctionnels.

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

A short statement from the member?

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga Centre): No, Speaker, so the other members can introduce, I'll pass, thank you.

The Speaker: I thank the member for the kind gesture, but unfortunately under standing order 33(f), the period for introduction of bills shall be limited to 30 minutes, and unfortunately we hit that. But I appreciate the member's co-operation.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business. I move that notwithstanding standing order 96(d), the following changes be made to the ballot list for private members' public business: Mr

Stewart and Mr Sampson exchange places in order of precedence, such that Mr Stewart assumes ballot item 39 and Mr Sampson assumes ballot item number 9.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Agreed? Carried.

Mr Mario Sergio (York West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask the indulgence of the House by seeking unanimous consent to remove parts I and III of Bill 28, which would allow the children in Toronto Catholic schools to get back into the classroom.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TAX LEGISLATION

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): I'm very pleased to rise and inform the House about the introduction of two significant pieces of legislation: the Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act and The Right Choices Act. I will also be introducing a third piece of budget legislation in the next few days entitled The Right Choices for Equity in Education Act. Combined, these three bills continue our economic plan for Ontario, a plan that has resulted in record economic growth and over one million new jobs for Ontarians.

Our seniors have contributed greatly to the economic prosperity we enjoy today in Ontario. The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act proposes to recognize those contributions by providing seniors with additional tax relief. The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act, if approved by this Legislature, will provide seniors with property tax relief on their principal residence. I've also introduced The Right Choices Act, which proposes a number of initiatives supporting economic prosperity by providing tax relief to individuals, cutting business taxes, encouraging investment and ensuring that those businesses that owe tax should pay tax. Taken together, these measures reflect the priorities of Ontarians.

For many seniors, rising costs such as property taxes eat into their fixed incomes. This bill proposes to complete the government's commitment to reduce residential property taxes through this new focused tax relief for our seniors. I had the privilege of speaking to a number of seniors this morning who were very pleased that we were recognizing their contribution to society, to our economic prosperity, in this way—something that will be of assistance to them.

Seniors who own or rent their homes would be eligible for a credit that reimburses them for the educational portion of their residential property tax, beginning July 1 this year. This would mean an average annual net saving of \$475 for each senior household. In total, 945,000 senior households will benefit from approximately \$450

million in tax relief—a very significant benefit for our seniors, and well deserved.

I would like to be clear that this additional property tax relief to seniors does not in any way diminish or impact or affect funding for public education in this province, as our critics across the way have tried to portray, and to cause seniors to question the relief they would be provided through this legislation if it were passed. In the 2003 budget, for example, we have committed almost \$2 billion more to our public education system by 2005-06. That is the most ever spent for public education in Ontario, important investments that the Minister of Education will be using to improve our schools, to improve how our children learn, to improve the outcomes of our public education system.

This bill would also provide relief over and above what is now offered by the existing Ontario tax credits program, which includes a combined property tax and sales tax credit for low- and moderate-income seniors. I think we need to be clear about that, because the critics across the way again are attempting to confuse seniors about what this means.

To qualify for their credit, senior owners or renters will apply once a year. Of course, if this legislation is passed, information will be available for our seniors on how they can do this, much like application programs that have existed before and continue to exist in other programs.

I would encourage all members of this House to support this legislation. I know we were very distressed on this side to see that the Liberals voted against this tax relief for seniors here today. We can only hope that when they've had an opportunity to read the bill, to talk to seniors in their community, they might well wish to revise their position.

The 2003 budget also included other initiatives which support our seniors, some of which are included in the second piece of legislation I have introduced today, The Right Choices Act. As we announced in the budget, we propose to exempt certain types of life leases from land transfer tax. Life leases are a unique form of seniors' housing where seniors receive the exclusive right to occupy a residential unit for life in return for an upfront payment and monthly maintenance fees. Life leases that are sponsored by registered charities or non-profit organizations would be exempt from land transfer tax. We expect this measure to provide average savings of approximately \$1,500 per unit.

The Right Choices Act also includes proposals to improve tax credits for people with disabilities and for family caregivers. We estimate that this increased tax support would provide average savings of about \$300 each to 165,000 family caregivers and people with disabilities in this province.

We recognize on this side of the House that the leader of the official opposition does not agree with tax relief, and he and the Liberal Party have pledged to cancel this relief for seniors. They do not appreciate that it is tax relief for individuals, for our business community, that has helped support Ontario's strong economic growth,

and we've certainly seen that track record in the last eight years. They also must not understand the contribution of seniors to our economy and to the strength of this province.

1430

Our overall programs of tax cuts for individual taxpayers and for business have helped to strengthen the province's economy for everyone, including seniors, by creating more than one million new jobs, by paying down \$5 billion on the provincial debt, by presenting our fifth consecutive balanced budget and by propelling Ontario to the forefront of G7 nations in terms of economic growth.

The proposed Right Choices Act takes further steps to ensure this successful economic plan continues.

It proposes to reduce taxes further for taxpayers with low to moderate incomes—modest-income taxpayers, who can be removed entirely from the Ontario income tax rolls, where they do not have to pay Ontario income tax. Many, unfortunately, still have to pay federal tax, but we are relieving them from the obligation of paying Ontario income tax—important support for modest-income Ontarians.

It proposes to remove the surtax for those taxpayers making \$75,000 or less—again, an important support for individuals who many times provide the managerial and entrepreneurial, creative and innovative spirit in so many of our organizations and companies across the province.

It proposes to enrich the Ontario child care supplement for working families, thereby helping 350,000 children and over 220,000 families—again, tax relief that is very broad-based, that will help many Ontario families.

The bill would also provide further tax relief to business by reducing the capital tax by 10% by January 1, 2004. What we heard very clearly was that the capital tax was a tax that discourages investment in this province, that kills jobs in this province. We do not want to let that happen.

Another important component of the proposals in this legislation is that businesses who do not pay their taxes in a timely fashion will face serious consequences under the bill's proposals if they do not do that. I think that for taxpayers to see our system as being fair, as being accountable, these also will be important changes that I hope the opposition will support.

The proposed legislation also includes measures to further promote electricity self-sufficiency, the use of alternative fuels and also to encourage the production of clean, renewable energy here in the province.

The bill proposes changes to the Retail Sales Tax Act's purchase exemption certificate system. This will reduce the red tape and the compliance costs for vendors and taxpayers when claiming an exemption from RST on their purchases. One of the important groups that will benefit from that are Ontario farmers.

We are also proposing a new act in this legislation, the Trust Beneficiaries Liability Act, which will clarify that investors in publicly traded trusts would not be liable for the activities of the trust or the trustees.

The Ontario Home Property Tax Relief for Seniors Act and the Right Choices Act that we've introduced

today both continue our successful economic plan for Ontario. It is a plan that is working to create more jobs, more growth, more prosperity for this province. It is a plan that needs to continue. I would urge all members of this House to support these important bills.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I would say to the public, take this with a grain of salt. I use as evidence, Minister, that the last time you ran, in 1999, you made these promises. You said, "We'll cut the provincial portion of residential property tax by 20% over our next term. This tax cut will put \$500 million into the hands of"—you didn't do it, Minister. I know you may leave now, but you broke that promise. You said publicly, "We're not going ahead with that. We're sorry. That promise is gone." I say to the public, take it with a grain of salt.

I realize the minister may not want to hear this. It was just a year ago that the minister got up here in the Legislature and cut \$1.5 billion of planned tax cuts—just simply cancelled them. In their own justification, I say to the public, how did they justify cancelling \$1.5 billion of tax cuts? This is what they said, "Questions and answers": "How can the government justify breaking the Taxpayer Protection Act?" Well, to meet the target of a balanced budget, the government scheduled—

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: Yes, you had to cancel the tax cuts. The public should listen to this. They acknowledge they simply broke the Taxpayer Protection Act, cancelled \$1.5 billion of tax cuts.

You make these promises that you don't keep. You make promises that you can't keep. I quote those two to the public. The last election, "Oh, we're going to cut the residential education property tax," and then you didn't do it. Then you promised you were going to cut taxes by \$1.5 billion. You simply didn't do it. Not only that, there was a law that requires you to do it. What did you do? "Oh, we'll simply break the law. We'll come in here and amend the law." I say to the public, take this with a grain of salt. These are just like the promises they made in 1999 and just like the promises they broke when they broke the Taxpayer Protection Act.

I say to the public, the minister just said, "We're getting rid of something called the fair share health levy." I remember when Mr Eves first got elected, one of the big promises was, "We're going to have something called a fair share health levy. That will make sure that we properly fund health care." What's the minister doing? Cancelling that fair share health levy.

Interjections.

Mr Phillips: There they go applauding again. The public should realize that when they got elected, they promised they would fund health care with a fair share health levy. It's gone. This bill takes out the fair share health levy. I say this to the public: they promised a 20% cut in residential education property tax to everyone. That's how you got elected. Think about that, folks. But now you've broken that promise. Part of the real platform of the Conservatives was this Taxpayer Protection Act, and you just simply abandoned it.

I would say to the public, have no confidence in these promises. They will be just like they made in 1999.

I would also say to the public that what Mr Eves is talking about is having corporate income taxes 25% lower than our competitors in the US. I say, why? In Ontario, we fund health care in a certain way that saves the average manufacturer, the average company, \$2,500 per employee. But we also want to have corporate taxes 25% lower. It can't be done, folks. The proof of the pudding for the public is that you had to abandon the Taxpayer Protection Act. You couldn't afford the tax cuts you promised before, and you can't afford the tax cuts you're promising now.

My final point is on the seniors. Recognize this: the richer you are, the more you get directly in proportion to the value of your house. People with a \$1-million house are going to get 10 times what somebody with an average \$100,000 house is going to get. It is a gift to the rich, to the best-off. Believe me, it will come out of education funding. The seniors in my area understand the importance of education. I say that this is, without a doubt, an attempt to buy the votes of the most well-off in Ontario at the expense of our education system, at the expense of the quality of life in Ontario. You can't trust what Mr Eves is promising.

1440

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): This government today speaks but to the smallest of percentages, those very wealthiest of seniors, just like it spoke to Frank Stronach a month ago up at Magna Corp when it announced its contemptuous bogus budget up at Frank Stronach's Magna auto parts manufacturing. In that announcement that day, Frank Stronach—what was his income last year? His personal income was some \$56 million, \$57 million or \$58 million. This government gave Frank Stronach a \$3.5-million tax cut.

Today it's announcing that Frank Stronach, with his \$10-million mansion, like the feudal overlord looking down at his empire, is now going to be subsidized by hard-working taxpayers in this province by virtue of property taxes being paid—\$10,000, \$20,000 or \$30,000. Today Frank Stronach got a \$30,000 cut on the property taxes on his \$10-million mansion.

This government today announces yet more corporate tax cuts. If this government really wanted to address seniors and talk about seniors, it would be announcing today full funding for home care services. Every one of us in our ridings and in our constituency offices has an unceasing series of phone calls from families whose folks are left alone in their homes, with diminishing numbers and diminishing hours of home care, folks who are literally left unwashed, unbathed, unshaven and unfed because this government has gutted home care services here in Ontario.

Where we come from, the seniors who need help are the seniors who are being denied home care services by this government. Where we come from, the seniors who need help are the seniors who need full coverage for treatment for macular degeneration. Where we come

from, the seniors who need help are seniors who need those pharmaceuticals relisted, in contrast to the aggressive delisting of drugs, so that they don't have to pay out of pocket for drugs that keep them alive, keep them mobile and keep them travelling.

Seniors like Sheila Volchert, grandparents raising their grandchildren, need direct financial help to enable them to do the important jobs they are doing.

You want to help seniors? Stop downloading on to municipalities.

You want to help seniors? Abandon and reverse your agenda of the privatization and deregulation of Ontario Hydro, because the most aggressive attack on seniors in the last 12 months was the one orchestrated by this government when it drove seniors' electricity costs through the roof. Taxpayers, including seniors, are now subsidizing your phoney cap already to the point of \$1.5 billion, and the number is going to increase.

You want to help seniors? Get more nurses into our hospitals, so that so many of those patients who are seniors can receive the care they deserve. I was at Hotel Dieu just two weeks ago in St Catharines, the beginning of nurses' week. Hotel Dieu Hospital in St Catharines is still laying off nurses because of the fiscal restraints you placed them under.

You want to help seniors? Ensure we have real rent control here in the province of Ontario.

You want to help seniors? Ensure that our folks, who worked so hard building things like public education and public health care—ensure you don't rob them of what they built and the legacy they've left to subsequent generations.

You want to help seniors? Abandon your agenda of privatization, with new user fees every day of the week that do a direct attack on seniors.

You want to help seniors? Don't tell them they have to keep working beyond the age of 65, but adopt the NDP pension reform legislation proposals that would ensure every worker in this province is a part of a defined benefit pension plan, one that vests immediately, and one that's indexed.

You want to help seniors? Start talking to the injured workers in this province, so many of whom are rapidly aging, who are suffering as a result of this government's attack on injured workers.

You want to help seniors? Ensure their grandchildren can attend university without exorbitant tuition rates of \$10,000, \$15,000, \$20,000, \$21,000 and \$25,000 a year, so that those seniors can watch their grandchildren graduate from university and colleges.

You want to help seniors? Show some regard for the tremendous contribution of seniors to the development of public services in this province over the course of so many decades and generations.

This is an attack on mainstream seniors in this province, it's an insult to them, and it's yet another favour to your wealthiest of friends.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Just before we continue, I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 69(b), the House leader of the third party, the member for Niagara Centre, has notified the Clerk of his intention to file notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 28, An Act to resolve a labour dispute between the Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association and the Toronto Catholic District School Board and to amend the Education Act and the Provincial Schools Negotiations Act. The order for second reading may therefore not be called today.

Just before we begin, on a point of order, the member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Trinity-Spadina): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would ask unanimous consent to pass second and third reading of Bill 31, An Act to ensure the preservation of the site of Toronto's first Parliament buildings.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

DEFERRED VOTES

THRONE SPEECH DEBATE

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): We now have a deferred vote on the amendment to the amendment to the motion for an address in reply to the speech of His Honour the Lieutenant Governor at the opening of the session.

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

The division bells rang from 1446 to 1451.

The Speaker: Mr Hampton has moved that the amendment to the motion be amended by striking out all words after "Whereas Ontarians" and substituting the following:

"have felt the impact of bad Conservative privatization policies where it hurts—in the pocketbook;"—

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): Dispense.

The Speaker: Dispense? Agreed?

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): No, I think you should read it.

The Speaker: OK.

"Whereas the Conservatives ignore evidence from around the world that privatization of public necessities—such as water, hydro, health, education—doesn't work and costs more;

"Whereas Ontarians are looking for practical solutions that would:

"Stop hydro privatization and deregulation and ensure clean, reliable public power at cost.

"Extend public home care, create 100 new community health centres and cut long-term-care user fees. Cancel plans for private MRI/CT clinics and privately built hospitals and put funds back into public health care.

"Keep our drinking water public and protect water from source to tap.

"Ensure every student has the opportunity to excel, guaranteed by a dedicated education excellence fund that takes the politics out of education funding. No public funds for private schools.

"Immediately increase the minimum wage to \$8 an hour, prohibit scabs and treat injured workers fairly.

"Freeze rents for two years, build at least 32,000 units of affordable housing and increase shelter allowances.

"Cut tuition by 10% and ensure that no student is denied a quality education or training for financial reasons.

"Lower transit fares, shorten waits and reduce gridlock with a dedicated transportation trust fund.

"Reduce child care fees to \$10 a day for 18-month-olds to five-year-olds in non-profit, regulated child care and create 20,000 new child care spaces.

"Protect your pension from inflation and let you take it with you from job to job.

"Therefore, this House endorses an agenda of public power."

All those in favour of Mr Hampton's amendment to the amendment to the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Christopherson, David	Marchese, Rosario	Prue, Michael
Churley, Marilyn	Martel, Shelley	
Kormos, Peter	Martin, Tony	

The Speaker: Those opposed to the amendment to the amendment to the motion will please rise.

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Galt, Doug	Newman, Dan
Arnott, Ted	Gilchrist, Steve	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Gill, Raminder	Peters, Steve
Bartolucci, Rick	Gravelle, Michael	Phillips, Gerry
Bountrogianni, Marie	Guzzo, Garry J.	Pupatello, Sandra
Bradley, James J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Runciman, Robert W.
Caplan, David	Hudak, Tim	Ruprecht, Tony
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Cleary, John C.	Johnson, Bert	Sergio, Mario
Clement, Tony	Kennedy, Gerard	Smitherman, George
Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Spina, Joseph
Colle, Mike	Kwinter, Monte	Sterling, Norman W.
Cordiano, Joseph	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
Crozier, Bruce	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Cunningham, Dianne	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
DeFaria, Carl	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Di Cocco, Caroline	McDonald, AL	Turnbull, David
Duncan, Dwight	McLeod, Lyn	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Dunlop, Garfield	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Ecker, Janet	Molinari, Tina R.	Witmer, Elizabeth
Elliott, Brenda	Munro, Julia	Wood, Bob
Flaherty, Jim	Mushinski, Marilyn	Young, David

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 7; the nays are 66.

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the amendment to the motion lost.

We will now deal with Mr McGuinty's motion, that the address in reply to the speech of His Honour the

Lieutenant Governor at the opening of this session be amended by striking out all the words after, "We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario," and substituting the following:

"Whereas Ontarians want a real and positive change;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will fix the vital public services that we all need, while keeping the budget in balance and holding the line on taxes;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will cancel the \$3.2-billion tax giveaway to large corporations and put that money toward improved health care, with more doctors and nurses and shorter waiting lists;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will cancel the private school tax credit and put that money back into improving our public schools through smaller class sizes;

"Whereas Ontarians want a government that will end taxpayer-funded, self-serving partisan advertising and put that money toward improving our water quality monitoring system and improving our air by closing coal-fired plants and mandating cleaner gasoline;

"Whereas the speech from the throne proved that the Eves government has been dithering, continues to support two-tier health care, private school tax credits, giveaways to large corporations, taxpayer-funded self-serving advertising and compromised environmental protection;

"Therefore, this House profoundly regrets that nothing has changed. The Eves government is tired, cynical, out of touch, out of steam and out of ideas, and instead of providing the real and positive change Ontarians demand, are only looking out for themselves and their friends."

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1458 to 1503.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr McGuinty's amendment to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cleary, John C.	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Clark, Brad	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clement, Tony	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph

Coburn, Brian	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Cunningham, Dianne	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, David

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 29; the nays are 45.

The Speaker: I declare the amendment to the motion lost.

Mr Dunlop has moved that a humble address be presented to His Honour the Lieutenant Governor as follows:

"To the Honourable James K. Bartleman, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario:

"We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario now assembled, beg leave to thank your Honour for the gracious speech your Honour has addressed to us."

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

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1507 to 1512.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Dunlop's motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Hudak, Tim	Runciman, Robert W.
Barrett, Toby	Johns, Helen	Sampson, Rob
Clark, Brad	Johnson, Bert	Spina, Joseph
Clement, Tony	Klees, Frank	Sterling, Norman W.
Coburn, Brian	Marland, Margaret	Stewart, R. Gary
DeFaria, Carl	Martiniuk, Gerry	Stockwell, Chris
Dunlop, Garfield	Maves, Bart	Tascona, Joseph N.
Ecker, Janet	Mazzilli, Frank	Tsubouchi, David H.
Elliott, Brenda	McDonald, AL	Turnbull, David
Flaherty, Jim	Miller, Norm	Wettlaufer, Wayne
Galt, Doug	Molinari, Tina R.	Wilson, Jim
Gilchrist, Steve	Munro, Julia	Witmer, Elizabeth
Gill, Raminder	Mushinski, Marilyn	Wood, Bob
Guzzo, Garry J.	Newman, Dan	Young, David
Hardeman, Ernie	Ouellette, Jerry J.	

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

Nays

Agostino, Dominic	Cordiano, Joseph	Martin, Tony
Bartolucci, Rick	Crozier, Bruce	McLeod, Lyn
Bountrogianni, Marie	Di Cocco, Caroline	Peters, Steve
Bradley, James J.	Duncan, Dwight	Phillips, Gerry
Bryant, Michael	Gravelle, Michael	Prue, Michael
Caplan, David	Kennedy, Gerard	Pupatello, Sandra
Christopherson, David	Kormos, Peter	Ruprecht, Tony
Churley, Marilyn	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Cleary, John C.	Marchese, Rosario	Smitherman, George
Colle, Mike	Martel, Shelley	

Clerk of the House: The ayes are 44; the nays are 29.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

VISITOR

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I know the assembly would want to welcome my constituent Mally Katrycz, whose son Charles is doing yeoman duty here as one of this term's pages.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): I would just like to mention to all the members—and I'm sure they're aware of it—that this is the last day for this fine group of pages. I'm sure all members would like to thank this wonderful group of young people who have served us well. And to all the parents who may be watching, you can be very proud of the fine young men and women who are up here representing us very well. We thank all of them.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr Gerard Kennedy (Parkdale-High Park): I have a question for the Minister of Education. You have taken millions out of your budget for classrooms to purchase expensive television ads in recent weeks and months. In one of those ads, you allege that \$250 million had been sent to children with special needs in schools, and you swamped the airwaves. Many of the parents who saw that knew it didn't square with the situation of them and their families and they wrote to Advertising Standards Canada, the industry regulator. The industry regulator reviewed your commercial and found that it contravened their standards. They say you have spent millions of taxpayers' dollars to make an inaccurate claim.

Parents like Gayle Stuart believe the \$50 million that was clawed back, which wasn't talked about in that commercial, is astronomical when it comes to the services their children are missing.

Minister, will you apologize for authorizing these misleading commercials and will you pull all your ads and put the money they cost back into the badly needed services students require instead? Will you do that, Minister?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Deputy Premier, Minister of Education): It's rather interesting that the member opposite has all this information. I can certainly tell him that any of the recent ads that were run by the government were accurate. They stated that \$250 million had been made available for special education funding. They also said that \$250 million more in funding is available for special education, effective this school year, in order that the children who need special help can get it. It also indicated that in December 2002, our government announced that we would be increasing the funding on an annual basis to \$250 million. As the member knows, as a result the money has flowed to school boards as the

school boards requested in accordance with the ISA process.

Mr Kennedy: The minister has been found out. She made promises, the Premier made promises, their ads made promises, but they've been caught. An objective body says it carefully reviewed the complaint, the commercial and the response of the advertisers—presumably the information the minister gave today—and found there was inaccurate information being put forward by the government. So, Minister, you used inaccurate information in your ads, and worse, you waited until it was politically convenient to announce money for some of the most-in-need children in this province, children like nine-year-old Jesse at Humbercrest school in my riding, who is waiting today for a properly trained education assistant because you cut the amount of money that went to the Toronto board. You had applications for kids in wheelchairs, for kids who have been waiting for months. You said it was coming. The ad standards council independently has found that you didn't. Minister, will you cancel the ad and put the money back in services so kids like Jesse can get help?

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member knows full well that the government has indicated we would be providing \$250 million to those students who have special needs. He also knows that what happens is that for these individual students who require help, applications are made for funding. He also knows that our government has indicated we would be prepared to flow \$250 million. In fact next year, if there are more claims, the number could well be more; it could be less. The reality is that this funding, ladies and gentlemen, is based on the actual claims that are submitted. So everything in the ad was accurate. I'd like the member to know that the ministry will be appealing the decision based on—

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

1520

Mr Kennedy: Just as you've had a chance, your ministry had a chance to present the facts. I had a briefing from your ministry and they confirmed that you've only distributed a portion of this money, that you clawed back \$50 million. Your own ministry, in a briefing with your staff present, confirmed that.

There are children all around this province who have had fewer services offered to them—people like Barb Lee, who lives in the Kawartha-Pine Ridge area, who has two children who can't get speech pathology, who have syndromes that have been identified, who are waiting for services. Weeks and months are ticking by because you have other uses for the money that should go to their services.

You put an ad on the airwaves. You approved it. You took the money out of your budget for classrooms and you said it's more important to have pre-election ads. That's bad enough, but when you're found out, when you're caught by an independent body that the ads you put on the air are inaccurate, you should stand in this House and apologize to those families. You should

withdraw all your ads because they're all suspect, they're all wrong and they shouldn't be on the air.

Hon Mrs Witmer: The member opposite is making some very serious allegations. I would say to the member opposite that in his press release, he states that the ads repeated a claim made by the Premier and minister that \$250 million was distributed. He knows that is wrong. He talks about \$50 million being clawed back. He talks about lying—very serious allegations. The member knows full well that all the eligible claims that have been submitted have been funded. He obviously does not understand how the ISA process works. It works in response to the claims by school boards that are submitted. As the claims are submitted, the funding flows. So it will vary—

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

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex): My question is also for the Deputy Premier. Your government has spent some 600,000 taxpayer dollars to run a 30-page brochure in Maclean's magazine and other media, singing the praises of the Tories. Here on page 9 is a glowing tribute from Roger and Terry Lavergne: "Roger has been a resident since the facility opened in 2001. 'They look after me very well,' he says."

Interjection.

Mr Crozier: I knew you'd react that way because you don't know their whole story. This also is about inaccurate advertising. I spoke with the Lavergnes, even before this ad was out, because his wife had written to me. They have a very different opinion today. Here is what Terry Lavergne wrote to me. She said, "Since that interview, staff has been cut twice. We've been told to expect more cuts in October.... There are nails coming through the floor tiles, large holes in the wall. He just gets one bath per week."

I quote further, "Over the year that my husband has lived at Extencicare, our opinion of this brand new facility has changed drastically. I am very, very unhappy to have given any positive publicity to this abysmal situation."

Why have you betrayed Mr and Mrs Lavergne?

Hon Mrs Witmer: I will refer that to the Chair of Management Board.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): What I will say is this: we brought in standards for the very first time. Neither the Liberals nor the NDP found it necessary to adopt any type of policies to define the difference between partisan advertising and government advertising. We did, for the very first time.

Based on the recommendations from the auditor, we felt it was very important for us to define what's considered advertising, to define what is partisan material and to clearly describe the rules that must be taken for procurement of these contracts. So for the very first time, we brought in rules that define advertising. These folks over there never had it, so they really ran roughshod whenever they were in government.

We believe it's important to have that accountability, and for the very first time, we actually do.

Mr Crozier: Speaking of accountability, I would hope you would answer the question and direct it to the Lavergnes, who are very concerned.

Your waste of taxpayer dollars on partisan ads, in my view, is simply terrible. But the betrayal of Mr and Mrs Lavergne is utterly disgusting.

Here's more of what Terry Lavergne wrote: "If I had known that the interview my husband and I gave about Extencicare long-term care last year would be published in Macleans, I would never have given it.

"At the time of the interview, I was trying to work within the health care system of long-term care, but today, I have completely given up in disgust."

I quote further: "I presume that the Ontario government paid Macleans magazine for all those pages of advertising disguised as reports. The money would have been better spent hiring more health care workers." And I couldn't agree with her more.

Why is it that you'll simply say anything, you'll do anything, just to get re-elected, instead of helping these people?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I just explained the actual process of what had occurred, the fact that we finally brought in some accountability rules, which of course were never evident during either the Liberal or the NDP times. Frankly, with respect to any particulars dealing with various ministries, they really should be referred to that particular ministry. I'll talk about the process.

Now, if you want to talk about partisan advertising, which I assume is what the member is getting to, there are a number of instances here that I can point out. For example, here's a wonderful one. It's beautiful. It's not in colour; unfortunately, I don't have it in colour. It says, "Ministry of Natural Resources committed to forestry research." It's a tremendous piece. Of course it features the then minister at the time, Lyn McLeod.

There are a number of these examples that I have here. I have a coloured one, and that's your colleague who's sitting next to you. That's James Bradley. This is in colour.

This is a really interesting one. This is in both English and Chinese. That's the Minister of Citizenship, Gerry Phillips. At least Alvin didn't include his picture—

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

Mr Crozier: You know what, Minister? This isn't about the advertising and how you should go about it and what's partisan; it's about using somebody to benefit yourselves. You're wasting 50 million taxpayers' dollars on partisan advertising like this. Every dollar that you spend on partisan advertising is a dollar less in the classroom, a dollar less for waste inspectors, a dollar less for home care and care for the long-term ill.

I'm confident that we will, in fact, now that you've mentioned us, implement Dalton McGuinty's bill to ban self-promotional government partisan advertising, and that goes beyond politics.

Deputy Premier, I think that you owe—

Interjections.

Mr Crozier: Just wait a second. I'm only asking for something small here, but it'll count. I think that you owe Roger Lavergne and his wife, Terry, an apology. Your government cynically exploited these people, and those were her words. They were promised quality care that was never delivered. They were promised dignity, and you've robbed them of that. Will you at the very least apologize to the Lavergnes?

The Speaker: The member's time is up. Minister?

1530

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: It's just quite amazing how these questions tend to evolve as the answers are supplied. Originally, the point the member was trying to make was partisan advertising. Clearly, when I held up examples of partisan advertising when they were in government, they didn't like that. Now the question has kind of shifted, so let me bring some more context here, if I could. If we look at advertising in general, the average amount of spending on advertising, adjusted for inflation, for the Liberals annually was \$80.1 million; for the NDP, the average yearly spending was \$70.1 million; and for the Tories, \$63.9 million.

Having said that, sometimes the Liberals don't recognize advertising as advertising. When Greg Sorbara was the labour minister and he was confronted with advertising, he said it wasn't advertising, it was an information clip. So advertising is not even advertising to you guys.

WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): My question is for the Deputy Premier. I want to talk to you today about safe drinking water and safe food on this, the third anniversary of the Walkerton tragedy. The Toronto Star recently revealed that there were 533 bad water reports from drinking water systems throughout Ontario last year. The environment ministry reports 40% of water systems in Ontario are out of compliance. Yet you have not spent the over \$200 million that you allocated for sewer and water projects—over \$200 million, Minister.

I want to ask you: on this, the third anniversary of Walkerton, why in God's name have you left so many municipalities with dangerous water systems in this province?

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

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Let's be clear about the bad water reporting. First of all, this is not a new phenomenon. In the past number of years, there have often been bad water reports, boil-water alerts and so on that have taken place in the province of Ontario. What we are doing is testing more often and discovering bad water reports more often, which is a good thing. It's a good thing to first establish what the problem is and make sure that the water you're providing the taxpayers and resi-

dents of this province is in fact clean. I am alarmed whenever we get a bad water report, but I also feel a comfort level in knowing that we're testing more often than any administration did in the past and we're discovering bad water alerts where possibly they wouldn't have been discovered in the past.

With respect to investments, my friend across the floor, you should know that we have committed to invest \$750 million in clean, safe drinking water. In fact, we have spent or committed more than \$1.2 billion for safe drinking water and sewer and water initiatives. I have met with AMO; I have met with the officials in the provincial ministry. We have worked with them to develop these pieces of legislation, endorsed by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. I think we've done a bang-up job. Rather than ask that question, you should be applauding us.

Ms Churley: The minister is saying they're doing the testing. What they're finding out is that there are bad water reports, and they're not doing anything about it. I wouldn't applaud for that.

There have been over 500 boil-water orders over the past year in this province. You have failed to fulfil the recommendations of the Walkerton inquiry. You have completed only 16 of 121 recommendations, by your own admission, Minister. Worse, we have obtained a copy of a cabinet document showing that you may delay until 2016 implementing the nutrient management regulations for 97% of farms. That's 16 years after the Walkerton tragedy. We know that farmers are working hard to protect the waterways, but delaying these rules for so long opens the door to more hog factories and potential contamination of our water.

Minister, will you agree today to pass my Ontario Drinking Water Source Protection Act so our drinking water is protected in this province?

Hon Mr Stockwell: First of all, that bill that you introduced, and the previous bill, were so flimsy; they're so inadequate. I had to redraft that thing. We had to work on that and put some meat on those bones so we could actually put something in place that was legitimate.

As far as the O'Connor report is concerned, we've implemented a lot of the O'Connor report; 60 or 70 recommendations have been implemented. But do you want to know what recommendations I'm most proud of? I'm most proud of the fact that we refused to grandfather operators of filtration systems. Do you know why? Because you grandfathered those folks and you allowed the Koebel brothers to operate in this province. We changed that. That's what I'm most proud of, that people like the Koebel brothers will never operate in the province of Ontario again.

Ms Churley: What disingenuous piffle. That's absolute nonsense. We're discussing the third anniversary of Walkerton here and you stand up with that kind of nonsense. The people of Ontario just heard how many systems are not operating cleanly in this province and you stand up with that nonsense.

I want to know why the minister has not spent that \$200 million that was specifically set aside to fix danger-

ous water systems in this province so we will not have another Walkerton. That is what this is all about.

Hon Mr Stockwell: I take great exception to the “piffle” comment. I think this government has moved swiftly, accurately and has spent a significant amount of money on the O’Connor report. I think we have worked very hard to implement the O’Connor report. I think it was a tragedy in Walkerton. We all know the tragedy in Walkerton took place, and we’re working to ensure it doesn’t happen again.

We also all know that the tragedy in Walkerton had many components, and many administrations were involved in those components. I will say this: I haven’t wasted my breath spending time going back over previous administrations. We all have responsibilities. We are working to put a better water system in this province: we have spent money, we have invested time, we have passed legislation, and we have committed to the people of this province that we will have the cleanest water in the world. I will add, which is significant to me, that we have done this over the protests and obstructionist tactics of the opposition. We’re proud of our record, and we do have the cleanest water in the world.

WEST NILE VIRUS

Ms Shelley Martel (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. At a briefing this morning, you were asked what you are doing to prepare doctors and nurses to deal with West Nile. Frankly, the answer that was given was completely inadequate. Family doctors, nurses and hospitals should all have information and directives in their hands now telling them what symptoms they should be on active alert for, when those symptoms should be reported and to whom. In conversations we’ve had with family doctors, infectious disease experts and chiefs of microbiology at hospitals in both Toronto and Ottawa, it’s clear that no one has received any directives or protocols from your ministry regarding West Nile. What are you waiting for, Minister, the outbreak to actually occur?

Hon Tony Clement (Minister of Health and Long-Term Care): That’s just not true. This virus has been in this province for the last two years. There have certainly been a lot of occasions when information about symptoms and treatment has been shared with family physicians, public health authorities and our hospitals. Many hospitals already have experience treating the West Nile virus, unfortunately, but factually that is true. Certainly all the information we have available and all the information that is clinically available is shared.

Ms Martel: I repeat that the family doctors, the infectious disease experts and the chiefs of microbiology in hospitals in both Ottawa and Toronto with whom we spoke today confirm they have not received one protocol or directive from you regarding how to deal with West Nile. This is important, because we know that yesterday a dead crow infected with West Nile was reported in Ottawa. That means human infection is, regrettably, not far behind.

Last year, health care providers were told to look out for encephalitis-like symptoms that might mean West Nile. This year, they should be told to be on active alert for fever and rash, for symptoms similar to polio or for viral meningitis, but no one we have spoken to in hospitals or family doctor practices have said they received any protocol or directive from your ministry on what to look for, what to be on active alert for, whom to report to or what to do after that.

Minister, I say to you, it’s your responsibility to be preparing health care providers for West Nile. When are you going to do that?

1540

Hon Mr Clement: Two things. First of all, she asked them about protocols. She should know that protocols are only a function of a provincial emergency situation, so if you ask them specifically about protocols, the answer is going to be no, because there is no provincial emergency. If the honourable member thinks it is the Minister of Health’s responsibility to tell doctors how to be doctors and to tell nurses how to be nurses, perhaps that would be the way it would work under an NDP government, but we on this side of the House have confidence in our doctors, confidence in our nurses, confidence in their education and confidence in their training. We know they will do the job for the people of Ontario.

WALKERTON TRAGEDY

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Attorney General. Minister, three years ago this week the town of Walkerton was in agony. In Walkerton, the people’s stomachs were twisted with pain, their children were growing weak and dehydrated, and they were drinking more of the water that made them sick. The people of Walkerton expected the system to protect them, but it failed.

Three years later, the system is failing those families again. Every adult in Walkerton got \$6,000 in compensation after the tragedy, but people suffering to this very day from the E coli they drank are still waiting for the rest of the compensation they were promised. For these people the disaster didn’t end with the raising of the well-water advisory or the reports from Justice O’Connor. It is with them every day.

Your predecessor, Jim Flaherty, said the following: “This is about doing the right thing. Obviously, it’s going to take millions of dollars, but we’re going to do what it takes.” Minister, why are the people of Walkerton still waiting for the full and adequate compensation promised to them to overcome their illnesses?

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): Under the settlement, a court oversees the operation of the plan, including the activities of the administrator, the mediators and the arbitrators. That independent court has appointed a claims adjusting firm, Crawford Adjusters Canada, who are taking care of the claims on a one-by-one basis and are working through them. According to the adjusters,

more than \$15 million had been issued in stage 1 claims as of the end of April of this year. Stage 1 refers to a minimum payment of \$2,000. More than 9,000 applicants have been approved for stage 1. Those individuals who believe their losses exceeded the \$2,000 minimum can apply for stage 2. Stage 2 payments will vary according to the type of compensation claimed. Crawford's records as of April 28, 2003, indicate the payment for stage 2 claims averages about \$2,100 per person for minor illness.

We're working on it. We'll continue to work on it.

Mr Bradley: Minister, there are people in Walkerton who have suffered from irritable bowel syndrome every day for the past three years. Their colon will spasm or block up. They are in pain. Others suffer from reactive arthritis from the E coli. Their joints are stiff and painful. It can also make the eyes light-sensitive. In arbitration, people with irritable bowel syndrome or reactive arthritis are being told \$3,000 will cover their three years of suffering—\$3,000 to help them live with a condition that could continue to plague them for the rest of their lives.

Minister, the people of Walkerton suffered horribly three years ago. Many of them are still suffering today. This pittance in compensation is an insult, many of them believe. Premier Harris said, "The people of Walkerton should not have to go to court to get the help they need. The important thing is to get money in their hands promptly. We can sort out the legal issues later." Minister, when will you ensure that the people of Walkerton don't have to come begging for compensation to your government, the compensation Premier Harris promised them?

Hon Mr Sterling: It should be noted, first of all, that this compensation plan was offered to all the people of Walkerton without any hesitation by the government of Ontario. Secondly, as the member who is questioning points out, the individual situation from person to person, from household to household, differs greatly, depending upon whatever sickness those people would have suffered. Therefore, it's necessary to go through those particular claims—and there are many of them, as I said in my previous answer—on a one-by-one basis, making certain that those people who suffered the greatest received the greatest compensation.

To date, we have paid out more than \$21 million in stage 2 payments, as well as the \$15 million that we have paid out in stage 1. This government has been most generous with regard to compensating the people of Walkerton for this terrible tragedy.

DRINKING AND DRIVING

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth-Middlesex): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, last weekend was Victoria Day weekend, and police across the province were on the lookout for drunk drivers and other offenders. In fact, in my hometown of north Perth in Listowel, a driver was charged with impaired driving and driving a motor vehicle with open liquor, among other

things. I believe all residents are very lucky that this driver was stopped before he caused an accident, because he was pulled over after being clocked doing 156 kilometres in an 80 zone.

Despite the well-known dangers of impaired driving, there are still those who drink, get behind the wheel and drive—a deadly combination.

Minister, we know that drinking and driving is unacceptable. How will your ministry ensure that this message gets through to everyone?

Hon Frank Klees (Minister of Transportation): I thank the honourable member for his question. I'm pleased to report to this House and to the people of Ontario that this government has done more to fight drinking and driving than any other government in the history of Ontario.

Since 1995, fatalities from drinking and driving have actually been reduced by 25%, that in face of the fact that there are thousands more vehicles and thousands more drivers in the province. But there's much more to be done. Two hundred and four people lost their lives in 2001 through drinking and driving. That's unacceptable.

So this past Victoria Day weekend, I joined with the Premier to announce that we would be introducing legislation soon that, if passed, will result in even stiffer penalties against drinking and driving in this province, lifetime suspensions for all second-time drinking and driving offences, as well as impoundment of vehicles for those caught drinking and driving.

In this game, in this province, two strikes and you're out. That's the message we want to send: you don't drink and drive in the province of Ontario.

Mr Johnson: I thank the minister for his response. It's reassuring to know that the government is committed to wiping out drinking and driving and that new, tougher legislation is forthcoming. I do commend all groups for their dedication, hard work and contribution in getting the message across that drinking and driving is unacceptable, especially our police officers and Mothers Against Drunk Driving, MADD.

However, despite stricter penalties and higher fines, there are still those who continue to drink and drive. Minister, I want you to stand in your place today and tell me what actions your ministry is taking now to remove these criminals from our roads and, to the extent possible, prevent them from driving drunk again and eliminate the tragedy to many victims' families of impaired driving.

Hon Mr Klees: I'm glad to respond to that. In addition to tough penalties and the highest fines in North America, we introduced the ignition interlock system, mandatory in cars for individuals who have in fact been convicted of drinking and driving. I would remind members of the House that this valuable initiative resulted from legislation brought forward by the member for Simcoe North. Last December, the first ignition interlock service centres opened in Ottawa, Toronto, Scarborough, London, Sudbury, Thunder Bay and Mississauga. We continue to expand this program throughout Ontario. Seven new facilities have now been opened in Barrie,

Kitchener, Chatham, St Catharines, Kingston, Peterborough and Etobicoke.

We're going to continue to work with our road safety partners. We want to get the message across very clearly that drinking and driving does not mix in the province of Ontario.

I might add that not only is it drinking alcohol but it's doing drugs which also causes impaired driving. Shame on the federal government for considering introducing a law that would legalize marijuana in this province. It's absolutely inappropriate.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I move unanimous consent that this House sit through the weekend to consider the back-to-work legislation for the Catholic separate school board in Toronto and that we debate it.

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): Is there unanimous consent? I'm afraid I heard some noes.

1550

WOMEN'S SHELTERS

Mrs Marie Bountrogianni (Hamilton Mountain): I have a question for the minister responsible for women's issues. The Social Planning and Research Council released a report yesterday that stated Hamilton shelters had to turn away twice as many homeless and abused women last year as they did in 1999. In 2002, all the shelters in Hamilton had turned away desperate women over 2,300 times, and the use of local homeless shelters has tripled since 1995. Homeless and abused women are being turned away every night because of a lack of available beds.

Women are forced to seek refuge in shelters because of a lack of options. Social assistance rates and the minimum wage have remained unchanged. Funding to transitional housing is almost non-existent and there's a significantly long wait for affordable housing. In 2002, the number of households waiting for social housing in Hamilton had increased to over 4,200, and the majority of people waiting were women. You even agreed that more is needed to be done to ensure the provision of emergency supports. Minister, I'm asking you, why are thousands of women turned away in their time of need?

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, minister responsible for women's issues): At the women's directorate there are two goals, and I know the House shares them: (1) to stop the violence, and (2) to work as best we can toward young women thinking about and attaining women's economic independence. On the issue of shelters, the member opposite will know that we have actually renovated a number of shelters in the province in the last couple of years. In many areas there have been applications for and permission given in order to build new shelters. It's an area this government has taken very seriously. I actually don't get letters from shelters telling me they need a lot more assistance. We are responding in

a planned way to building more shelters and renovating existing beds right across this province.

Mrs Bountrogianni: Minister, women who are fleeing for their lives hardly have the time or the energy to write you letters, but advocates on their behalf have come here. As representatives, both opposition parties have come to you to say that the Provincial Auditor actually said we are failing women and children fleeing violence. Two years ago, the Provincial Auditor stated that. A year later, 2,300 women were turned away from shelters in Hamilton. On this side of the House, we respect the Provincial Auditor's opinion because we respect accountability. I'm proud to say that under a Dalton McGuinty government we would reinstate funding to second-stage housing, which would free up spaces in shelters. We will address the root of the frustration that often leads to family violence by increasing the minimum wage and we will build affordable housing.

Minister, I plead with you, on behalf of these women who don't have the strength to write to you, to plead with your Premier to implement these policies. Women and children are waiting.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: We too on this side of the House, and hopefully with the support of our opposition partners, consider this to be a particularly non-partisan issue. Violence against women is a crime. We've long been committed to helping prevent domestic violence. We've made substantial improvements to Ontario's system of supports for victims right across nine ministries. I've had this job for seven out of eight years and I can tell you that we have committed more resources to address violence against women since taking office than any previous government. In fact, expenditures have increased by about 70% since 1995. I will also tell you that on the issue of shelters we could go into the numbers, but every member in this House knows that we have improved shelters over the years, but specifically since 2002. We have announced some \$26 million to support improvement to shelters and new—

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

INVESTOR PROTECTION

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I have a question for the Minister of Finance. As the minister knows, the impetus for this question is the grim experience of my constituent while carrying out her duties as a director of a public company. Witnessing what she believed to be securities violations, my constituent took her observations to the Ontario Securities Commission and its counterpart in another province. Little did she realize that she would be involved in a lengthy, stressful and extremely expensive battle. My constituent has not only borne large costs but has also lost her investment in the company in question.

Minister, what is the Ontario government doing to improve investor protection and, in particular, to help so-

called whistle-blowers carry out their duties without undue repercussions?

Hon Janet Ecker (Minister of Finance): Having strong markets here in Ontario, having investors know they can invest their money safely and have the information they need to make good decisions is part of our economic plan for keeping growth and jobs going in Ontario.

Last fall we introduced new rules, new laws, to better protect investors in Ontario. In April we proclaimed those provisions. They are provisions for tougher fines, more prison terms, more openness and transparency in terms of accounts, making directors responsible for the financial statements of their companies and forcing those who have been found guilty of insider trading, for example, to give up their ill-gotten gains, so we can protect those who have been victims of this.

We also have the final report of the review of securities legislation coming forward. This will be one of the issues that I think needs to be looked at.

Mrs Marland: One very frustrating aspect of my constituent's experience was the involvement of two jurisdictions with different laws, regulations and enforcement agencies. She had to make numerous trips and deal with mountains of paperwork as her case went through separate proceedings in two provinces. Obviously this factor added hugely to the cost and complexity of her case. The fact that the two provincial regulators reached vastly different conclusions about the company in question only emphasizes the need for a national system of securities regulation.

Minister, what can our government do so that Ontario's investors do not have to deal with a complicated patchwork of regulators and regulations?

Hon Mrs Ecker: I guess the member's question underlines the importance of having one national securities regulation system in Canada, because right now there are 13. For a market of this size, it simply makes no sense at all. We are working with the other provinces on two projects: first, to have more uniform securities legislation, to see if we can find common ground between all the jurisdictions; and second, to look at different models for a national system. There will be consultation occurring on that, probably later this spring.

The other project the Ontario government has been supportive of is the Wise Persons' Committee, as it is called, which is consulting with the sector to again make recommendations about how we can move to a national securities system in Canada—a very important step for future economic prosperity.

SITE OF FIRST PARLIAMENT

Mr Michael Prue (Beaches-East York): My question is to the Minister of Culture. Back in December last year you made the following statement in this House about the first Parliament becoming a Porsche dealership: "It's one of these sites that you have one opportunity in a lifetime to save." Well, it hasn't been saved. The lawyer acting for the Porsche dealership says that no negotia-

tions have taken place since March. The bulldozers are lining up around the site as we speak. It needs intervention from you and from the Premier. Will you save our history, will you save our heritage and will you save the first Parliament site?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet, Minister of Culture): Let's take a look at some of the sequence of events here. First of all, the city of Toronto approached the government. As you know, under the Planning Act, they have the first response to any type of historical site. They approached the government and we agreed to work with them to try to find some solutions for what we all consider a very important first Parliament site.

Bearing in mind that the city of Toronto has no money—they approached us earlier in the year for a bailout of between \$60 million to \$70 million—we took that into consideration. We advanced a number of options that would not require the city of Toronto to advance any money at all. Could we get the city of Toronto to agree to that? No, we couldn't. The problem is, we can't get their co-operation to come forward with a solution.

It really bugs me, to tell the truth, to see Councillor McConnell out there on the weekend. She is part of the problem, in my opinion. She's in the way. She has refused to advance the city of Toronto to the point where we can work with them. We have a number of options we're still working on right now, hopefully with or without the city of Toronto—

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

1600

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): Do you want me to do business of the week?

The Speaker (Hon Gary Carr): The minister could do that, if he'd like.

Hon Mr Stockwell: The business for next week is TBA.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Stockwell: For those who didn't understand, the business for next week is to be announced.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

2003 ONTARIO BUDGET

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 21, 2003, on the motion that this House approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): It only seems like a few minutes ago that I was standing here—about 9:20 last night—when I got rudely interrupted by the Minister of Energy and chief government whip, who

doesn't seem to understand that it's the opposition's job to call for a quorum in this place, to make sure they're actually on their—

Mr George Smitherman (Toronto Centre-Rosedale): He's practising.

Mr Martin: Yes, he's practising for when he gets over to this side after the next election. It's your job to keep a quorum in this House, and it's our job to make sure you're doing that. The Minister of Energy and chief government whip has that kind of backwards. I guess it was late at night, perhaps he had been drinking—I'm not sure. Anyway, he got it a little twisted around. He very rudely got in the way of me challenging this government with regard to the budget it brought forward. It might have had something to do with the fact that I was really—

Hon Doug Galt (Minister without Portfolio): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I acknowledge that the Minister of Energy did call for a quorum, but certainly the chief government whip didn't. I was busy getting our members in. I resent being included in that.

Mr Martin: I guess it's starting all over again. This government doesn't like it when members of the public or members of the opposition get up and challenge them or are critical in any way of their agenda or what they bring before this House, particularly something as important as the budget. We know how they feel about that. Everybody knows now that they delivered the budget at Magna International's training centre, away from this place, to an invited list of guests, so that they could spin it and make it sound like the greatest thing since sliced bread.

Well, here we are this afternoon, with at least some opportunity, if the government members over there will allow me to finish my speech, to actually to put on the record some of our concerns where this budget is concerned, and some of our concerns in terms of what this budget says about the agenda and priorities of this government where communities, individuals, families and people across this province are concerned.

Last night, I was talking about the fact there was nothing in this budget to give communities like Wawa any relief whatsoever—any solace, any hope whatsoever—from their very difficult struggle with the escalating price of hydro and the impact it's having on their industry, on their businesses and on their individual lives. This government doesn't seem to understand at all that they're having this problem and that this problem flows directly from a decision by this government to deregulate and privatize hydro that started on May 1 last year.

This small community has been one of the more important, thriving, vital and viable towns in this province over the last 40 or 50 years, and gave rise to all kinds of interesting and important personalities in the province, one of them being myself. I grew up in Wawa. I actually packed and carried out groceries and stocked shelves in the grocery store that is now ready to close down in that town because they cannot get the ear of this government. They cannot get the Minister of Energy to

call them back, to respond to their invite to have a meeting, to sit down and talk with them about these very real issues. It's not included in the budget, either.

The Minister of Energy was up in high dudgeon the other day, asking members of the community of Toronto to call my colleague here because of the labour relations dispute between the teachers and the school board. He was giving out her phone number, so this afternoon I'm giving a phone number for the Minister of Energy. People who think the Minister of Energy should sit down and have a meeting with the people of Wawa, who should honour that long-standing democratic tradition of ministers who have responsibilities sitting down with constituents and people in the province who are affected directly and negatively by their decisions, should call the minister. I think people in Wawa for sure, and people out there all over the place, should be calling the minister because Wawa, as we've said so often in this place now, has become the canary in the coal mine. What's happening in Wawa is already happening, but it will happen in the same significant, important and damaging way to every community across this province if this agenda is allowed to go forward. If we just sit here and allow this budget to become what governs the financial dealings and decisions that are made in this province over the next year, you will see the deregulation and privatization of Hydro take more and more grip, become more and more rooted in your community will be affected as well.

So I'm asking people across the province to call Minister John Baird at 416-325-6351. That's the Minister of Energy, John Baird, who used to be the Minister of Community and Social Services. And we remember when he was the Minister of Community and Social Services and the kind of damage he did to families, to poor and vulnerable people, and to people with disabilities across this province. Again, not willing to listen, not willing to hear, not willing to sit down and have meetings with people who advocate on behalf of the poor in this province so that he might understand by way of their arguments the impacts his decisions were having on them. This is the same minister who, after whacking the poor, the vulnerable and the at-risk, and families and people across this province, is now whacking communities, industries, businesses, families and individuals with his energy policies. When will it ever stop? We should call him the Minister of Whacking, or the Whacking Minister, or the Whacky Minister, or whatever. We should be calling a spade a spade here. This minister obviously has no sensitivity, no concern, no interest in doing anything except driving his agenda and the agenda of this government and doing whatever it takes, and not having meetings with people so they can sit down and talk to him.

The Minister of Finance came to Sault Ste Marie for one of her infamous community meetings before she released the budget at Magna. A very focused and narrow list of invitees to that meeting, most of them probably card-carrying members of the Tory party, most of them belonging to the chamber of commerce—and I'm not

casting aspersions on the chamber of commerce here. I'm just saying that the Minister of Finance thinks that, if she gets the green light and the OK from Bay Street and chambers of commerce from across the province, everybody else is going to be OK, that this agenda is going to be OK for every community, every family and every individual across this province.

Then she came back and invited a smaller group of those folks to this meeting at Magna and released her budget. I suggest to you that there was probably nobody from Wawa invited to that meeting, nobody from the power group invited so they could sit down at that meeting and share what the impact of the decision to deregulate and privatize Hydro is having on that little town of Wawa. I'm absolutely certain that they didn't. Nor did the Minister of Energy, in trying to give advice to the minister, come up with proposals, plans or programs that might mitigate some of the damage as concerned the Minister of Finance in releasing her budget, so that he could work on behalf of them to make sure there was something in the budget that would respond to their very real and very troubling challenges and concerns.

1610

People should call Mr Baird. People from Wawa, people from across Algoma, the area that is serviced by Great Lakes Power and Brascan for their energy, from Echo Bay, from St Joseph Island, people from across northern Ontario, because it's resource-based industries, eventually and ultimately, that will be hurt the most. The jobs they represent and the communities they support will be hurt very directly and in a very big way if this decision to deregulate and privatize hydro continues in this province.

So they should be calling Mr Baird at his office, 416-325-6351. People should be calling him and letting him know what they think about his nonchalant attitude, his not wanting to meet with the people of Wawa so that we can stop it there, where the canary in the coal mine is choking on the gases that have been produced by this decision, and tell him to get that right. If he gets that right, then he'll have a formula or a program that he can then bring in and introduce to everybody else in the province.

I also wanted to suggest last night—and again it's indirectly connected to decisions made by the infamous Minister Baird when he was the Minister of Community and Social Services in the province—the impact this government's agenda is having on the lives of those who are most vulnerable and at risk in our communities across the province; the fact that when they came into power in 1995, the first thing they did was remove 22% of the income of the poorest of our citizens. Then, not long after that, they began to cut back on the services that supported those individuals.

Then I found out, in travelling the province with my People's Parliament on Poverty, that they were actually clawing back the child tax benefit supplement, that money that the federal government was giving to some of the poorest families to eradicate child poverty. This gov-

ernment decided in its wisdom that those folks who are at the mercy of government, collecting assistance of one sort or another from the province, shouldn't get that money. We're not talking about the adults here, although I think the adults are just as worthy and deserving of that money to look after themselves. Most people who are on welfare or collecting social assistance in this province are there for very legitimate and real reasons and deserve to have a quality of life that we, particularly in this place, so often take for granted. But this government decided that the \$100 or thereabouts that would be available to them through the federal government's new child tax benefit supplement should be clawed back.

There's nothing in this budget to suggest that they've heard the literally thousands of people—and I have a petition that I was going to introduce to the Legislature here today saying, "Stop the clawback," but we didn't get to petitions.

We've tabled probably 10,000 names on petitions from every community across this province that has concerns with regard to the impact of decisions by this government to take away 21.6% of the income of the poorest of our citizens, to claw back the little bit of money that the federal government was going to deliver to them by way of the child tax benefit supplement. There are so many other things that they've taken away by way of supports and services that were at one time available to poor people in the province of Ontario.

As a matter of fact, if you think I'm the only one who has a concern about this, I want to share with you that there are many municipalities across the province that have passed many resolutions in objection to the clawback, in objection to the reduction in the amount of money that people on social assistance get, in objection to those things that caused the very tragic death of Kimberly Rogers in this province.

Here's one that I have here that I had delivered to my office just the other day from the community of Kingston. It says, "This will confirm that Kingston city council at its regular meeting held on April 15, 2003, approved the following resolution, being clause 2, report number 43."

This is input that I want to give to the Minister of Finance here this afternoon, that she should have been looking for before she delivered her budget, because there's absolutely nothing in it that reflects that she has heard from communities like Kingston, London, North Bay and other communities that have passed similar resolutions.

It goes like this:

"Whereas social assistance benefits were cut by 21.6% in 1995 and are insufficient to meet basic needs; and there have been no adjustments to social assistance benefits since 1995; and the cost of living has increased by 15.5%, with the result that the purchasing power of Ontario Works ... benefits has declined by 40%"—purchasing power has declined for those most vulnerable and at-risk citizens in our communities by 40%—“and the purchasing power of the Ontario disability support program ... benefits has declined by 15.5%; and

“Whereas increasing the basic needs portion of social assistance would relieve the pressure on over-extended community support services such as food banks, which were set up to be temporary rather than permanent services; and

“Whereas increasing the purchasing power for the approximately 674,000 people on Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program across Ontario would have a positive impact on the local economy and indexing the basic needs portion of social assistance would slow the growth of poverty in Ontario; and

“Whereas rent levels in Kingston (as measured by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp) ... have increased and the vacancy rate has fallen, and social assistance shelter allowance rates are insufficient to cover housing costs, with the result that our municipality is facing increased costs in shelter services, rent banks and other support services; and

“Whereas several hundred citizens of Kingston have signed petitions endorsing the ‘Feed the Kids and Pay the Rent’ Campaign, together with 22 community, social services, housing, faith and justice groups have also endorsed this campaign;

“Therefore be it resolved that the city of Kingston call on the provincial government to (1) restore the 21.6% cut to the basic needs portion of Ontario Works, (2) raise the shelter allowance portion of the Ontario Works and Ontario disability support program benefits to the average rent level of each region of Ontario, as determined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp, (3) index the basic needs portion of the Ontario Works and the Ontario disability support program benefits to the cost of living; and

“Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent to the Premier of Ontario; the Minister of Community, Family and Children’s Services; the Minister of Finance....”

This is the municipality of Kingston raising some very real, sincere and genuine concerns where the interests of poor and vulnerable people are concerned that obviously the Minister of Finance didn’t hear, didn’t want to hear, doesn’t understand or doesn’t care anything about.

Again I say, if you have a concern about this, I would suggest that you give the Minister of Energy a call because he used to be the Minister of Community and Social Services and probably has some influence on the Minister of Finance. You can give him both messages. Tell him you’re concerned about the program on de-regulating and privatizing hydro and you’re concerned about the impact of decisions he made and that this government continues to support where poor people are concerned. His phone number again is 416-325-6351. Phone him. Everybody out there, phone him every minute. Fax him even, if you can get his fax number. You want the phone number again? It’s 416-325-6351. That’s the Minister of Energy, who used to be the Minister of Community and Social Services. I’m sure he has influence, and he’ll be able to tell—

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): One more time just to make sure everybody has it.

Mr Martin: One more time? OK. It’s 416-325-6351.

Interjection.

Mr Martin: Maybe the member from Kitchener would want to call his colleague the Minister of Energy and tell him, “Back off. Whoa.” This is killing Wawa, and not only Wawa but other communities across this province and people across this province. While you’re at it, Minister of Energy, talk to your friend the Minister of Finance and tell her that you’re sorry, you made a mistake when you were the Minister of Community and Social Services, you didn’t mean to impose all those very difficult conditions on the very vulnerable and at-risk in our communities, and you should change that too and give them back their 21.6% and stop clawing back the child tax benefit supplement and bring back those support programs that were in place in 1995 when you took over as government.

It’s not just the community of Kingston that we’re concerned about here. I was up in Attawapiskat in February.

Hon Tim Hudak (Minister of Consumer and Business Services): I’ve been to Attawapiskat.

Mr Martin: I don’t know, when you were up there, if you talked to the same people I did or not, but 80% of the people up there are unemployed. They’re on social assistance. The 21.6% that you took away from people on social assistance across this province in 1995 affected them as well. They lost almost a quarter of their income. Do you know what that means for that community, in terms of cash inflow and the local economy? What has happened there is tragic. Not only that, but in talking to some of the families and some of the parents trying to look after children, they are having the child tax benefit supplement clawed back. So money that could be in their pocket to feed their children and contribute to the local economy, and be circulated in the small businesses that are up there, is being taken out of that community and put into the general revenue of the province of Ontario so that they, as we’ve seen in this budget from the Minister of Finance that she talked about last night, can give more tax breaks to their friends and benefactors out there, those who at the end of the day—particularly when you compare them to the people of Wawa, the people of Kingston and the poor people up in Attawapiskat, who need it more, who cannot get the services and the support they need.

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Let me tell you what’s happening in Attawapiskat to give you a little hint of what Mr Hudak perhaps should have got up in the House and talked about when he came back. They have lost 21.6% of their income—80% of the people up there. They get the child tax benefit supplement clawed back and yet they have to pay on average three times as much for their food, their clothing and all the other basics of life in Attawapiskat.

Let’s just look at one thing that really blew me away. They drink a lot of Carnation milk. Because they’re so

far away and they have so many transportation issues, they've got to haul in cases of Carnation milk to feed themselves and their children. A case of Carnation milk in Timmins is \$29.99. A case of Carnation milk in Moosonee, which is up the line by train, is \$49.99. Do you know what a case of Carnation milk costs in Attawapiskat? It's a hundred bucks—\$99.99. Do you know how much that is out of the social assistance cheque for most of those people? That's it, probably almost their whole cheque.

In Attawapiskat, they're not even talking about paying their rent or their hydro. They're trying to get enough money to pay for food to feed their children. That's what's going on up there. It's a pretty desperate circumstance, one that needs to be addressed and that this Parliament needs to know about and needs to be willing to do something about.

The Minister of Finance in her budget should have indicated some program of relief, should have done something with the billions of dollars they're generating now in this province by way of the tax—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener Centre): The Speaker is standing.

Mr Martin: Sorry, I didn't see you standing, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): It's not only that I'm standing, I'm standing for a reason, and that is that your time has expired.

Further debate?

Mr Wettlaufer: Tax cuts are good for Ontario residents. Our tax cuts are saving the average family hundreds and thousands of dollars a year, and our tax cuts are creating an environment in which more than a million new jobs have been created since this government's first throne speech eight years ago.

Our government has put in place a multi-year tax reduction plan to support growth and prosperity. Our past tax cuts, combined with the further reductions proposed in this year's budget, would benefit individuals and businesses by \$16 billion a year in 2003-04.

Every one of our budgets has reduced taxes. Let me repeat that: every one of our budgets has reduced taxes.

Legislation already in place fulfills the government's commitment to completing its additional 20% reduction in personal income tax by January 1 next year. So far, Ontario's personal income tax cuts are providing \$12 billion in benefits to all individual taxpayers this year. Personal income tax cuts are part of our pro-growth plan to promote economic development and financial security, which allows us to make further investments in our priorities like health care and education.

Let me give you an example of how tax cuts are working for Ontario families. A family of four with \$60,000 in net income from two earners is already benefiting from \$2,125 in Ontario income tax savings this year. Let me repeat that: a family of four with \$60,000 in net income from two earners is already benefiting from \$2,125 in Ontario income tax savings this year.

Interjection: Repeat that.

Mr Wettlaufer: I did repeat it. That \$2,125 can buy appliances for a new house. It can buy four or five appli-

ances for that new house, or for a new condominium. By next year those tax savings will have risen to more than \$2,500. As well, we propose to eliminate Ontario personal income tax for more people with modest incomes. Again I want to repeat that: we propose to eliminate Ontario personal income tax for more people with modest incomes. The 2003 budget's proposal to enrich the Ontario tax reduction program would increase to 700,000 the number of people no longer paying Ontario income tax as a result of our government's personal income tax cuts since 1995.

So take that, I say to the NDP, you who think you have a monopoly on compassion. We are the ones who have removed the modest-income families from paying Ontario income tax. Clearly tax cuts are good for economic growth and prosperity and consideration of the low income. Our record has proved that time and again.

Our government continues to focus on its long-term plan for competitive tax rates. We sought advice on a new, multi-year tax reduction plan that included the next steps toward eliminating Ontario's income tax surtax. As most of you know, this tax is the extra tax that reduces the province's attractiveness for mobile professionals and managers to work and invest. Beginning January 1, 2004, the surtax will be eliminated for those who pay only the first tier. The 2003 budget proposes to raise the surtax threshold effective January 1, 2005, so that the lowest income person paying the surtax would have taxable income of about \$75,000.

This government believes that eliminating the surtax would improve Ontario's ability to attract and retain skilled workers and increase incentives for investors. These skilled workers we are talking about are the workers that you see at plants like Budd Automotive, middle-income earners who are making \$70,000 and \$75,000 a year, workers at Budd Automotive—a factory—who support me.

Lower taxes are equally important to Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses, the backbone of our economy. We will continue to lower their taxes as well. We will do this by lowering the small business tax rate from the current level of 5.5% to 4% on January 1, 2005. Small businesses are the businesses that create 60% of the jobs in Ontario. What this means is that more money will be left in the hands of more than 125,000 businesses to invest and to create more jobs.

A significant factor in the resilience and flexibility of our economy is this government's focus on cutting taxes. We have shown that cutting taxes invigorates an economy. It gives both entrepreneurs and employees the incentive they need to expand, invest and create jobs. We know for a fact that lower small business taxes create jobs. Between the period 1990 and 1995, under higher taxes, Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses laid off a net 69,000 workers. I know the member for Lincoln Centre knows that all too well, because his government was in power. That was a recession created in Ontario. It was a Canadian recession created in large part because this province was no longer creating jobs and was no

longer the engine of the country's economy. Between 1995 and 2002, with lower taxes, small and medium-sized businesses have hired 478,000 net new workers.

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We will continue to reduce the general corporate income tax rate too, from the current level of 12.5% to 8% by the beginning of 2006. Meanwhile, the manufacturing and processing tax rate will be lowered from 11% today down to 8% at the start of 2006.

The importance of competitive business tax rates in attracting investment is confirmed by experience around the world. Indeed, one US study found that a difference of only 1% in tax rates increased business investment by 9% to 11%, with the result, I remind the member from Lincoln Centre—

Mr Smitherman: Niagara Centre.

Mr Wettlaufer: —that it's more jobs.

Moreover, we intend to reduce capital tax rates by 10%, effective January 1, 2004. Capital taxes hurt businesses, especially in the early start-up years when they can least afford it. It's the small businesses that are impacted most by that tax, and we have committed to eliminating it altogether by the time the federal government eliminates its capital tax.

Members of this House may recall that when our government first brought in our tax cut plan, critics said it would kill government revenues. Well, they were wrong. I stand here and tell you that even though our tax rates have gone down, even though the people of Ontario have benefited to the tune of \$16.1 billion, our tax revenues will be \$16.1 billion higher this year than when we started cutting taxes. Tax cuts increase revenue.

I would like to correct the record. I've been saying the member from Lincoln Centre. It's the member from Niagara Centre. We want to get that straight. We want to give him all the credit for being in the House today. He's the only one of his members who is.

Interjection: How many Liberals?

Mr Wettlaufer: Oh, there's one Liberal.

In the coming years, our tax revenues are expected to be \$16.1 billion higher than last year. That's money we can invest in health care, education, seniors and the disabled. Increased revenue allows us to invest in all of our priority programs, the programs that support Ontario's prosperity and quality of life—key parts of our competitive edge.

These days, many of us have family or friends struggling with the challenge of caring for elderly or dependant parents and relatives, so we are acting to recognize the higher costs faced by these family members. Our tax system currently provides tax assistance for people in these situations. However, this year's budget would enhance the support and bring \$50 million in benefits to approximately 165,000 Ontario taxpayers.

As I mentioned earlier, we are also proposing to increase the amount of the disability tax credit, the caregiver tax credit, the infirm dependant tax credit and the disability credit supplement for children with severe disabilities. We are preparing to expand the eligibility for

the caregiver and infirm dependant tax credits to include spouses of common-law partners who are dependent by reason of a mental or physical infirmity, to provide support to more caregivers living apart from dependant relatives and to increase the threshold for the dependant's income above which the caregiver and infirm dependant credits are reduced. This means that more people would qualify for them.

We announced several other tax relief measures in this year's budget. Let's discuss a couple.

To further encourage electricity self-sufficiency, our 2003 budget proposes an additional 100% income tax deduction to Ontario corporations for the cost of qualifying assets used to generate their own electricity from alternative or renewable energy sources. Other energy-related initiatives in this budget include proposed expansion of the five-year retail sales tax rebate for solar energy systems, which we announced last November, to include wind energy systems, micro-hydroelectric systems and geothermal heating-cooling systems for residential premises if purchased after March 27 this year; and proposed doubling of the retail sales tax rebate for qualifying alternative fuel vehicles to \$2,000 for vehicles delivered after March 27 this year. The maximum rebate for propane vehicles remains at \$750.

As I mentioned before, the tax measures outlined in this 2003 budget continue our work to ensure Ontario remains on the path to prosperity. Budgets are about setting priorities and making choices. Our government has made those priorities and choices clear: lower taxes to keep Ontario's economy strong, competitive and growing; create more jobs and higher incomes; increase support for seniors, caregivers and children; health care we can all depend on, where we need it and when we need it; and an accountable education system that provides our young people with the knowledge and skills they need for success.

We also have established a priority that colleges and universities will prepare our students for the opportunities of a lifetime. I was very pleased to work with John Tibbits, the president of Conestoga College, in setting his goals and achieving his goals in that area.

We will continue with our economic plan, and that plan includes cutting taxes. Cutting taxes does stimulate our economy. I remember in 1995 that Mark Mullins was our advising economist, and he said at the time that these tax cuts would work. He was the only economist who said they would work, and he used a very simple economic principle: the law of diminishing returns. All we were doing was reversing the law of diminishing returns. The Liberals swear by Don Drummond at the Toronto-Dominion Bank. He is a naysayer insofar as cutting taxes is concerned. I had thought that by now he would have changed his mind, but he still continues that way.

Ontario continues to be the number one place in North America to do business. Through our government's commitment to tax cuts, debt reduction, strategic investments in health care and education, innovation in infrastructure, modernizing financial regulations, reducing red tape and

eliminating other barriers to growth, we believe there is simply no better place to open up shop, and the many thousands of businesses that have been established here since 1995 think so too.

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Private sector forecasters project the Ontario economy will grow on average by 2.8% in 2003 and 3.5% in 2004. This rate is faster than any of the jurisdictions in any of the G7-G8 over this two-year period. We are the fastest-growing jurisdiction in the G8 and we have been the fastest-growing jurisdiction in the G8 since 1995. We have been the leader. This province—Ontario—has been the leader in reducing taxes and removing barriers to growth and job creation. This has contributed to the province's impressive economic record. Our economic foundation is strong. Our businesses are more competitive than ever before. Inflation is in check, interest rates are low and after-tax incomes are rising. Sound policies will continue to strengthen these fundamentals. Balanced budgets, tax cuts and positive business conditions have created a climate that is stimulating economic growth and raising living standards.

Our economic plan is working. It's a plan to continue the growth and prosperity our government has put in place since 1995. It's a plan to secure a strong and successful future for Ontario. Not only that, but it's a plan that will secure a strong and successful future for Canada, because Ontario is the engine that drives this country's economy.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Mr Smitherman: It's a pleasure to have two minutes today to speak to what the member from Kitchener just took 18 minutes to say.

I want to make just a few comments. Firstly, he likes to attack people personally. Anyone he doesn't agree with, he attacks personally. Today's version of that is Don Drummond, a senior economist with the Toronto-Dominion Bank, a noteworthy organization. But these members seek to diminish his message. His message is clear, and it's the same message the Dominion Bond Rating Service has about this government's budget.

They like to claim it's in balance, but it's not. There is a \$2-billion hole in the budget of that government. We first said that the day they delivered their speech at Magna. I said it the next day to reporters with Ernie Eves in Orangeville, and yet they've not had the courage to stand up and address it.

Yesterday in scrums here at the Legislature, Ernie Eves was asked, I think by Richard Brennan from the Toronto Star, "Mr Premier, what are you going to sell for \$2 billion, and what are you going to do to deal with the hole in your budget?" Mr Eves had no comment.

The Deputy Speaker: We usually refer to people by their title or their rank.

Mr Smitherman: The Premier.

On the issue of mortgage interest deductibility, we had this huge debate coming forward, and we thought this was going to be some grandiose plan. But as it turns out, what the government of the day is offering by policy

proposal to people with respect to mortgage interest deductibility is that, starting in 2005, they'll give you \$100 a year, or as we like to refer to it, a cup of coffee a week.

The option for Ontarians is extraordinarily clear. You can get \$100 a year from a government to buy a few more coffees, or instead you can choose change. You can choose to invest your support in a government—a Liberal Party government—that will offer this to your children: smaller class sizes from kindergarten to grade 3—a hard cap of 20. That's the alternative—

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Peter Kormos (Niagara Centre): It's amazing that this member can appear to take pride in the fact that there's less and less home care for our folks who, as senior citizens, need help to continue to live in their homes; that more and more medical procedures are being delisted; that more and more pharmaceuticals are being delisted so that, again, mostly seniors have to pay out of pocket. It's amazing that this member can take pride in talking about putting more money in people's pockets, yet the minimum wage remains stagnant for eight years at \$6.85 an hour. How about putting some money in the pockets of the lowest-paid workers in this province—increasing in number, yes, because there have been new jobs, and most of those new jobs have been minimum wage and, at that, part-time and even temporary.

I say to this member that he should take shame in a budget that creates more and more tax breaks for the rich, that immediately reduced Frank Stronach's \$56-million or \$57-million personal income last year by yet another \$3.5 million but didn't give minimum-wage workers a penny—mostly women working darned hard at two or three jobs to support themselves. This government should understand that, during its rule here at Queen's Park, that minimum wage, assuming a cost of living CPI of 2% a year, has been reduced by 16%.

Minimum wage workers are under attack, women are under attack and seniors are under attack, but oh, the wealthy and profitable corporations and all the rich friends—the Frank Stronachs, the \$50-million-plus annual income owners—are the beneficiaries of such largesse. I say shame.

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): It's a pleasure to speak to the member for Kitchener Centre's comments. He came into this Legislature in 1995 as a very well known and successful businessman in Kitchener. He knows what it takes to run a business and actually employ people in Ontario. There have been thousands upon thousands of business owners in Ontario over the last eight years who said in 1995, when this government came to office, "Amen. Finally, someone came to office who understands what businesses face, what it takes to get businesses to invest money and create jobs." We've helped to create a climate that has brought over 1.1 million more net new jobs to this province since 1995. The members opposite complain about these jobs and complain about the minimum wage. The fact of the matter is,

1.1 million people have work today who didn't have work under the former governments opposite.

Some of the members opposite talked about less and less home care. Since 1995, in Niagara alone we've increased home care funding by 130%—a quite simple fact. Pharmaceuticals have been added. There are not less and less pharmaceuticals on the Ontario drug benefit formulary; there are more and more. There are well over 3,300 pharmaceuticals now on the Ontario drug benefit plan.

OHIP coverage: we're expanding coverage of many things under OHIP. For example, the procedure that coincides with Visudyne to help people who are losing their sight has been added to OHIP. So we're adding to OHIP; we're adding pharmaceuticals to the ODB; we're adding home care services over the years.

Most important, this government has had a business climate that is adding jobs, and because more people are working, more people are paying taxes that are giving us more revenues to balance budgets and offer more services.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I've been listening with intent interest to the member for Kitchener. I was very concerned that he didn't deal with the issue of the \$181 million which has been taken out of the budget for public security. My friend Bob Runciman, if I may use a friendly name, as opposed to saying "the Solicitor General," as I used to call him—now he's comparable to Tom Ridge in the United States, the Minister of Public Safety and Security. Last year he lost \$60 million from his budget. This year it's down another \$181 million.

I know that all of us, justifiably, in this province are concerned with matters under his jurisdiction, matters of security, matters of the penal system, the parole system and so on. I'm concerned, when I look at the budget figures and I see his budget is down by \$181 million, that there's got to be a real problem that exists in this province, that the funding does not keep up with the rhetoric.

The other thing I'm concerned about, and the member for Kitchener probably is as well, is that with all the enforcement activities that are going to be required by the Ministry of the Environment, there's not going to be sufficient funding allocated to the Ministry of the Environment to ensure that that enforcement activity can take place, because there is new legislation that this Legislature passed that suggests, I think very strongly, an enforcement component. If we look at legislation down the line governing the spreading of manure and other waste in the province, if we look at waste management, if we look at the water system and the air system, that's going to require restoring the Ministry of the Environment to its previous levels of commitment and staffing. I would like the member to address that issue because I think he'd be concerned about that.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Kitchener Centre has two minutes to reply.

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Mr Wettlaufer: I want to thank the members from Toronto Centre-Rosedale, Niagara Centre, Niagara Falls

and St Catharines for their comments. I would like to address the comment on mortgage interest deductibility.

The member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale feels that people in Ontario don't deserve any mortgage interest deductibility from their taxes. He said that the people of Ontario have a choice. Yes, they do have a choice. They have a choice between lower taxes with our government, which have proven to be without a doubt beneficial to the economy of the province, to the economy of the country, more jobs, and more revenue for the government to put into health care and education; or they can choose a high-tax government like the Liberals' or the NDP's. Both parties are committed to higher taxes if they were to form the government.

The member for Niagara Centre talks about home care. Well, if anybody should know what has happened to home care, that member should. We've increased health care funding in this province from \$17.4 billion in 1995 to just short of \$28 billion in this year's budget. We are providing funding for home care, pharmaceutical care and long-term care. We have a federal government which, while committed initially, when medicare was brought into being in this country, to funding 50% of health care costs, now has contributed only 17% to the province of Ontario and does not provide one cent to Ontario for long-term care, home care or pharmaceutical care.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Eglinton-Lawrence): There was some discussion about the economic trickle-down effect of tax cuts when they were debating just recently whether the friend of the Conservative accountant was right or whether the TD accountant was right. I just want to quote from a fairly successful person who doesn't have all the degrees after his name, but who I think everybody agrees may be the most learned man alive in North America today when it comes to making money or running the economy. His name is Warren Buffett.

Warren Buffett was commenting yesterday about the other continual round of corporate tax cuts, in the United States under President Bush. I realize that this government of Harris and Eves has followed the philosophy of the Republicans. Here's Warren Buffett, maybe one of the richest men in the world, and he calls this ongoing proposal to cut more corporate taxes in the United States voodoo economics that uses Enron-style accounting. I think it's similar to what's happening here.

Mr Buffett said, "Putting \$1,000 in the pockets of 310,000 families with urgent needs is going to provide far more stimulus to the economy than putting the same \$310 million in my pockets." He's saying, "Don't put money into my pocket, the pocket of the corporate elite. Put the money into the ordinary person's pocket. Because they need the money, they'll spend it."

Instead, this government is continuing with more corporate tax cuts to try and help Frank Stronach, who makes I think \$58 million a year. That's where they had the budget. So if you want to know the true symbol of this budget that this government is defending, it's all

about Mr Frank Stronach and Magna. They had the whole thing staged up there. That's whom they want to please. They don't want to have the budget plan unveiled at Regent Park, or Lawrence Heights in my riding. No, they went to Frank Stronach's palace up there in Brampton. That's what this budget is all about.

Warren Buffett goes on to say, "Government can't deliver a free lunch to the country as a whole. It can, however, determine who pays for lunch." Last week, Warren Buffett said the Senate handed the bill to the wrong party. That's exactly what this budget is all about. It's handing the bill in taxes—as much as you say it's cutting taxes, you'll notice most of the benefits in these budgets in the past have gone to the upper 10%. That's why it's an auto parts budget at Magna, not down on Main Street, where there are people who don't get free lunches. They can't write off their lunches. They actually pay for lunch at the corner diner, believe it or not. But this budget, like all past budgets by this government, has favoured the corporate elite. It will continue to do that at the peril of ordinary working people who still have to pay for lunch.

That's the difference in approach here. So even Warren Buffett calls this voodoo-type economics, Enron-style accounting, and there's no better proof of that than Standard and Poor's, or the Dominion Bond Rating Service. All the experts have looked at this budget proposal, the auto parts budget, and have said that there's a \$2-billion hole in it. That's like saying, "Oh, yeah, the budget in the House is all balanced this year, Jane. It's all balanced. Trust me, Jane, it's balanced. But there's only one problem: I have to sell off the backyard and I have to sell off the front yard so we can keep it in balance." That's what they've done here. They have basically said that they have a balanced budget but there is a \$2-billion debt that we have to pay off.

As everybody keeps asking the Premier, "What are you going to sell, Ernie? What are you going to give away, Ernie?" Do you know what he's going to do, probably, if he ever has the chance? He'll do what he did before: he gave away one of the most significant assets in this province for a song to a Spanish consortium and his friend Al Leach, who got the 407 highway, built by taxpayers' dollars. That's what he did last time. He plans to do the same thing again. What will the Tory government sell off this time? What is the secret plan to sell off? Will it be maybe the LCBO? Will it be Ontario Place? Will it be parks? What will they sell to make up for that \$2-billion hole in this budget that everybody agrees is there and it doesn't add up?

So it's an Enron-type budget prepared and staged up at Frank Stronach's place to please Frank, because Frank needs help. The poor guy makes \$58 million; he says he's worth more. I'm sure the Tories on the other side all agree that Frank Stronach needs more help. They'll have more budgets there, because they voted against the member from Pembroke's resolution to hold the budget here next time. They said, "No, we're going back to Frank Stronach's place." Whoever they're going to pick

next time, you can rest assured it's not going to be on Main Street in small-town Ontario. It's not going to be where there are real people who need help; it's going to be where their big friends with deep pockets are, looking for more corporate handouts.

In all honesty, if you look at this budget, you'll see over and over again an attempt to try and tell people, "We will give you everything you want. Just trust us. Somehow this will all work out. Trust us, you won't get hurt. You'll still have high-level health care and education." We know that after eight years, people in Ontario are too smart. They've seen the reckless damage you've done to our public schools. They've seen the condition of our municipalities, where the infrastructure is crumbling. They've seen our hospitals and what you've done to close hospitals all across this province, what you've done to basically fire 10,000 nurses. That's where you pay for these promises in this budget. That's where the Frank Stronach money will have to come from. It'll have to come from the hospitals, it'll have to come from the nurses they're going to fire, it'll have to come from the textbooks that won't be in schools.

Look at the schools. In eight years, thanks to the guidance of Paul Martin and a robust American economy, we've had a prosperous Ontario. In eight years they still haven't fixed the holes in the roofs on our schools. The plumbing hasn't been fixed. They haven't been able to even paint the school walls.

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I've got a hospital in the west end sitting empty after eight years, after they closed it. Another hospital they haven't fixed is in almost Third World condition. For the eight years they've said they were going to do all this stuff, they basically have rewarded their friends, who are very happy. That top 10% love the Frank Stronach-type budgets.

Yesterday I talked to two people, out of many people, as I was going up the street. You should hear what they told me. One said he was sent to hospital for a hernia operation. They sent him home an hour after the hernia operation and he started hemorrhaging. He had to call the ambulance and went back to the hospital again. He said, "Listen, I can't stop the bleeding. Do something." How can you send a person home one hour after a hernia operation? Then he had to go back and forth. He had to spend another week in the hospital. He had to have two or three months of home care that he could hardly get. They push them out of the hospital, and this is a gentleman in his sixties, on to the street an hour after an operation.

I talked to another gentleman who was almost in tears because his son had to wait eight hours in emergency. He couldn't even hold his head up or sit up in emergency. There was nobody to take care of that sick, dying son. That was just last night—two people who have paid the cost of all these gifts they give to their corporate friends. As I said, the underlying factor is that this budget and all these promises were made at the feet of Frank Stronach. Do you think they're trying to please Frank Stronach, or

are they trying to please that guy with the hernia operation in my riding or trying to please the man who lost his son because, in part, he couldn't get good treatment in a hospital?

That's what they're trying to do with these promises. They're giving money that will come from public asset sales. What will the Premier sell next? We know he's got a plan to sell something. He won't tell us because he knows the people of Ontario will say, "Here's another 407." We sold it to the Spanish consortium and Al Leach for \$3 billion. It's now worth \$12 billion. This was Premier Eves's wonderful pre-election fire sale before the last election, but this time, on the eve of the election, he's afraid to publicize what 407 he's going to give away because the people of Ontario have seen the consequences of selling off that 407, where they not only sold it for a song, but people are being gouged 24 hours a day on a highway they paid for and built.

Then the Minister of Transportation stands up and yells and screams at the poor people who are getting gouged by the erroneous billing that consortium is doing. He's going to defend them? He's going to take away their right to have their licence renewed again. Here the government of Ontario is going to act as a collection agency for a consortium that got the deal of a lifetime: \$12 billion worth of public highway for \$3 billion. No wonder they had this budget presentation at the feet of Frank Stronach. That's why they did it there. That's what it represents.

The question is, what will Mr Eves give away, or plan to give away? Ask him that if you see him. "What are you going to give away? Are you going to give away another 407?" That's what his plans are.

This whole budget doesn't deal with the reality of what people are paying in their hydro bills. They're being gouged with every bill. Gas bills: I talked to people last month and their bill went up another hundred bucks. The government sits in silence as insurance rates have gone up 20%. People cannot renew their car and house insurance because this government is allowing the systematic rip-off of people who only want a little bit of insurance when they drive their car. If they have one small accident or if there's any technicality where they want to switch from company to company, they're cut off and told, "Sorry, we don't want you any more."

The government sits there in silence as thousands of Ontarians can't get insurance and are being gouged by the insurance companies. This government does nothing. There's nothing in this Stronach-Magna budget that says they're going to protect people who are being gouged by the insurance companies—nothing, not a word, not one single word. I remember this was the same government that had door-to-door hustlers conning people with gas marketers and brokers. They were selling them and making them sign three or four contracts under false pretences, taking advantage of poor people all across this province. They stood by silently while seniors and working people were gouged by the privatization of natural gas for heating.

Hydro: in this budget, the government is doing nothing about a multi-billion dollar debt they're putting on the back of every taxpayer who is on Hydro. They messed up the Hydro file to the point where they don't know whether, tomorrow, Pickering is on or off, if Bruce is on or off. They don't know whether the bills are going to be double, triple or quadruple, if you add the debt that is being borne by the people of Ontario because of their mismanagement of the Hydro file.

It's been a laughing stock. Even *The Economist*, the most respected international magazine about the economy, made fun of this government and Premier Eves about how they mishandled the Hydro file. They said what he was doing on Hydro was laughable. Our Hydro is probably the most significant asset we have, next to our health and our education systems. They completely fouled it up to the point where Ontario, which was the proud home of a public utility known as Ontario Hydro, is amassing over a billion dollars a year in debt because of their mismanagement. They don't know what they're doing with it from day to day—very little about gas, Hydro and insurance bills, and how they're going to help people cope.

They promise they're going to give you a break on mortgage interest rates. The seniors are going to get a break. They're going to give corporations a break. Everybody's going to get a break, but everybody says, "Who's going to pay for these promises?" You've got Hydro debt; you've got a \$2-billion hole in the budget; you've got hospitals that need money—as we speak there's even a hiring freeze on nurses. There was a report today that said there's a \$1.4-billion gap in the amount of money this government was supposed to ante up for education.

So you've got all these huge multi-billion dollar gaps, yet this government wants everybody to believe—in their desperation, because they're desperate to try and cling to power for the sake of power, they're promising whatever they can in their deathbed repentance. "We'll give you this; we'll give away the store; we'll give you a highway; we'll give you whatever you want. Please elect us. We're desperate." It's a futile attempt to pull the wool over the eyes of the people of Ontario who for eight years have seen what their financial mismanagement has done, in the best of times when they could have been fixing our schools and hospitals.

The most laughable part of this whole budget is that they've got this cockamamie scheme in there for municipalities. They're telling municipalities, "You need a referendum if you want to have money for your bridges, roads or transit. We'll set the wording of the referendum and then you've got to have half the population turn out to make the referendum possible." In other words, 50% of the people have to come out to vote for the referendum to be legal.

1710

This referendum, as you know, is totally hypothetical, because very few of the members across there have sat on municipal councils to know that the average turnout in

municipal elections is about 35%. So not only will they not meet the legal requirement, but to try to get people to vote on whether they want to increase taxes—guess what will happen? People will say no. So it's a way of basically downloading on to the municipalities, as they have done for eight years. They've downloaded welfare, they've downloaded transit, they've downloaded public health, all on municipalities. This budget continues the downloading.

They say they will cut your taxes here, meanwhile you'll pay more user fees for your soccer fields and your gym, more for hydro bills, more for car and house insurance—for damn sure, you'll pay more. I'll withdraw the “damn.” So don't trust them.

As people are saying all across this province, “Not his time, Ernie.” Eight years of voodoo economics, eight years of Enron-style accounting is not going to fool the people of Ontario, not this time, Ernie, because they know this budget is all about pleasing the likes of Frank Stronach, who this government has a lot of empathy for. They feel Frank needs more than \$58 million a year. They're going to do their best to make sure he gets his break. Guaranteed this budget is to Frank Stronach's liking, but I'll tell you, it's not to Mr and Mrs Jones's liking or Mr and Mrs Carlucci's liking, that's for darn sure.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Toronto-Danforth): I have listened with interest to the comments from the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He pointed out many of the problems of real Ontarians across this province—average people, low-income people—and the kinds of things they're crying out for, and nothing they need is mentioned in this infomercial.

They at least decided to give their so-called budget, their infomercial, among real cars that you can get in and drive and tell where to go and go somewhere in a straight line, but they decided to deliver their platform with go-karts, with a couple of MPPs sitting in little go-karts and flying out in the go-karts.

Hon Mr Hudak: It's cool.

Ms Churley: Yes, you were in that, weren't you? It actually looked pretty silly to me.

I wasn't allowed in. I went out there but they made me stand in the rain. I didn't fight that. I do go to government announcements no matter where they are made because that's my right, but I understood. I stood in the rain and waited until after. They announced that in little go-karts that bump around all over the place; it doesn't know what it's doing, bumping into objects, but it goes around in a circle. That's where you announced your platform. That's why I said your platform leads us straight back full circle to Walkerton.

But what's interesting about this budget we're talking about today is that your budget wasn't balanced last year and it's not balanced this year.

Interjection.

Ms Churley: No, it hasn't been. It's just amazing; if you had been here listening when your colleagues were

sitting over here as the third party, when we were in the worst recession since the 1930s, talking about our deficits when we got downgraded, they were God then, but now, when you have a respected credit rating firm that has issued a formal report that Ontario will have a deficit of \$2 billion, you won't admit to it. Suddenly you've changed your tune on those people, haven't you?

Mr Wettlaufer: I am just flabbergasted at the rhetoric emanating from the member for Eglinton-Lawrence. He attacks Frank Stronach. I don't know how you can attack a fellow Liberal.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: No, no. Sit down. He ran for the federal Liberals in 1988.

Mr Colle: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: it was not a personal attack. It was used in explaining a corporate sector representative.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Kitchener Centre.

Mr Wettlaufer: That's OK, Speaker. I was just getting to the meat of it anyway. They attack a successful businessman, but earlier today the member from Windsor West stood in her place and wanted the government to come up with a billion dollars for a business that is not successful in her riding, for DaimlerChrysler, a multi-national corporation. I tell you, I find this very hard to take.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: She wanted a billion dollars to build a plant in Windsor. That's what she wanted.

He also talked about Highway 407. Let's talk about Highway 407. A corporation is spending hundreds of millions of dollars on expanding, repairing and completing that highway. In fact, by the time it's completed east of Markham, it will be into the billions of dollars. That's money our government felt we would rather spend on health care, education and the elderly. That is why that was sold.

Interjection.

Mr Wettlaufer: Profit? What kind of profit? You would not want the return on the money they have invested.

Mr Smitherman: We're going to rename the minister—minister, that's pretty funny—the member for Kitchener Centre “the apologist for the 407.” That ought to get him a few votes.

I want to say firstly, no one attacked Frank Stronach; they attacked the government opposite that would offer to one of the richest people in our province a further \$3.1 million.

Interjections.

Mr Smitherman: They don't like to hear it. They're going to give him a further \$3.1 million, because his pay packet is not big enough.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Wettlaufer: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to point out that the member from Toronto Centre-Rosedale wasn't even here to hear whether or not he attacked Frank Stronach.

The Deputy Speaker: That is not a point of order. The Chair recognizes the member for Toronto Centre-Rosedale.

Mr Smitherman: The tactics on that side to interrupt the cadence of my remarks: an unbelievable, dirty trick.

I want to make a further comment about DaimlerChrysler. He referred to DaimlerChrysler as an unsuccessful venture in the riding of the member from Windsor. That's a disgusting thing to hear from someone who just a little while ago spent time telling us about the guys at Budd Automotive. No connection there with the auto assembly industry, I suppose.

The other thing that has happened in this Legislature this afternoon is that the Ernie Eves government—not in the chamber, but in the building—finally acknowledged what we've been claiming for some time: that in 2002, when they stood in this place and delayed tax cuts and broke their own law in so doing, that was in effect a tax increase. At least, that's what they're trying to claim about us.

The Liberal Party plan is clear: we're going to ditch some corporate tax cuts; we're going to ditch the private school tax voucher. Here's what we're going to do: we're going to make the biggest contribution that we can to restoring confidence in the essential public services, just like the member from Eglinton-Lawrence spoke about with such extraordinary passion. The members opposite could learn quite a bit from his presentation.

Mr Kormos: Yes, DaimlerChrysler is in trouble, and so are, more importantly, the workers who work at DaimlerChrysler, just like Navistar in Chatham. I say in the context of this budget that yes, this province should be sitting at the table with Navistar, helping to save the community of Chatham and the workers at Navistar. Yes, this government should be at the table with DaimlerChrysler, helping to save that DaimlerChrysler operation down there in Windsor. But please, so should the federal government.

Here we've got a federal government that's going to spend—maybe it will, maybe it won't. Dennis Mills—what riding is he from?

Ms Churley: Toronto-Danforth.

Mr Kormos: Toronto-Danforth. He wants to spend \$10 million of federal funds for a Rolling Stones concert. I told him Walter Ostanek would come up to Toronto. He has won as many Grammys as the Rolling Stones have. Walter Ostanek would come up to Toronto for 500 bucks and an overnight stay in a hotel room. Quite frankly, he'll draw millions too.

What's interesting is the omissions from this budget, any commitment just to saving the auto sector in this province, and it is desperately in need of salvation. I say to my counterparts in the Liberal caucus, the federal Liberals, the federal government, have shown a similar reluctance to be at that table in terms of saving auto sector jobs.

1720

What's missing? Not a penny of relief for college and university students whose tuitions have increased by over 150% since 1996—tuition fees of 20 grand-plus a year.

This government is creating an environment where only the children of the wealthiest, once again, are going to have access to colleges and universities.

Ms Churley: Frank Stronach's grandchildren.

Mr Kormos: Yes, Frank Stronach's grandkids will get to go to college and university, because when you make that kind of cheese and when you've got those kinds of tax breaks from this government, you don't get nothing to worry about. Working women and men, their kids will never see the daylight of a university campus or a college campus.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Eglinton-Lawrence has two minutes to reply.

Mr Colle: I appreciate the comments from both sides. I think it's very valuable to get input from both sides because it's a fundamental debate we're in here. The debate is the direction this province is going in, and as you can see with the budget proposal from the auto parts plant, this government has made a firm decision to go back to the past, to the extreme divisionary approach to budgetary expenditures, where they're going to cater to the elite in the province and let our public services, our public schools, our public health care and ordinary people just make do, while people who don't need help are going to get their help. That's quite clear from this budget and I think the government is proud of that, sadly.

I would say that the critical thing here for the people of Ontario is to remember that if you look back at the eight years of what this government has done, are our hospitals any better? Is emergency room service any better? Do we have more doctors? Do we have more nurses? Look at our schools: has our education system been improved? There has never been so much strife in our schools: lack of textbooks, overcrowded classrooms, closing of schools. Then on top of that, you look at our cities. Are our cities any better after eight years of Harris-Eves? They are basically crumbling. Our sewers, our roads, our services have been cut, whether it's garbage pickup or basic transit. This government, after eight years, has proven to the people of Ontario that they're not about pleasing Main Street, they're about pleasing Frank Stronach.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr AL McDonald (Nipissing): I'm honoured and pleased to stand in my place here this afternoon and debate the budget. I can say, this being Thursday afternoon, getting close to 6 o'clock, it's the last day the Legislature sits before we can all go home, work in our offices in our hometowns, meet with our constituents, get out to events and say hello to people—because we've been gone for four days—and I'm looking forward to it.

I also find it very interesting that it's a very spirited debate given the fact that we've been here for this whole week. It's very encouraging that people have a lot of interest in the budget.

I know from a northern Ontario point of view, I like what I see in the budget. I can tell you, in my riding of Nipissing, we're building a new hospital in North Bay. We're building a new hospital in Mattawa. We've helped

the town of Powassan with some water infrastructure. We've helped the town of Callandar with water infrastructure. We've seen a lot of investment in my riding of Nipissing but, more particularly, in northern Ontario.

I'm very pleased to say that the four-laning of Highway 11 between Trout Creek and South River will be open this fall. For anybody who travels in the riding of Nipissing, from Mattawa or Powassan or Trout Creek or North Bay or Jocko Point down to Toronto, they know that, one, it's a little bit quicker, but it's definitely safer for us. Highway infrastructure is very important to access the southern markets, and I'm very pleased that's going ahead. I'm very pleased also that the Premier made an announcement that the four-laning of Highway 69 is going to go ahead as well. As true northerners, we believe we have to work together to make our lot in life that much better. We've seen a lot of growth in southern Ontario, and we want to see that come to northern Ontario, and part of that is the infrastructure to bring the markets and the jobs to the north.

We have the first medical school in the history of the province of Ontario in the last 30 years going into northern Ontario, with satellite offices in Thunder Bay and Sudbury, which is good news.

The Premier also announced tax incentive zones for all of northern Ontario, not just specific areas. I can tell you, as northerners, we welcome that and we applaud the Premier for his leadership. As I said, we have to think regionally to be successful in the north and we have to act together, co-operatively, to make things happen, to create jobs in northern Ontario and to create opportunities for our young people to stay, find employment, start families and build our communities in northern Ontario.

I was also pleased to see the tax relief for senior citizens being offered because, as you know, senior citizens have built our communities and our cities in the north. From being out and talking to a lot of them—as municipal taxes and all the services and water charges were going up, they were afraid that they might have to leave their homes. They welcome this tax relief. They see this as a way they can save about \$500 a year. I've heard a few members opposite say, "What's \$500?" I can tell you that in northern Ontario, to seniors, to people with low incomes, \$500 is a lot per year; and if it enables them to stay in their homes for the next 10 years because they're saving \$500 a year, I welcome that and I understand that they do as well.

I watched the leader of the official opposition, Mr McGuinty, stand up, and very seldom does he ever speak about northern Ontario. But he did visit North Bay, Sudbury and the Soo. He actually visited. I mean that he flew in, didn't even get out of the airport terminal and just went to the next site. So I guess his 15-minute stop in each of the three places before he flew back to Toronto was his commitment to northern Ontario, because let's face it, all he is interested in is southern Ontario.

I called up his Web site because I was interested to see what he had to say about northern Ontario. This is right off his Web site. There is a picture of a fisherman sitting

in a boat; and he's saying that he's going to increase the natural resources and create opportunities for fishing, hunting and tourism in northern Ontario. I find it very interesting that there's a fisherman sitting in a boat. He is not even wearing a life jacket and he has four lines in the water. I don't know if Mr McGuinty knows this, but that's illegal. You can't have more than one line in the water.

I just might say to anybody who's watching, especially those people in northern Ontario, go right on to his Web site and look up what he says about northern Ontario. Not only does he have four lines in the water, he's not even wearing a life jacket.

So what is he promoting in northern Ontario? Is he promoting us to break the law and not to wear life jackets? I don't know who did his Web site, but obviously he okayed it. Maybe he should pay a little bit more attention to northern Ontario because he doesn't realize that this is illegal. Not only, on top of that—he's promoting northern Ontario—he has a big cloud of industrial gas, smoke or smog right behind him. Is smog what he's promoting for northern Ontario?

I can tell you that in northern Ontario, we want jobs, but we want them to be environmentally friendly. We don't need this kind of stuff. I find it incredible that he's promoting illegal activities. That might be a bit strong, but they okayed a fisherman not wearing a life jacket with four fishing lines in the water. What does that have to say about a leader? I can tell you: not that much.

Just in the past couple of days, I was negotiating with the Minister of Natural Resources on a fishing study, an assessment of Lake Nipissing. I'm very pleased he agreed that this was very important to my riding of Nipissing. He realizes—and everybody who lives in northern Ontario, in Nipissing, North Bay, Mattawa or Callander understands—how valuable Lake Nipissing is to our area. It's a \$1-billion asset. It has economic returns of probably about \$80 million a year, so it's very important to us. I must say that people in northern Ontario know you can only put one line in the water.

1730

Also in the budget I saw an area that I thought was very important. I spoke about the new hospital in North Bay, and I spoke about the new hospital in Mattawa. I didn't touch on the new children's treatment centre that Minister of Health Tony Clement announced back in November, which is just incredible for children and parents in our region, in northern Ontario. That was very important. I really appreciate all the support the Minister of Health has given us in northern Ontario. We're looking forward to the implementation of the children's treatment centre.

As we see a province-wide, a countrywide, a North America-wide shortage of nurses and doctors, it's not just a problem in the north; it's a problem throughout the free world. I must applaud the Premier and the Minister of Health for free tuition for doctors and nurses who are going to practise in underserved areas. I can tell you that's pretty much all of the north. Parents have said to

me that obviously one of their major concerns is health care. The fact is that we're not only going to be able to train these doctors and nurses in northern Ontario—studies have shown that if we train them in the north, they'll probably stay in the north. That probably is going to work out to be very true, but we're giving young people incentive to go about these professions that are going to be much needed in the future and not burden them with a debt that they have to incur for these studies.

We've been getting a lot of calls at the constituency office regarding this program for free tuition for nurses. When we talk about retaining our young people in the north, wouldn't that be great? What a great opportunity for our young people to get into the medical field, to train to become nurses and doctors and to give back to their communities. For every person a doctor or nurse helps, saves or makes their life that much better—I can't think of a better way of giving back to your community.

I applaud this initiative. I just want to thank all the medical professionals and caregivers who have made our lives that much easier, and our grandparents', our parents', our children's, that much better a quality of life because they believe in helping individuals. I think this was a great step forward.

I want to touch a little bit on small business in northern Ontario. I know, as a small business owner, which I was over the past 15 or 20 years, I've watched various levels of government come into place. As a small entrepreneur I didn't really understand how these taxes happened, but I can tell you as a small business owner that every time I turned around, it seemed like the government was telling me they wanted more money for this and more money for that, I had to do this and I had to do that. There were forms to fill out and fees to pay. I talked to a lot of my fellow business owners around North Bay, Mattawa and Callander and I can tell you, they were wondering why they were even in business, because government just seemed to be in the way. They were blocking all their growth, making it very difficult for us. At one point we all felt that three days out of five all we were doing was filling out government forms.

Then, of course, I remember they implemented the EHT, the employer health tax—which is exactly that: it's just another tax on business. What it did was tax the businesses that were creating jobs, so the more people you hired, the more tax you had to pay to hire those people. It was the exact opposite of what small business is trying to do. It's trying to prosper. It needs to make a profit so that it can keep continuing on. It needs to pay its individuals. Back in 1995-96, when the provincial Conservatives came into power, they exempted the first \$400,000 in wages to your employees—they exempted that. When you're paying a 2% tax on that first \$400,000—that's a small business; that might be 10 or 12 employees. You can imagine all these small businesses paying \$8,000 just for that one little payroll tax. It was something they instituted. When I heard Mr McGuinty stand up and say he's going to roll that all back, he's going to throw it out, he's going to put the taxes back in

on all these corporations, I can tell you that what he's saying to the small business owners is, "Do you know what? We don't care. It's only another \$8,000 per year for you. So what? You should pay it." I can tell you that if that's their job-creation plan, they've got it all backwards. That's not going to work. All that's going to do is lay off people.

Interjection.

Mr McDonald: I can hear them yelling across. That's their stand, and I know they don't want the people of Ontario to know exactly what that means. They just keep saying they're going to roll back all these tax savings to the big, bad corporations.

I just want to say to the people of Ontario, if you work at a store or a mall or an office or an accountant's office, if you work anywhere in the private sector, what they're saying is that they're going to throw all those tax cuts out the window and that's going to make it more difficult for your employer to keep you employed. So be very careful. I can tell you, as a small business owner, that what they're proposing will kill jobs, will hurt small business, will hurt the small business owners and will be detrimental to Ontario, and they don't want that message out. They just keep saying, "the big, bad corporations." Well, I can tell you that the big, bad corporation is the everyday, hard-working entrepreneur who creates jobs, creates prosperity for Ontario, puts more money back into the treasury to give us money to fund health care, to fund education.

If we go back to that, if we go back to what they are trying to do, back to the late 1980s when they just kept taxing and taxing, I can tell you that is the wrong direction. Small business owners will be the first ones who will stand up when they realize that's what they're trying to do, and there will be an outcry. I want to say to all those individuals out there who just go to work from 9 to 5, Monday to Friday, and don't fully understand that what they're doing is putting their jobs at risk—I want to say to the average Ontarian that it's very important that they keep that in mind when they go to the polls some time in the next year. What they want to do is increase taxes right across the board. That will hurt everyone, and it will reduce services, because I can tell you there won't be as many people employed paying taxes.

When I'm in downtown North Bay and walk down the main street, I see John Wilson, who is the DIA chair, out there working very hard. He's out there trying to make a better environment for the downtown businesses. Of course the downtown businesses are competing against the malls and against Internet sales, and he's trying to create an environment for them to succeed. I can tell you that they are turning the corner, but it's a tough go. Business is tough. In northern Ontario it's a little different than southern Ontario. You come here to Toronto and see help wanted signs all over the place. I can tell you that in northern Ontario it's not like that. We need to create the environment so that these businesses can succeed and pay their municipal, provincial and federal taxes, so that we can continue to get the services we enjoy.

I just want to say to those small business owners in downtown North Bay, "Keep going. You're going in the right direction." Our provincial government has invested over a million dollars just in the CP renovation project, and the federal government is a partner as well, which we welcome. You're starting to see this new energy downtown, with the waterfront. When I look out to Mattawa, I see the mayor, Dean Backer, is working very hard. His town has gone through some tough times as well with the softwood lumber dispute, but I can tell you, they are not lying down. They're fighting for everything they can get for their area.

We all share the responsibility in northern Ontario that we look after one another. We don't think of ourselves as just one community; we think of ourselves as a region, as a place to do business, as a place to raise our families and enjoy the natural resources that we have, because we do have a good quality of life. But the challenge obviously is to keep our youth in the north, to create growth and assessment that will make our communities that much stronger.

1740

I also saw, getting back to health care, a portion in the budget about the Electronic Child Health Network. That's crucial to northern Ontario, because if a parent has a sick child, the parent can bring the child into the hospital in northern Ontario and they can do the X-rays. They'll have a specialist right at Sick Kids looking at the X-ray at the same time, so that they can determine the best course of action for that child. You can imagine if you had a sick child and that wasn't in place. You have to put your child in the car, drive down to Toronto—and we all know how much it costs to stay here—take time off work, the anxiety that you would have with a four-hour drive down and waiting to see a specialist. Now they can just drive to the local hospital, take the X-rays and have a specialist review them and give the course of action. So you can imagine how much money that's going to save the health care field, our budget and our tax dollars.

I am very thrilled with the announcement that is forthcoming, because it shows that it doesn't matter where you live in the province of Ontario. It could be northern, southern, eastern or western Ontario. If we can provide the resources, specialists, doctors, nurses and expertise, it doesn't matter where you live in the province. That shows that the province is listening. That shows that the government of Ontario is listening to the people and providing the infrastructure required and needed, so that families with parents and grandchildren who might need care have it.

You know, when I sit here day in and day out and I listen to the opposition scream across at this and that—and that's their job, and I respect that—what I find is they ignore all the great things that are happening. You never hear them say, "You know what? That's a good idea. I support that. I can tell you that I really like the hospital in North Bay." They never say that. They don't say it whatsoever. They just concentrate on a few little

things that they want to change, where they think they can get some traction.

I want to say that I'm very proud of all these initiatives and very proud of the Premier for paying attention to northern Ontario for making good things happen there. That's just the beginning of great things that are going to happen if the people of northern Ontario believe in themselves and believe in this government.

Mr Agostino: I certainly listened with interest to the member across the floor. I guess what he failed to talk about is the record of Ernie Eves and his ability to keep his word and his commitments. The reality is, they can put whatever they want in their budget.

Who can trust Ernie Eves and the Tories to keep their word? I mean, Ernie Eves broke his own Taxpayer Protection Act by delaying tax cuts in the 2002 budget. In 1999, Ernie Eves promised to cut residential property tax by 20%—another broken promise. When he was running for the leadership, he called the \$500-million handout to private schools "ludicrous." It was his word, not ours. He said it was ludicrous. What has Ernie Eves done now? He's gone ahead with that tax break for private schools.

When he sold the 407 in 1999, Ernie Eves said he would cap the tolls at 2% plus inflation. They've gone up as high as 203%. In 1999, he said they were committed to publicly funded health care. But today we have private MRIs, CT clinics and construction of private hospitals—a two-tier health care system that Ernie Eves privately wanted. But again, he said that's not what he wanted.

When Ernie Eves came back and forced one of his members to step aside, he said, "There's no patronage appointment here. There's no payback for this. He's just doing this out of the goodness of his heart." Guess what? The member, Mr Tilson, got an \$111,000 appointment the other day.

Again, how can you believe anything Ernie Eves has to say? This man and this party and this government will say and do whatever it takes to get re-elected. They have no values. They have no principles. They stand for absolutely nothing.

If you don't like Ernie Eves's position, just wait two days, or two weeks, and it will change. He'll make you happy. Ernie Eves does not know what he believes in. He has absolutely no idea why he wants to be Premier of Ontario. He has no values when it comes to governing this province. Sooner or later, Ernie Eves will have to face the electorate—not the 18,000 Tory members who elected him but the people of Ontario. The day of reckoning will come.

Mr Kormos: When this Conservative government persists in talking about small business, it becomes clearer and clearer that they think small business is some non-union shop with 100 employees. That's simply not the case; that's not the reality. I know small business. My grandparents were small business people; my parents were small business people. I grew up working in that shop from when I was 12 years old. Small businesses are the folks like my friends down at Denistoun Variety, at the corner of Denistoun and West Main. Relieving them

of the annual corporate filing fee means diddly because they aren't incorporated. It's a mom-and-pop operation. Relieving them of corporate taxes by reducing the corporate tax rate means nothing to Sang and Monica who run Denistoun Variety and work 16 and 18 hours a day doing it.

What would help small business people like Denistoun Variety would be an increase in minimum wage so that minimum wage workers in that area would have a little more to spend in that corner store on a daily basis. What would help them would be a reduction of the downloading on to municipalities so they could get a break on the property taxes. What would help them would be this government keeping their promise to cut taxes across the board when it comes to property taxes.

This government thinks small business is 100 non-union employees in a corporate-owned shop. Sorry, small businesses across this province are mom-and-pop family operations. They're not incorporated. They're hard-working people. They're people who work seven days a week, 16 and 18 hours a day. They're people who want to see progressive government. They're people who want to see fairness from government. They're people who want to see their kids afford to go to university and college so their kids don't have to work 16 and 18 hours a day in a corner store like Denistoun Variety. This government doesn't come close to meeting their needs or serving their interests.

Hon Chris Stockwell (Minister of the Environment, Government House Leader): I want to say, first and foremost, that was an excellent speech. I think you did a good job. Since you've arrived in this place you've done nothing but impress me with your command of the issues and your ability to express them. I think the people of Nipissing, North Bay, should be proud and honoured that you are their member, and proud and honoured that you're seeking re-election too.

I don't want to spend a lot of time debating what Mr Kormos says because virtually every small business owner I know, whether it be two or three employees or 100 employees, agrees on one thing: they will never vote NDP. Having him suggest he's defending small business, well, he's defending people who don't want to be defended by him. Be my guest. Go ahead and defend people who don't want to be defended by you. I've been in politics 22 years, and I find the most adamant anti-NDPers out there are small business people en masse.

With respect to the Liberal's comment, this is funny coming from an opposition party that has a leader who in 1992 introduced Bill 14 banning school strikes. Talk about flip-flopping, a potential different point of view today as opposed to 1992, but in a weaselly, mealy-mouthed, Liberal fashion. Do you want to know what his bill said? This is what's so beautiful about being a Liberal: "I will only ban school strikes after October 31." What the hell is that? You can go on strike for no more than 20 days in September, and you can go on strike for 20 days in October, but you can't go on strike in November, December, January, February, March, April, May or

June. What kind of muddle-headed, mealy-mouthed, Liberal, thought-provoking, cotton-minded person drafted that? Dalton McGuinty. Now they've got a chance to order some teachers back to work on May 22 or whatever, and he's opposed. It's after Halloween. Why isn't he in favour?

Mr Joseph Cordiano (York South-Weston): I want to say to the Minister of the Environment that the leadership race was over a year ago, so it's not going to pay any dividends—oh, I forgot. He's planning for the next time around, so it's OK. You can pat the backbenchers on the back. That's good PR, I say to the Minister of the Environment. You're thinking longer-term.

Let me just say this to the government members: when Mike Harris was Premier, the leader of your party, Premier—

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: At the very least, what I have to say is this: it was difficult, at the end of the day, to argue with the guy who lived up to what he said he was going to do. You know what? I say to you that I didn't agree with just about everything he did, but you couldn't argue with the fact that he said, "I stand here and this is where I stand." With this leader and this Premier, Ernie Eves, you don't know where he stands. You guys will wake up tomorrow morning and find that all of a sudden he's reversed his policies 180 degrees. Give me a break. Have you ever seen such reversals? The list is endless.

I want to go back to another thing that was talked about earlier: small business. One of the things I was very proud of that we introduced when we were in government, that I had a hand in introducing, was the creation of the new ventures program, which helped and assisted small business with access to capital, new business start-ups. Guess what? The Conservatives did away with that program. I would say the New Democrats did not completely abolish that program. They worked with the banks.

Interjection.

Mr Cordiano: But you guys did away with that program. It was helping small business. I'll tell you, most small businesses still have a problem with access to capital. If you want to help small business, help them with that, because access to capital is still an issue. I would say to you, with respect to all these tax cuts, it's not helping the small business guys out there.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Nipissing has two minutes to reply.

Mr McDonald: I'd like to thank the members from Hamilton East, Niagara Centre, Etobicoke Centre and York South-Weston for their comments.

I just want to recap. We were speaking about promises and issues, and I want to say to the people of Nipissing first that I've heard Mr McGuinty stand up and say he's going to help health care in the north. It was their government that cancelled our hospital in North Bay. It was the Liberal government that cancelled our hospital. We'd fundraised for the hospital and they cancelled it.

Dalton McGuinty made one of his stops in North Bay. He flew in to the North Bay airport and spent 15 minutes there. Do you know what he said? He said, "You know what? We'll complete what's going on with Highway 11 north, but that's all. We're committing to Highway 69." The people in Nipissing listened very closely. He did not commit to Highway 11; he committed to Highway 69. All he was interested in was that his member from Sudbury got his project. I just want to be very clear that this leader has stated that he's concentrating on Highway 69, not on Highway 11.

He also showed up at that airport and said, "We're going to allow northerners to stud their tires." Who's going to pay to fix the roads after everybody wrecks

them with studded tires? Then he goes to Sault Ste Marie and says, "No, we're not going to do that." In North Bay he says this and in Sault Ste Marie he says that. Do you know what? He doesn't even know that Sault Ste Marie is still in northern Ontario and that we get that news as well.

Here's a leader who's saying it's OK to have four fishing lines in the water. To northerners, that's an insult. Maybe I should say to the members opposite, you might want to tell your leader to adjust the picture a little bit.

The Deputy Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 pm on Monday, May 26, 2003.

The House adjourned at 1753.

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